

# The conflict between parris and proctor in the crucible assignment

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**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*, is set in Salem village where an atmosphere of enmity and mistrust has been created through the conflicts and disagreements many villagers experience throughout the play. Many of these are caused by or, similar to the conflict between Parris and Proctor, are inflated by the many accusations of witchcraft occurring in the village. John Proctor is very rarely involved in village affairs, preferring to spend time on his farm than getting involved in politics. He does however still have conflicts with others in the village, especially Parris, whom he mistrusts greatly.

Proctor genuinely dislikes Parris and disagrees with all that he does. Proctor's hatred of Parris causes him to rarely attend church services on Sabbath Day and instead spends the day on his farm. The reason Proctor does not attend is that he disagrees with Parris' morals and motivations and cannot bare to listen to the "hellfire and damnation" that he preaches during his services. Proctor also refuses to have his youngest child baptised because he dreads the thought of Parris touching his baby, believing that there is no "light of god in that man", even though he is a minister.

Parris has glorious hopes for his church and his own future. Proctor believes that Parris is obsessed with material goods and "dreams cathedrals not clapboard meatin' houses", as shown by his replacement of the pewter candlesticks with gold ones. The pewter candlesticks were hand made by Francis Nurse, and therefore had great sentimental value, but Parris preached "nothing but golden candlesticks" until he had them replaced. Proctor is outraged that his hard work goes to waste on materialistic items such as new candlesticks that serve no other purpose but to look good.

Parris has a great influence on the witch-hunt and is often expressing his opinion about Proctor in an attempt to have him arrested. He contradicts many of Proctor's words in the courtroom when Proctor testifies that the women arrested have an "upright reputation", and therefore the accusations cannot be truthful. Parris refers to the bible to prove Proctor wrong, using the son of Adam and Eve, Cain, who killed his brother Able, as an example of an upright person who can perform horrible acts. This hatred and suspicion between Proctor and Parris contributes greatly to the tense and hostile environment that occurs during the play.

Proctor also conflicts with Thomas Putnam, whom he mistrusts because of his greed and willingness to hurt others in order gain land for himself, throughout the play. Putnam uses the crisis occurring in Salem Village as a discrete way to dispose of his neighbours, causing their land to go up for sale. This is one of the only ways that Putnam can lay his hands upon new land and is therefore merciless in his attempts at increasing his land ownership. Proctor has a heated argument with Putnam about the ownership of a piece of land, which both believe to be theirs.

Putnam soon threatens Proctor, proving his willingness to harm others for his own gain. Much of the tension felt between Proctor and his enemies is caused by the doubt he feels about himself, which in turn is felt as a result of his lechery. Hale preaches that the catastrophe occurring in Salem Village must have been because somebody has previously done a very bad thing and God was punishing the whole village as a result. This causes Proctor to

blame himself for the disaster. When Elizabeth is arrested for witchcraft, Proctor's inner loathing and guilt causes his temper to shorten.

His guilty conscience is the cause of many of the outbursts and arguments that Proctor is involved in, therefore contributing to the mistrust and anger that is overrunning the village. Abigail is the cause and instigator of the witch-hunt, and is therefore the person who inflates the inimical atmosphere in Salem Village. There is a great deal of tension between Abigail and Proctor due to their affair and this, in turn, causes hatred between Abigail and Elizabeth. Since the affair, there has been tension between Abigail and Proctor as a result of the regret and guilt he feels.

Proctor vows to "cut off [his] hand before [he'll] ever reach for [Abigail] again". Abigail is devastated that Proctor is now loyal to his "sickly" wife. Abigail holds a grudge against Goody Proctor because she had her fired and is now "blackening" her name in the village. Although the original accusations of witchcraft were made to avoid a whipping, Abigail sees an opportunity to eliminate her competition, Elizabeth. The awkwardness between Abigail and Elizabeth is increased to hatred when Abigail accuses Elizabeth of witchcraft and devises a plan to frame her.

When Elizabeth discovers that Abigail saw Mary Warren push the pin into her poppet and that she is willing to go to the extreme lengths of stabbing herself with a pin, her loathing of Abigail increases to the point where she exclaims that Abigail is "murder" and should be "ripped out of the world". The hatred between the two has stemmed directly from the affair between Abigail and Proctor, thus adding to the hostility of Salem Village. Although

Parris is the Minister of Salem Village, he is far from the most respected and decent man and has many grievances and conflicts during the play.

