

# The scarlet letter and the crucible – comparison of proctor and dimmesdale essay ...

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



The decisions made by the character John Proctor, in *The Crucible*, and by Arthur Dimmesdale, in *The Scarlet Letter*, were very much alike. Throughout the entirety of both books, the similarities and differences between these two male characters, and the environments in which they lived, seemed to reflect back and forth quite generously. Also, the societies in which John Proctor and Arthur Dimmesdale lived in have a fair amount of topics that can be compared and contrasted together to further backup the fact that these men, despite their differences, were very similar.

Of the similarities between Proctor and Dimmesdale throughout the book the reader is told that these two men are relatively the same age, and living in approximately the same time period, the 1600s. In each Puritan society both men are well respected because of their role in the community. Dimmesdale is a well-known, and respected reverend, and Proctor is a well-respected farmer. Both men are involved with the church, however they both question their role in the theocracy in which they live. Dimmesdale as the reverend, or leader of the theocracy, questions his ability to be the leader of all of the people of the community. He could not see himself, a sinner under the eyes of God, leading a religion whose morals and standards were based upon not sinning. John Proctor on the other hand, rarely went to church, and was even criticized for his choice not to attend masses. Both men also hid their secret, which also is one and the same; they both have committed the crime of adultery. However, each man has concealed his sin, which for one person or another leads to death. John Proctor's silence of his crime led to the persecution and death many innocent men and women.

If, in the beginning, he had admitted his sin he would have shown Abigail Williams to be a liar. Then there would be no confusion, and her accusations would have been deemed incredible. Instead, John kept quiet in order to keep his name clean, and many innocent people died due to Abigail's claims. "...He hesitates to expose Abigail as a fraud because he worries that his secret will be revealed and his good name ruined." (Ward). Arthur Dimmesdale also did not speak of his sin with Hester Prynne, which ultimately resulted in his own death. Dimmesdale's silence led to an internal conflict with himself over the guilt that he felt from not admitting to his wrongdoing. This internal conflict leads to intense flagellations, and mental health problems, and because of these problems, his death comes toward the end of the story. Both men also died for what they believed. Dimmesdale's actions caused confusion as well; it caused confusion between Pearl and his followers. If he had admitted his crime, Pearl would not be deprived of the knowledge of who her father was.

Also, if his followers knew about his act of adultery, they would be in a great state of confusion, not knowing to believe in their reverend, their leader, and forgive him, or to get rid of him. Dimmesdale believed that his actions with Hester were not sinful, so he spoke to the community and announced his actions. He felt that in speaking of his actions he would be lifted from the guilt of not taking any fault and he 'cleaned his slate' in the eyes of God, and now his soul would not be condemned. John Proctor died because he did not want to live knowing that his soul was condemned, yet he'd rather die with a clean soul and a clean name.

Among the many similarities between Arthur Dimmesdale and John Proctor, there are a few differences. One main difference is how Arthur is the reverend of the community, and John rarely attends masses. Also, the popularity change between Dimmesdale and Proctor is very clear. In the different books, the change of popularity was opposite. After adultery was committed in *The Scarlet Letter*, Dimmesdale and Hester's popularity went up. Because of his love and secret adoration of Hester and Pearl, Dimmesdale give much stronger sermons that secretly represent, or are directed to his two loves, Pearl and Hester. Because of the stronger sermons, more people were inspired and they took more to Dimmesdale, and liked him more for them. Hester started to work on her sewing skills more and she became well known for them. On the other hand, however, John and Abigail's popularity diminished.

After John was questioned in court and he told of his sins and his wife lied to try to save his name, when he actually had told the truth, he was deemed as a liar. His popularity went down because of this. After Abigail was taken for a fraud, she became unpopular, left town, and turned to prostitution. Also, it can be assumed that because of Abigail's young age, John Proctor might have taken advantage of her, and she might not have really knew what was going on. Proctor and Abigail was purely lust, as for Hester and Dimmesdale was purely love. Hester and Dimmesdale were completely consensual in the action; they both agreed in the action that they performed, no matter how much trouble could come out of it.

Differences and similarities in the society in which John Proctor and Arthur Dimmesdale live are another important part of this romance novel. Firstly the diversity in the society is amazing from Arthur's society to John's society. It is clear that each was a Puritan society set in the 1600s in Salem, Massachusetts. It is very noticeable, however, that in *The Crucible*, everyone is strictly Puritan, and one would even be criticized if he or she were not. In *The Scarlet Letter*, most of the people are Puritan, yet if one was not, whatever religious affiliations they had were not looked down upon or criticized. There were actually seemingly curious about other religions.

" It [the market] was already thronged with the craftsmen and other plebeian inhabitants of the town, in considerable numbers; among whom, likewise, were many rough figures, whose attire of deer-skins marked them as belonging to some of the forest settlements, which surrounded the little metropolis of the colony."(Hawthorne 225).

This excerpt describes the other people in the town at this festive time. Pearl also comments on the many new faces, " But, see, mother, how many faces of strange people, and Indians among them, and sailors!" (Hawthorne 228). This shows how this is no discrimination against the new people in the community, they are actually curious about the attire of the newcomers, especially the sailors. They wear clothing that was very different than the society's clothing, which revealed no skin, aside from the hands and face. Both societies had the same views of clothing, and how little skin it should reveal. Also a woman's hair was only to be seen by her husband, as it was seen as her beauty and her youth. The excerpt, "...She took off the formal

cap that confined her hair; and down it fell upon her shoulders, dark and rich, with at once a shadow and a light in its abundance, and imparting the charm of softness to her features.”(Hawthorne 201), describes the beauty that the hair gives the woman, and how it is sacred for only the husband to see.

Clearly, there is a great relationship between differences and similarities in this romance novel. The actions of the two main male characters are extremely similar. There are also some differences that enable the reader to differentiate the characters. The societies in which these two men live in are also quite alike, yet they do have their differences. Even though these two men, Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale and John Proctor, the actions they make, and the societies they live in are quite similar, they are in fact quite different and unique.

#### Works Cited

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