

# The john proctor and his role

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



The next character is John Proctor and his role in Act 1. Although he is not as involved as Abby he makes it his problem by returning to Salem and being involved in a love triangle which grips the audience and keeps them on the edge of their seat as they wonder if their affair will be revealed. We are informed of his relationship with Abby when she asks him for a soft word but he refuses, claiming their affair is over.

He reiterates this by saying, " I will cut off my hands before I ever touch you again," He is very strong and assertive which leads Abby to remind herself of how strong he is, " Gah!

I almost forgot how strong you are, John Proctor. " His masculine physic is proved in that quote. The women in the audience would also be amazed by his physical presence and probably be wolf whistling at him when he is on stage to show how good looking he is.

Another example is when he enters the room and their servant {Mary Warren}, is startled and when she speaks she is quite clearly terrified. He tries to remain loyal to his wife Elizabeth regardless of Abigail's advances. " You will speak nothing of Elizabeth! " This also shows where his priorities lie.

Next is Betty who is a very mysterious character which helps build up tension and suspense. She says so little but is very important due to the fact that everything seems to revolve around her as at the start of the play you are left wondering whether or not she is dead or alive and then when she finally wakes up she seems very deranged as she tries to fly out of the window. The whole witchcraft scenario only came about as when she woke

up she seemed mentally disturbed by claiming that she wanted her "mama" to which Abigail replied, "What ails you Betty?"

Your mama's dead and buried." She is also very easily threatened by Abigail and a bit gullible. Parris who is Abigail's Uncle is very self-righteous and highly regarded due to the fact that he is the Reverend. His constant mood changes result in his agitated feel which makes him rush around the stage. He is selfish and a prime example of his pompous attitude is, "But if you trafficked with spirits then I must know it, for surely my enemies will, and they will ruin me with it." This comment was whilst in an argument with Abigail which confirms his well-regarded role in the society.

He is also adamant that no witchcraft would ever be involved in his village. Hale is also like Parris in the way that he feels more important due to him being educated and he has a good reputation for catching witches. Here is one comment where he boasts of his knowledge on the supernatural, "In these books the devil stands stripped of his disguises." It demonstrates that he knows what he is doing as well. The last one of which I feel are main characters is Tituba who is from Barbados who is the first person accused of being in touch with the Devil.

At first she denies being in touch with the Devil but then later admits, "I don't compact with the Devil." She insists on her innocence but is beaten that badly she changes her plea so she doesn't die. "No, No, Sir, don't hang Tituba! I tell him! I don't desire to work for him sir!" This reveals that she is easily targeted by others because of her race and that she was forced to admit to a crime she didn't commit so she won't be hanged. She also repeats

her self a lot due to the language difficulties and Miller has used this to good effect by using double negatives, " I never saw no devil.

" Other characters include Susannah who is one of the girls and is very inquisitive, but is easily forced to do things against her will, " But he bid me tell you that you might look at unnatural things for the cause of it. " This informs us of her weak character and that she is easily pushed around.

Secondly, Mrs Putnam who is still uneasy at her children dying when they were only a few days old and everyone feels uncomfortable around her as she constantly mention children, a good exemplar of this is when she blurts out " My babies blood.

" She cries this whilst Abigail reveals that Tituba forced her to drink chicken blood. When Betty is ill Mrs Putnam also claims, " I'd not call it sick; the Devil's touch is heavier than sick. " This confirms that she jumps to conclusions without actually considering the other options and that she also fears the supernatural by blaming it just to stir things up. In addition there is Mr Putnam who feels he is intellectually superior to everyone and is, " quickly to accuse others and corroborate anybody linked with the supernatural" as it says in the narrators notes.

That means that anybody who is accused of witchcraft or being with the devil Mr Putnam is normally one of the first to confirm that they were, even if he doesn't really know. You can tell he is quite well respected as when Mr Hale meets him he exclaims, " Putnam! I had not expected such distinguished company. " This demonstrates his highly regarded name which

could also be why he testifies against so many people as his opinion is unlikely to be questioned due to him being well respected.

Mercy who is the Putnam's servant feels inferior towards everyone as you can tell this by her gentle tone of voice although she seems quite vicious and ruthless when the Devil is involved as she states, " Have you tried beating her? " This is very out of character which indicates to the audience what people might do in order to save themselves and blame others in a theocratic society. Next is Rebecca who is the local Nurse and is very widely thought of and she has a very caring nature when asking, " Will it hurt the child sir?

" She is also very polite and respects other people. Giles who is a land owner and is relatively stupid and a nuisance as he has been in court six times over the last year. He is in admiration of, Mr Hale who is well educated as he claims he has always wanted to talk to, " a learned man. " This signifies he is not very clever and that he looks up to those which are cleverer than him. Penultimately, Mary Warren who is Proctor's servant and is scared of John's physical presence and you can tell this as when John shouts at her, her voice is quivering and is much quieter.

