

The crucible – power and manipulation

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



'The Crucible' is set in a theocratic society, a religious community in which the church and the state are one. The religion was very strict; a harsh form of Protestantism known as Puritanism. Because of the theocratic nature of the society, moral laws and state laws were one and the same; sin and the status of an individual's soul were matters of public concern. There was no room for divergence from social norms, since any individual whose personal life did not conform to the recognized moral laws represented a threat, not only to the public good but to the rule of God and true religion as well.

In Salem everyone and everything belonged to either God or the Devil; disagreement was not only unlawful but was associated with satanic activity. This overview functioned as the under-lying logic behind the witch-trials. Arthur Miller said that he wrote about 'An imploded community that distrust and paranoia had killed'. Miller has demonstrated in his play that the people who were strongly associated to the church were those who were most unlikely to be suspected or even accused of witch-craft.

We are able to see that the theocratic society did not provide the community of Salem with many choices; they either followed the church or alternatively the devil. This then reinforced the Salem community to become a part of the congregation and regular church attendees. In Act 3, Judge Danforth says: "A person is either with this court or he must be counted against it." This represents intolerance of the society.

We can also assume that the church and the court both worked as one to create an image for the Salem society which showed that the church and court consisted of individuals who were God-loving and righteous, so anyone

who did not follow either the church or court, was immediately thought to be dis-loyal to God and would then be further suspected of witch-craft.

Furthermore we are also able to observe how important attending church was to other characters in the play, for example, John Proctor was not a regular church attendee.

The Salem Society now had one over John; even though we are aware that it is a completely unreasonable thought, the society could have claimed that the reason why John did not attend church was because he had been communing with the devil. Another absurd incident is when Giles Corey becomes suspicious of his wife Martha Corey because she would read a book every night instead of the bible. Giles: “ Mr Hale, I have always wanted to ask a learned man-what signifies the readin’ of strange books? ” Hale: “ Who does this? ” Giles: “ Martha, my wife. I have walked at night many a time and found her in a corner readin’ of a book.

Now what do you make of that? ” The witch trials empowered several characters in the play; some of whom were previously marginalized in the Salem society. The four characters in this play that abused and manipulated their power in different ways and for different reasons were: Abigail Williams, Tituba, Reverend Samuel Parris and Judge Danforth. In general women occupied the lowest rung of Salem (which was a male dominated town) and therefore had very few opinions in life. The Salem witch trials gave females such as Abigail and Tituba power as well as a voice which was heard.