

The crucible coursework

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'The Crucible' is a play written by Arthur Miller in the 1950's. It is a play based on the Salem witch trials. It is fictionally retelling the events that occurred in the 17th century. It was written at the time of the McCarthy era, where many innocent people had been accused of communism. Senator Joseph McCarthy influenced society so that they feared communism by accusing various different people of it. McCarthy abused his power of sending fear into the society, and used it to his advantage. The Crucible focuses on the abuse of power in a theocratic society, where religion is supreme and controls everyone in the society. This then gave power to people who claimed and were said to be closest to God, such as ministers and reverends.

Status played a vital role in both the society and in the play, where the people with status controlled the society and manipulated everybody's minds, so that they believed that they were right. This was the principle of the theocratic society, where the people that never worshipped or followed God would be against him and therefore against the society and its laws. Then they would be punished, such as being hung. This is displayed in 'The Crucible' play many times, as many people are hung due to 'conjuring the devil.' This paranoia of 'the devil' in their society leads those with power to abuse it by continuing to falsely accuse people and making them lead to death, which is what McCarthyism was all about. This can be shown in 'The Crucible' as John Proctor (The main character) was lead to death. In this essay I will be focussing on how miller tries to convince the audience that John Proctor is the play's hero.

At the beginning of Act 1, Arthur Miller introduces John Proctor as 'a powerful and an even tempered man.' Miller gives us the sense that Proctor is a well respected man, who is feared in Salem. 'Proctor, respected and even feared in Salem.' This makes us feel that Proctor is noble and therefore is playing the role of a hero. Proctor has earned the respect of the village in the past. In the introduction of Proctor it is hinted that he is playing as the hero, 'a fool felt his foolishness instantly' which shows that Proctor will not stand foolishness in his presence and that he is a powerful person.

When the audience first see Proctor, in the conversation between Mary and Abigail, Proctor fills the atmosphere with fear. 'Mary warren, barely speak with embarrassment and fear.' This shows Proctor's authority. Miller shows fear by showing Proctor's dominance with his servant Mary Warren. 'Be you foolish Mary warren? Be you deaf? I forbid you leave the house.' Proctor treats Mary harshly and shows persistent dominance abruptly. This shows the power and influence Proctor has. Later, when Proctor is talking to Abigail, we are told about the affair he has had with her. This is a non-heroic act. Although Proctor has had an affair with Abigail, he feels guilty about it and says no to Abigail 'Abby, I never give you hope to wait for me.' This shows that Proctor does not want to pursue their relationship. Proctor is shown to still have love for his wife Elizabeth, as in the opening scene Abigail talks ill of her and in reply Proctor gives her a threat. 'Do you look for a whipping?'

In Act 2, Proctor is accused of not going to Church, and not being Christian. However Proctor replies that he has helped build the church. 'I nailed the roof upon the church, I hung the door.' Here Miller shows Proctor being a

good Christian and a righteous man as he has helped build the church.

Various characters in the play respect Proctor and they ask for his opinion and guidance. 'John-tell me, are we lost?' Here a character asks Proctor for guidance and relies on his answer.

In the same act Miller also shows us that proctor is a noble person and tries to put things right. He tries to gain forgiveness from his wife, but John's guilt and her coldness makes him feel unforgiven. 'You forget nothin, and you forgive nothin.' In the same conversation Elizabeth asks Proctor about why he lied to her about being alone with Abigail, Proctor replies it has been seven months since the affair. 'Were I a stone, I would have cracked for shame this seven month.' Here proctor is ashamed of himself. This shows that he is a hero as he is regretting and repenting on his sin.

In Act 2 Proctor risks his liberty for Elizabeth as he rips up the warrant for Elizabeth's arrest, and he is not worried about authority. This is heroic behaviour as he loves his wife, and is defending her by risking his liberty. This is shown later again, when Proctor forgets his own needs for Elizabeth. We are told that Proctor doesn't lie and tells things the way they are. He speaks his mind. 'I labour the earth from dawn of day to blink of night and I tell you true.' This shows that Proctor is a trust worthy person.

In Act 3, Proctor defends his friends and their wives as they are accused of conjuring the devil. This gets him into trouble as the court thinks that he is rebelling with their decision. This makes him heroic as he is getting himself into trouble for others. Later, Proctor tries to stop Giles Corey from getting into more trouble. 'Peace Giles, we'll prove it all now.' After trying to stop the

proceedings, Proctor finally admits to the affair with Abigail. 'I lusted, and there is a promise in such a sweat.' Here Proctor is telling the truth, just like a typical hero.

In Acts 2, 3 and 4, a lot of different people are accused for witchcraft. An allegation is also made against John Proctor for conjuring the devil. As a result of this he is put in jail. Proctor doesn't want his friends being accused of witchcraft, or conjuring the devil. This is why he confesses to something he didn't do and accepts total responsibility for it. Although Proctor confesses and signs on the paper, he doesn't want his good name put to shame and his children's name ruined. So this is why he confesses but rips up the paper he signed on. As a result Proctor is hung. Proctor made a sacrifice for his friends with his own freedom. This is why he can be known as the play's hero. Many people in Salem, especially Rebecca Nurse think he is noble and respect him a lot.

In conclusion I would say that 'The Crucible' is an excellent play, based on the events that occurred during the Salem witch trials. In general I think that it has been an interesting play to read about. This is why it has already been adapted to produce a film from it. Overall I think that Miller has used many techniques in trying to convince us that John Proctor is the play's hero. From showing us that Proctor is a sinner, having affairs, to a noble and kind hearted person, who risked his own life for his friends. I would partly agree with Miller's point of view, thinking John Proctor is the play's hero. My reasons for this are that a hero should be noble and honest and Proctor is. However Proctor is said to have committed sin and is a fraud as he has had an affair

with Abigail. Apart from this I would agree with Miller as Proctor has sacrificed his own freedom for the sake of his friends.