

# A man will not cast away his good name

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



The two now clearly have forgiven and rediscovered their love for each other '(He has lifted her, and now kisses her with great passion)' and when asked to force Proctor's confession Elizabeth says no, ' He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him. ' The incidents of the play have brought the two much closer together; we can see a great difference in their relationship now compared to at the beginning of the novel when Elizabeth was very cold with John.

Also the events have led Elizabeth to believe that John is a good man and she has no right to judge him. In a classical tragedy the central character is of noble or royal birth, but the protagonist of ' The Crucible', John Proctor, is a common farmer. In the dictionary ' noble' has two meanings: the first being a person of noble/illustrious birth, this cannot be applied to Proctor as he is a simple farmer with negligible birth and rank.

But the second definition of ' noble' is more apt: showing greatness of character, morally elevated, admirable.

Proctor certainly shows greatness of character in ' The Crucible' when admitting his crime of lechery to all, in an attempt to save his wife and neighbours from the court's ' justice', even though in the period in which the play was set lechery was viewed very seriously, being one of the ' Seven Sins'. In the court John attempts to remove the court's faith in Abigail Williams by naming her a whore, saying that he has had sex with her, he pleads for the court to believe him saying why would he throw away his own good name if he did not speak true, ' A man will not cast away his good name.

You surely know that. ' Here Proctor shows admirable strength of character, destroying his own name and reputation to expose Abigail's lies and save his wife and neighbours. Proctor also shows himself to be morally elevated and admirable at the end of the novel when he hangs, not only saving his own name and that of his wife and children but that of the other innocents who are to be hung, by hanging himself he does not name them liars, ' They think to go like saints, I like not to spoil their names'.

Proctor was willing to name himself a witch in front of wife, judge and a priest but when told his confession will be nailed to the church door he would rather hang than sign it as it will blacken the names of his children and friends. He protests that if he declares himself a witch the day other innocents hang, people will believe them guilty too, ' I blacken all of them when this is nailed to the to the church the very day they hang for silence'.

Arthur Miller, author of the play describes it as a tragedy of the common man but although John Proctor may not be noble by blood or wealth it can be argued that he is noble in another sense. Another feature of a classical tragedy is that the fate of the tragic hero changes the fates of those about him and reveals essential truths about humanity. At the end of the play when John Proctor about to be hung he realises he cannot save himself at the expense of the honour of his friends and as a result they are able to die as saints, by not confessing himself to witchcraft he does not damage the integrity of his friends.

Before he finally destroys his confession Proctor protests: ' I blacken them all when this is nailed to the church the very day they hang for silence. ' As a

result of Proctor's death, as a well respected member of the community, the faith of the people of Salem in the hangings, the court and the church faltered, the epilogue states that after the hanging of such respected and admired people the beliefs of the townspeople changed, ' the fever died', ' Parris was voted from office' and most importantly, ' the power of theocracy in Massachusetts was broken'.

Parris realises the consequences of the deaths of such people and protested at the hangings, ' You cannot hang this sort. There is danger for me. I dare not step outside at night! ' Judge Danforth though proceeded with these hangings and, as a result, destroyed the belief of the people in his judgment. The fate of John Proctor, the tragic hero caused Reverend Hale to lose conviction in the court, he quit proceedings, when Proctor was arrested he declared, ' I denounce these proceedings!

And then announced he would no longer work enforcing the kings justice, ' I quit this court'. After Proctor is condemned Abigail loses conviction in her power over the people in the town and flees aboard a ship. And Elizabeth Proctor, John's wife, towards the end of the play changes her attitude towards John realizing that she has her own faults and admitting that she could be the cause of John's adultery, ' It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery', and also she has no power to judge John. ' I cannot judge you John' she replies when he asks her whether he should confess or not.

The downfall of the protagonist in ' The Crucible' caused many changes to the lives of those about him, and essential truths were revealed to the community. The ' fever' and the power of theocracy were broken and John

and Elizabeth's love and passion were rekindled. In a classical tragedy an evil influence can be seen throughout the play. In 'The Crucible' it can be said that Abigail Williams acts as the human embodiment of evil; she exploits the town's belief in Satan to try and achieve the death of Elizabeth Proctor, she thinks that by attaining this she will gain the love of John Proctor.

Abigail threatens the other children and leads them to causing the imprisonment and murder of many people. Abigail had an affair with John Proctor while working for him and his wife, after Proctor ended the affair and Elizabeth expelled Abigail from her service Abigail was not willing to let the affair end and believed she had cause to hope for its continuance. At the beginning of the play the village girls danced around a fire in the woods, in the Puritan society in which this play was set this was forbidden and badly viewed.

Tituba, Parris' slave who 'conjured spirits' in the woods says it was Abigail who led her to do so, 'You beg me to conjure! She beg me make charm'. In the forest Abigail drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor, thinking that by eliminating his wife she would gain Proctor's love. The other girls in the play are frightened of Abigail, she is clearly the leader of their peer group, Betty accuses Abigail of drinking blood and wishing the death of Elizabeth, 'You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!' in response to this Abigail 'smashes' the child across the face.

