

# Struggle between the rights of freeman and the mass efforts to destroy

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



Richard Watts Jr. describes the striking similarity between the Salem witch trials and the McCarthy Era as a “struggle between the rights of freeman and the mass efforts to destroy them under the guise of defending decency.” All good writing conveys a strong message for the reader to take away, and effectively apply to his everyday life.

In the novel *The Crucible*, author Arthur Miller uses 17th Puritan society, and the Salem witch trials as a vehicle to make a strong political statement about the nature of conformity in an overly hysterical society, and the fundamental struggle man faces to retain moral righteousness in the face of a cruel world.

Written in the heart of the McCarthy Era, *The Crucible* makes sweeping statements about the nature of society during a crisis, and how people deal with the introduction of beliefs that differ from their traditional way of thought.

Claiming the people of his society are just as intolerant as the Puritans, Miller desperately pleads with them to learn from their mistakes, and not persecute others based on the nature of their beliefs.

Through the story of the Salem witch trials, Miller epitomizes the never-ending conflict between an individual and society as a continuous struggle to retain one's moral righteousness, and not give in to illogical societal demands.

Through the actions of the court officials, the girls, and the Christ figures, Miller effectively points out the manner in which society persecutes those who refuse to conform in their ways of thinking, and the nature of the challenging test individuals are forced to make in such a conflict. The society

in Salem also demands conformity from the court system, a place where those who dare to be different are tried.

At least on face, it appears that the court simply wants those people who challenge society to be brought to justice. However, during the Salem witch trials, the court officials, who ironically are the one group in society who are single-handedly responsible for administering justice fairly, act simply out of self-interest, striving only to appease the community, and gain fame.

Relaying on nothing more than spectral evidence, Danforth and the other court officials condemn those who refuse to conform to society's beliefs.

Under the guise of religious duty, Danforth strives solely to appease the community, and benefit his standing in society. He believes that " a person is either with the court or he must be counted against it. " When one does not conform to the norms of society and challenges it, he is condemned to die. For example, upon discovering that John Proctor does " not come to church" on Sundays, he automatically assumes that Proctor must be guilty, and must be hanged. He appears motivated solely by the desire to gain fame.

For example, in the final act of the play right before the hanging, Reverend Hale tries to convince Danforth to postpone the hanging. Danforth knows that " the village expects to see them die this morning" and cannot postpone the event because " postponement now speaks a floundering on my [Danforth's] part. " Danforth's actions show that he not only acts out of self motivation and the desire to appease society, but also fails the to overcome his conflict with society.

Reverend John Hale, on the other hand, also appointed to work with the court during the witch trials, makes his decisions based on his own morals instead of what society prefers. Hale, an expert on witch trials and a “stranger” in Salem finds “it difficult to draw a clear opinion on them that come accused before court.” Being a minister of the Lord, Hale judges others based on clear evidence and does not “dare [to] take a life without proof.” His morals prevent him from just simply doing what will appeal to society.

Even though he desires to be “allied with the best minds in Europe- kings, philosophers, scientists, and ecclesiasts of all churches,” he, unlike Danforth and the court officials, refuses to let his personal ambition come in the way of administering justice fairly. He even rejects his religious doctrine in the name of justice, claiming that “life... life is God’s most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it.” Unlike Danforth and his selfish motivation, Reverend Hale refuses to conform to what society dictates, clinging on to his own moral beliefs.