Parris' main conflicting personality is John Proctor but he has many other grievances that may seem insignificant to many, but to Parris, the threat that they provide appears enormous. The danger that Parris is concerned about most is the possibility that his reputation may be ruined. Parris is originally terrified that witchcraft may take place in his own home and when this is "proven" he attempts to go along with the accusations in an effort to steer the suspicion onto the women being accused.

He has "enemies" who can use the appearance of witchcraft in his home to their advantage, thus ruining his reputation and possibly losing him the position as minister. This position, according to Parris, is the most important occupation in the town and therefore he should be more highly paid because he is "a graduate of Harvard College" and not just a "preaching farmer". Parris complains about the lack of firewood provided for him but is told that he is provided with six pounds to buy wood each year. Parris, to the displeasure and disgust of most others, regards this as part of his salary.

Parris is a bitter and selfish man whom cares very little for anything but his own reputation, therefore earning him more enemies and hostility than allies. Ann Putnam also plays her part in the accusations of witchcraft in Salem Village. Her bitterness and grievances are caused by the death of her seven children within hours of their birth. Ann Putnam is worried that the devil will take her only living child away and in an attempt to ease the pain

of her deceased daughters slightly, accuses Rebecca Nurse of murdering of her babies.

This allows Ann to rest at ease as she is finally able to put the death of her children behind her, however, this accusation causes much hostility in the town because of Rebecca Nurse's saintly reputation. Many believe it impossible that Goody Nurse could "traffick" with the devil. The accusation causes an uproar over the arrests of these decent women, which then causes ninety one people to be arrested for signing a petition about the prisoners' reputations. Through the accusations of Goody Nurse, Elizabeth and Goody Corey, many more people have reasons to attempt to overthrow the court, thus creating more hatred, tension and enmity.

Thomas Putnam sees an opportunity during the Salem witch-hunt to acquire more land. He is willing to do anything in order to get this land, leading him to accuse many neighbours of witchcraft. This ruthless and merciless attitude also earns him many enemies, like Giles Corey, who pleads to the court to arrest Putnam for false accusations because he is "killing his neighbours for their land". Putnam believes his family to be the founders of Salem Village and therefore cares about his family name and reputation greatly.

Thomas Putnam had the previous minister of Salem Village "jailed for debts the man did not owe" because his brother in law had not won the position, proving his willingness to go to great lengths for his family and their reputation. He is a very embittered man also because his father, an extremely wealthy man, left nothing to Putnam in his will and Putnam did not

win in his attempt to break the will. Thomas Putnam, through all his failings, has become a very bitter man, causing there to be “ so many accusations ... in the handwriting of Thomas Putnam”.

Giles Corey provides comic relief throughout the play that often relieves the town of the tense atmosphere that develops. This comical attitude changes suddenly after Corey's wife is accused and arrested for practicing witchcraft. Giles feels guilty because he believes that the reason she was arrested was because he had told Hale that she had been reading strange books. To add to his feeling of guilt, Danforth arrests all those who signed the petition for Giles. Giles had promised those who signed that no trouble would come from it, causing him to feel responsible for their arrests.

This prompts an outburst from Corey and, as he is unwilling to name any of his other informants, Danforth arrests him. Giles Corey's argument with Danforth, brought upon by the accusation of his wife, is another example of the mistrusting and hateful environment that has been created in Salem Village. The accuser of Goody Corey is Walcott. Although he does not play a huge part in the play, he contributes to Giles Corey's argument and outbursts. If it were not for Walcott, who accuses Goody Corey of bewitching him so he cannot keep his pigs alive, then Giles Corey would not have needed to start a petition or support his case.

Walcott causes the arrests of the 91 petition signers, therefore betraying his many peers. There is an overwhelming feeling of mistrust, suspicion and enmity in Salem Village throughout the witch-hunt. This is brought upon by the betrayal between those who live in the village, the conflicts and

accusations of witch-craft. Although small incidents of unfaithfulness and feelings of tension were present in the village prior to the witch-hunt, it is ultimately the thought and accusations of witchcraft that brings mistrust, disloyalty and hostility upon Salem Village.