Abigail also intimidates the rest of the girls, she threatens to stab them during the night should they dare to break their silence concerning the events of the night in the woods, 'I will come to you in the black of some

terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. ' Later in the play when Proctor wishes Mary Warren to accuse Abigail of being a liar Mary is terrified and believes that Abigail will murder her, ' She'll kill me for saying that!

Abigail is unscrupulous, willing to go to any lengths and cause numerous deaths to try and win John Proctor, she exploits her domination of the girls leading them to cry witchcraft, the large number of deaths at her hands do not cause her to falter, she even leads the girls to cry witchcraft at one of their own peers to protect herself, ' Oh, Mary, this is a black art to change your shape. ' Throughout the novel Abigail tries tempt John into recommencing his affair with her, believing that he still has feelings for her.

With John, Abigail reveals a completely different side to her nature, though violent and domineering when interacting with the other girls, with John Abigail is sweet, a woman in love, ' John – I am waitin' for you every night'. Abigail believes she has reason to hope John will come for her, ' I saw your face when she put me out, and you loved me then and you do now! ' But John is deeply repentant of his sins and still clearly loves his wife.

When Abigail's plans go awry and John Proctor is accused of witchcraft Abigail is too craven to save him by admitting her lies and instead steals thirty-one pounds from her uncle and flees Salem aboard a ship. I believe that Abigail is the evil influence in ' The Crucible', from the start of the play she wished Elizabeth Proctor dead, she drank blood, a charm to kill Goody Proctor and in the social period in which Abigail lived she would have

believed that this would work. Abigail led the other children to cry witchcraft and cause the death or imprisonment of a great number of Salem's people.

Throughout the play Abigail attempted to lead Proctor into committing lechery. But, although Abigail did wish Elizabeth Proctor dead I do not believe she wished to cause the death of so many other people, she did not initiate the fear of witchcraft in Salem and only began accusing others to escape from blame herself. Abigail's initial explanation for the events in the woods was common dancing, it was only after Hale accused Abigail of calling the devil after hearing of the dancing that Abigail began accusing others.

Hale asked Abigail if she compacted with the devil, ' Did you call the devil last night? ' frightened for herself Abigail responded, ' I never called him! Tituba, Tituba ... ' this led to Tituba being accused and she, terrified for her life confessed herself to witchcraft, '(terrified, falls to her knees): No, no don't hang Tituba! I tell him I don't desire to work for him'. Tituba is asked to name others in league with the devil and seeing a chance to save herself she does so.

Abigail sees Tituba confess and be forgiven, ' You have confessed yourself to witchcraft, and that speaks a wish to come to heaven's side. And we will bless you, Tituba', seeing her chanced to be viewed as pure and innocent again Abigail begins accusing others of witchcraft, Betty follows suit, a snowball effect follows and mass hysteria captures Salem. Abigail saw that she had to damn others to save herself and once she had begun pretending it was too late to back out. Another influence in ' The Crucible' is the church.

The church perceives the conviction of the 'witches' as a chance to strengthen its power in the town. Parris the ministering Salem is greedy, constantly complaining about money, 'Parris came and for twenty week he preach nothin' but golden candlesticks until he had them'. At the commence of the play Abigail wishes Parris to speak with the people and tell them that witchcraft is not the cause of Betty's ailment, 'Uncle, the rumour of witchcraft is all about; I think you best go down and deny it yourself', 'they're speaking of witchcraft.

Betty's not witched. 'Parris is terrified that the people will believe in tales of witchcraft when his own nieces danced and one is unconscious, but as soon as Betty has recovered and Abigail has cleared her name Parris is eager to fall in with the tales of witchcraft to further his own position and power in Salem. Abigail is the evil influence in Salem, and the church, the main influence in people's lives in the 1600s is eager to use her evil lies to further its own ends.

Although Parris knows the events in the woods were not linked to witchcraft he does nothing to stop the belief of this in the town and even supports the belief, excommunicating the accused from the church. When John Proctor tries to bring the truth in front of the court Parris attempts to prevent the court from listening to what he has to say, protesting that Proctor is not a man to be believed, 'Beware this man, Your excellency, this man is mischief'.

Parris knows the accusations of witchcraft to be lies and is frightened for his own life and position when Proctor tries to expose the lies, '(in a sweat):



Excellence, you surely cannot think to let so vile a lie be spread in open court'. Parris wishes the hangings to occur as this way he can get rid of his enemies and increase his power simultaneously, as minister of the church he is incorruptible, ' The man's ordained, therefore the light of God is in him' and so in times of strife the people of Salem would turn to him for God's light.

In a Classical tragedy the tragic hero suffers greatly and as a result is able to see himself and the world more clearly. John Proctor suffers his town going mad around him, he is falsely accused of witchcraft by a girl who works in his own house, is convicted, imprisoned and tortured then sentenced to death. ' You have been tortured', ' Aye. They come for my life now'. Throughout the play John Proctor sees himself as blackened by his sins, he has committed lechery and does not forgive himself.