All of these characters have a part to play in building up the suspense and tension created by the supernatural being involved as well as the two-faced characters which make the play even more exciting and because the audience never know what is going to happen next or if there will be another twist in the story. They are all of the characters in Act 1. and as you can tell with so many characters in such a small space on stage the atmosphere is

very claustrophobic and this creates tension and suspense because of all the confusion of who is coming on stage and who is exiting.

The unvarying arrivals and departures throughout act one build up a tense atmosphere and it keeps the audience on the edge of their seats as you never know what might happen next. At the beginning of the play where there is an overture when everyone is crowded into a small room all around the bed where Betty lay motionless creates a claustrophobic feel about the place, to when Tituba burst in and then was abruptly sent out immediately by a grieving Parris. He says this in such a harsh manner that it makes the audience jump back into their seats, " Out of my sight!

" This comment is furiously directed at Tituba. This feeling on stage leaves the audience questioning themselves to what has happened and what is going to happen. Is she dead? Is she ill? What is wrong with her? Why is he praying? What has Tituba done to be sent out of the room? The number of characters on stage manufacture a baffling play as you don't fully understand what is happening as no one is allowed to finish their sentence as they are always interrupted. Abby and John share a confrontation when she asks him for " a soft word.

" but he adamantly refuses then immediately Betty rudely whines loudly forcing Abby to dramatically change the subject so their affair is not found out. This makes the audience wonder whether or not their affair will be revealed and if Betty heard their revealing conversation. The next tense part is when Betty attempts to fly to her mum out of the window, " Let me fly to mama let me fly. " That quote queries her physical and mental state as no

sane parson would even think about trying to fly out of a window. I think the audience at this point would gasp in disbelief at the bewildered Betty's disturbed endeavour to fly.

Another example of suspense and tension is when Tituba is accused of witchcraft and then later accuses Goody Good which leads to a melee of names being shouted out which confuses the audience as they wonder who will be accused next. Throughout act one there are plenty of entrances and unfinished sentences and not many exits which creates tension and suspense as it is chaotic when everyone is talking at the same time and then intervened in the middle of their speech so you can't tell what is happening. This often leaves their speech on a cliff-hanger.

The themes during the play are each character's battle with their own conscience. Abigail who is eager to clear her name as from the start of the play she claims, " My name is good in the village. " She tries to interpret the feeling that why would she do such a thing as witchcraft when she is so highly respected in the village. Her guilt about John and whether or not she should come clean and admit to her sins. Next there is John who has a guilty conscience and wants to make sure no one finds out about his affair with Abigail and the lechery that he has been with other women whilst he is married.

The villagers also always question each other's conscience and morals to what is right and what is wrong, for example when they are arguing whose land it is. The main theme is that the village is a theocracy and that no one wants to go against God and will do anything to clear their name and

prevent them from being hanged. This would make the viewers realise just how hard it is to live in a society of those beliefs and that it was really happening in the 1690's.

No one wants to be associated with evil and will do their utmost to stop them being linked with any wrong doings. Evil is another main theme which runs throughout the play as everyone is accused of witchcraft and it is the opposite of God and everyone wants to abide by God's rules. Abby drinks blood which is associated with the Devil and when she threatens the other girls and claims, " I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you, and you know I can do it.

" This also confirms the sharp contrast in good and evil as she claims if anyone will accuse her she will get revenge in the " black of some terrible night," which is another link to evil. I think the audience would gasp in disbelief when Abby threatens the rest of the girls. Finally, when the girls blame each other to save themselves and because they stick together to isolate a person they don't get blamed. They are more likely to be believed as there are other people to back them up. This builds up tension as you wonder who will be blamed next.

Abby also accuses Tituba of making her laugh at prayer just to try to get someone else in trouble and so they have some " evidence" of Tituba's witchcraft. All of this aids Miller's play in building up tension and suspense. An additional theme is that everyone will do their utmost to protect their names in the village. Abby is the first to say that her name is good in the



village when she is linked with the Devil. Towards the end of act 1. when everyone is accusing each other in order to save their own name.

A good example of this is when Proctor fails to sign a document admitting that he was involved in Witchcraft just so his name will not be ruined in the village as he declares that " I can not live without my name! " This shows that he is willing to die for his reputation as without that he has nothing to live for. Fear is apparent throughout as Abby often spoke fearfully around her Uncle Parris and Mary Warren who is Proctor's servant is scared of John as when he entered the room her voice went timid and she jumped out of fright as it says in the narrator's notes.

This shows John's physical presence is quite daunting. Tituba also admits to Witchcraft as she is scared of being hanged and at the end when there is a crescendo of fear. My conclusion is that Arthur Miller has successfully and effectively written a play built around suspense and tension and kept the audience on the edge of their seats throughout the duration of the play due to it's confusing but historically accurate storyline.

He has very cleverly used Salem to mock the current political state but at the same time make it exciting and truthful as these events did really happen! The characters have been well used and how one dance in the woods can lead to such appalling consequences really amazes the audience. Thus shows that society hasn't changed over time. Finally the contrast between Good and Evil have been very well used in a society ruled by religion.