

The crucible versus mccarthyism: a comparative analysis

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



During the early 1690s in Salem, Massachusetts, witch trials took place. Salem was a Puritan society at the time, which meant that there was a strict moral code that encompassed Puritan lifestyle. The notion of the Devil brought fear to Puritans as well as the act of witchcraft, taking into account that Puritans were very religious. In the year of 1938 HUAC, House of Un-American Activities Committee, was established. HUAC took to investigating certain groups of people during the time of the Cold War in order to uncover people suspected of being a part of the Communist party. HUAC brought about mass hysteria due to the fear of communism by employing certain tactics. There were public hearings in which witnesses were forced to provide information or names of those who were potential communists. The Hollywood Ten consisted of famous screenwriters, directors, and producers who were blacklisted so that they wouldn't be able to find work.

In addition, the events which occurred during the Salem witch trials as demonstrated in *The Crucible* are quite similar to those of the McCarthy era. Accusations took place with very little evidence in both events. In *The Crucible*, people were accused of being witches and doing the Devil's work, while people were accused of being communists in the McCarthy era. John Proctor and Rebecca Nurse were well-respected people in the Salem community who were accused of witchcraft, despite their good reputations. Joseph McCarthy accused people of being communists without paying heed to whether his accusations were accurate or not. Also, Reputations were hindered in both cases. John Proctor's reputation was very important to him, and he knew that it would impact his sons negatively when he was

sentenced to hang. Hollywood screenwriters who were blacklisted had to work under false names.

With that in mind, the themes of *The Crucible* can be seen in certain social issues that take place in the world today. One of these themes is naming names, in which the accused takes the attention or blame off of themselves by calling others out. This theme can be demonstrated in the act of bullying, in which the bully can harm someone and then blame another person without anyone knowing. At the end of Act One in *The Crucible*, Abigail Williams, Tituba, and Betty Parris confess to witchcraft, but name names of others they had seen with the Devil in order to protect themselves. Another theme seen in the play is that of hysteria. There was great hysteria in the Salem community with the threat of witchcraft. Although people were able to get out of trouble by naming names, those who didn't confess to witchcraft were assumed to be witches. Today, terrorist attacks and mass shootings would obviously arouse fear in the public. In a different aspect, political correctness can bring about fear of offending someone or using the wrong word choice.