

Honesty is still the best policy in the crucible, a play by arthur miller

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



It is a golden rule in our society that honesty is the best policy. Throughout childhood we are taught that in all situations, it is best to tell the truth. This rule of honesty in all circumstances is seldom followed for one reason or another. In the play, *The Crucible*, written by Arthur Miller, there is a story about a town in Massachusetts called Salem during the era of the Witch Trials in the 1600s, where there are many characters that spiral out of control because of one lie that continues to grow. According to *The Crucible*, and many of my experiences in life, people lie for many reasons including the thirst for power and authority, jealousy, and the need to protect one's self and others.

In the play, when some of the characters get a taste of power and authority, they abuse it and the whole town of Salem gets wrapped up in these lies. Abigail and Betty, two young girls in the town begin to get attention when they say they have come in contact with the devil. When they realize the "powers that be" in the town are believing everything they say, the two girls are exhilarated by this power they have and continue to lie about the "witches" they know about. "' I saw Goody Sibber with the Devil!'-Abigail, ' I saw Alice Barrow with the Devil'-Betty, ' I saw Goody Hawkins with the Devil!'-Abigail" (Miller 48). The girls continue to accuse people of witchcraft because the unusual power and authority they have over the town excite them. Instead of being seen as ignorant children, people are trusting them, and listening to them. In my experience, I have found it is easy to lie in a situation such as this one. When I was younger, I had a neighborhood full of children younger than me. I remember a time when I was in charge and I wanted to go on a hike and none of the kids did. I abused my authority by

telling all the kids that there was a treasure/prize at the end of the hike that they could all have so they would believe me and come on the hike. In this situation, I experienced the ability to abuse authority to get what I wanted. The girls in the novel also abused their power to get what they wanted, attention. This was a reason for me to lie in my experience and for Abigail and Betty to lie in theirs.

Throughout the book, there are characters that feel they have to lie to protect themselves or to protect others. In *The Crucible*, Elizabeth is being questioned at trial regarding why she and her husband had decided to fire Abigail. Elizabeth knows it is because Abigail and Her husband had an affair, but she lies to save her husband's honor. " I came to think he fancied her. And so one night I lost my wits, I think, and put her out on the highroad."- Elizabeth. ' Then he did not turn from you.'-Danforth. ' No, sir'"(113).

Elizabeth is lying in this situation so that she can keep her husband's honor safe. She is trying to protect him and believes that this is a good reason to lie. I have also experienced lying for the reason of protecting myself or someone else. A few years ago, my parents were upset because the lamp in my living room was broken. I knew my brother had knocked the lamp over but I lied and told them I did not know what had happened so my brother would not get in trouble. This lie was what I believed was right because I was protecting my brother as Elizabeth did for her husband in the novel. Both Elizabeth and I lied because of the need to protect someone we care about.

A third reason people lie as portrayed in, *The Crucible*, is out of jealousy and envy of another person. In the novel, Abigail is still in love with Proctor,

Elizabeth's wife, even after their affair is over. Therefore, Elizabeth believes that Abigail is jealous of her, and wants her to be killed. "Spoke or silent, a promise is surely made. And she may dote on it now-I am sure she does- and thinks to kill me, then to take my place" (Miller 61). Abigail is jealous because she wants to fill Elizabeth's shoes as Proctor's wife, and with the power she has over the town, she wants to get rid of Elizabeth. Proctor also believes that Abigail's lies are driven by her envy and her thirst for revenge, "We are what we always were in Salem, but now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law! This warrant is vengeance! I'll not give my wife to vengeance!" (77). Proctor believes that Abigail is also seeking revenge over Elizabeth and is envious of his wife. The lies Abigail tells are out of jealousy and envy and anger toward Elizabeth.

People lie for many different reasons. People lie out of fear of a punishment. People lie because they believe it is the best way to protect themselves or their family or friends. People also lie for personal gain and out of self interest. Throughout *The Crucible*, lies are continually spreading and growing and they turn this story and the entire time period into a time of strife and conflict. Honesty is considered the best policy in our society, but when placed in a situation of personal loss or gain individuals resort to lying. The lies build on each other and turn and twist until the individual finds himself or herself in a situation similar to the ending of *The Crucible*. A situation where lies become the norm, no one knows who to trust, and the whole community is in a state of chaos.