

Theme of religion in 'the crucible' essay sample



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Puritanism revolves around the ideology of honest prayer and hard work. -
Play isn't based on the religious aspect of the play, but the lack of it. Puritans were very afraid of hell and the more sins they committed, the closer to hell they were.

Relates to many issues at the time, the McCarthy era reflecting to the
theocracy in Salem Historical Background

Christians in America tried to convert native Americans and failed as the
Indians became violent and resentful of their presence.

Christians preferred to take land from the natives than fellow Christians. The
Crucible is set in a theocratic society, in which the church and the state are
one. Because of the theocratic nature of the society, moral laws and state
laws are one and the same: sin and the status of an individual's soul are
matters of public concern. In Salem, everything and everyone belongs to
either God or the devil.

Important Religious Characters

Reverend Parris Minister of Salem, although he is a theological man he is
obsessed with the way he is perceived, his image is also dependent on his
niece Abigail and daughter Betty. Reverend Hale Minister from Beverly,
called in Act One to confirm or deny the presence of witchcraft in Salem. He
becomes increasingly worried throughout the play at the amount of
accusations put forward, and at the end of Act Three quits the court because
of the corruption of the girls accusing innocent people of witchcraft. John
Proctor somewhat the hero of the play. Although he is seen as someone who
shuns the workings of Parris' church and has committed lechery. he is an

important reminder of how religion can leave someone. Despite his prideful ways, John Proctor describes himself as a “ sinner.”

He has cheated on his wife, and he is loath to admit the crime to anyone else. There are moments when his anger and disgust towards himself burst forth, such as in the climactic moment when he exclaims to Judge Danforth: “ I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours.” Proctor is the best example of integrity. In a private conversation with his wife about whether he should confess and save his life he says, “ I think it is honest, I think so. I am no saint. Let Rebecca go like a saint; for me it is a fraud.” This shows his genuine struggle with himself to do what is honest.

Rebecca Nurse She is the saintly character of the play. Whereas John Proctor has many flaws, Rebecca seems angelic. She is a nurturing soul, as seen when she tries to comfort the sick and the fearful during Act One. She is a grandmother who exhibits "compassion throughout the play. She is a symbol of the wrongly convicted. This web of characteristics eventually leads to the scarcity of morally strong people . Abigail Williams a model of sin in the play, committed adultery and has dabbled in witchcraft. The important thing to remember is that the play is not demonstrating how Puritans dealt with witchcraft in their religion, but to see how the lack of religion corrupts the church. People such as Abigail are put into positions of trust and authority, even when they admit to committing sin. Abigail is the reminder of how the church was turned on its head in the Salem witch trials.

Religion in the play

Act 1

*Parris has discovered the girls dancing, a mortal sin in the Puritan way of life.

*Parris turns to Abigail, who admits Ruth and Tituba conjured spirits, but insists she wasn't involved.

*Reverend Hale enters carrying a stack of religious books about witchcraft. He seems eager to flex his authority. (See theme of authority) *Troubled, Hale asks Abigail if she conjured the devil. Abigail says Tituba did.

*Tituba responds that Abigail begged her to conjure. But Abigail says Tituba often " sends her spirit out" and makes Abigail laugh at prayer in church, another great sin in Puritan times.

*Tituba identifies Sarah Good and Mrs. Osburn as other witches. Mrs. Putnam shouts that she knew it! Osburn was the midwife at the births of three of her dead babies. Superstition was a strong feature in religion at the time (delusional)

Act 2

*Eight days later, John Proctor returns home late from planting the fields. He and Elizabeth talk about the coming crop as he eats the dinner she prepared for him. A sense of separation exists between them. Proctor asks his wife what's wrong.

She says he was out so late she thought he might have gone into Salem. (this occurs because of Abigail and John's relationship)

explains: judges have been sent up from Boston to try people for witchcraft.

*Hale asks some questions about the " Christian character" of the house. He

asks why the Proctors don't often go to church, and why only two of their three sons are baptized. Proctor explains he doesn't see the "light of God" in Parris. Hale says that such a thing is not for Proctor to decide: Parris is an ordained minister, therefore he has the "light of God." Hale also asks Proctor to recite the ten commandments. Proctor gets nine of ten, forgetting the one against adultery. The missed commandment troubles Hale, and he gets up to go. This shows his denial at the situation. *Giles Corey and Francis Nurse appear in Proctor's doorway with the news that their "wives, Martha and Rebecca, have been charged and imprisoned. *Ezekiel Cheever and Marshal Herrick appear at the Proctors' door with an arrest warrant for Elizabeth.

Act 3

*Offstage, Judge Hathorne and Deputy Governor Danforth question Martha Corey. Giles Corey suddenly shouts that he has evidence that Thomas Putnam is using the trials to get more land. Corey is dragged from the courtroom. (Corey is the character that will not name names in the play)

*Furious, Proctor calls Abigail a whore. Proctor admits his affair with Abigail and says Elizabeth dismissed her because of it. Abigail denies it, but Proctor says he would not soil his own honor for no reason.

*Danforth sends for Elizabeth, whom Proctor says will never lie.

Act Four

*In a cell in the Salem prison a few months later, Sarah Good and Tituba think that the devil has come to take them to Barbados. But it's just Marshal Herrick, come to move them to a different cell. Belief in the devil seems stronger than God at this point. *Parris enters. To Danforth and Hathorne's

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questions about Hale, he answers that Hale has returned to try to convince those convicted of witchcraft to confess their crimes and save their lives.

Danforth is surprised and pleased. Although this is a lie, and lying is a mortal sin, Parris accepts it. This is a highlight of how religion has been corrupted then thrown out.

*Danforth refuses to postpone the executions. He does say, however, that he's willing to work until dawn to convince one of the convicted to confess, since a confession would make those who don't confess look like liars. Lying is another sin (you see the pattern, you can't breathe without committing a sin)

* Hale begs Elizabeth to convince Proctor to lie, to give a false confession, in order to save himself. He says that life is God's great gift, and no belief or religion should be followed if it harms life.

*Proctor is brought from his cell and the others leave so he can spend some time alone with Elizabeth. She tells him that hundreds have confessed, though Rebecca has not.

*Danforth says if the confession is a lie, then it is no confession at all. Proctor rips the confession to pieces. Danforth orders Herrick to take Proctor to the gallows. Parris and Hale beg Elizabeth to speak to Proctor. But she says Proctor has his goodness back now, and refuses.