

Analysis of the movie the crucible essay

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



The Crucible is a movie that was written by Arthur Miller adapted from his play, which he authored in 1953, going by the same name. Miller released this two hours and three minutes movie on November 29, 1996. The film as directed by Nicholas Hytner portrays the events taking place in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. The people of this community were religious and were devoted to serve God (Leeper, Para. 2).

The main actors in this movie include Daniel Day-Lewis who acted as John proctor, Winona Ryder as Abigail Williams, Paul Scofield as Judge Thomas Danforth, and Joan Allen as Elizabeth Proctor. Other actors who contributed to the film include Bruce Davidson as Reverend Parris, Rob Campbell as Reverend Hale, Jaffrey Jones as Thomas Putman, Karron Graves as Mary Warren, Charlayne Woodard as Tituba, among others. The movie shooting took place on the island of Hog in Essex, Massachusetts. The Crucible has some historical accuracy.

The movie starts by a scene where young girls in their teen age gather in the woods and dance while chanting. These girls secretly organized this ceremony to give them a forum to perform magic in order to entice some village men to love them.

Leeper says, “ The opening sequence shows a voodoo-like ceremony in the woods complete with mystic chalk symbols drawn on the ground, and Tituba chanting a perfectly recorded version of the Yanvalou chant (Para. 5).” From this it is evident that Tituba (Charlayne Woodard), a black American Slave, was leading the ceremony.

Abigail Williams, who wished for John Proctor's wife to die, slaughtered a hen and drunk the blood. Before the ceremony climaxed, Reverend Parris (Bruce Davison), who was Abigail's uncle, came across them. The ceremony came to an abrupt end and the girls started running away. In this event, Betty, Parris' daughter and Ruth the daughter of Thomas fell and became unconscious. The parents of these girls suspected that their daughters were demon possessed. They then called Reverend Hale to come and look into this issue.

The girls had to look for means of rescuing themselves from this problem and so Abigail indicated Tituba as a witch. Tituba, after subjection to torment, confessed to be a witch. This made the girls to name other people whom they had seen practicing witchcraft. Elizabeth Proctor, John's wife was one of the named people. This was Abigail's plan to kill her in order for her to get back John Proctor.

The community at that time was religious and did not entertain witchcrafts. According to their judicial systems, anybody who denied the accusations was supposed to die. The suspects were supposed to be hung. This meant that John Proctor's wife, Elizabeth Proctor, was to be hung if she denied the allegations, as was Abigail's plan. John defended his wife against the accusation, an issue that turned against him. He was accused of being a witch and was hung. Elizabeth survived execution of the sentence because she was pregnant.

Arthur Miller's play and movie was a reflection of what used to happen in the United States of America. It was a portrayal of the trials, which used to take

place in Salem, Massachusetts. There was a committee headed by Senator Joe McCarthy. The committee sought Un-American activists and questioned them. Those who pleaded guilty were let free and those who refused to name others were persecuted. In addition, those who pleaded innocent were hung.

It was a situation where reason was not used in the judicial system and people were made to confess things out of fear. Those who wanted to fight for their reputation, like John Proctor in the movie, were killed by hanging. This House of Representatives' Committee on Un-American Activities summoned and questioned Miller in 1956. The committee convicted Miller of "Contempt of Congress" because he failed to name the people who attended with him the secret meetings.

The Crucible is "based on an actual historical event of the past, but it is neither a historical play nor a historical romance" (Ram, 116). Miller himself said in a note about the historical accuracy of his play that the "play is not historic in the sense in which the word is used by academic historians" (Miller and Blakesley, xvii).

There are historical characters presented in this film. Miller used the exact names of some of them. He also accepts that he never captured the whole of their characters and personalities. All he portrayed was what he could capture from the documents of their trial cases. Some of the historical characters depicted in the movie include Betty Parris, Elizabeth Proctor, John Proctor, Abigail Williams, Samuel Parris, Reverend Hale among others.

Miller must have researched well into history and therefore tried to put this movie to be accurate with history as much as possible. Leeper suggests, “ If The Crucible is not historically accurate, it transcends it” (Para. 5). Even though the movie tried to be historically accurate, there are minor deviations from history.

The characters he employed in presenting his message in the movie were not the real historical individuals and thus were prone to have some differences. The chant by Tituba at the onset of the film shows that this might have happened sometimes later than the real setting of the play depicts. The movie also portrays another lapse of historical accuracy in the execution of the death sentences.

The movie shows a group of people hanged at the same time. In the real historical setting, these people were hanged at different times. “ Rebecca Nurse was hanged on July 19, Proctor on August 19, and Martha Corey on September 22 — not all on the same gallows” (Burns, Para. 20). Reverend George Burroughs prayed on the gallows and not Proctor as it is in the movie. The movie proves to be in tandem with the historical happenings in Salem, despite these minor deviations.

The events taking place in The Crucible are examples of what is happening in our society nowadays. Some people live in fear and as such are not free to express themselves and point out what is right. Like the trials which were taking place in Salem, our judicial systems have become very unfair condemning the innocent while letting the guilty free.

This further aggravates the people's fear making them to confess falsely on what they have not done. The form of judgments made in Salem, Massachusetts is still seen in our governments where people do not use reason to pass judgments but use the opinion of many. Even though the events taking place in Salem may not take the same form in our societies, they still exist.

Burns, Margo. " Arthur Miller's The Crucible: Fact and Fiction." 17th Century Colonial New England. 9. 30. 2010. Web. <http://www.17thc.us/docs/fact-fiction.shtml>

Leeper, Mark. " The Crucible (1996)". Movie Reviews. N. d. Web. <http://www.eclectica.org/v1n3n4/leeper4.html>

Miller, Arthur and Blakesley, Maureen. The Crucible By Arthur Miller. London: Heinemann, 1992. Print.

Ram, Atma. Perspectives on Arthur Miller. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1988. Print.