

John proctor essay sample



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In 1692 in the little town of Salem, Massachusetts tragic events took place that would alter this miniscule town forever (Conforti par. 1). Specifically, the witch trials that spring made it one of the most famous towns in American History. Being accused of witchcraft, many people met their deaths and were hung. The witch trials were started and ended by the actions of one man, John Proctor. This is illustrated in *The Crucible*, a book written to depict the events of these trials. It would seem that John Proctor would be the tragic hero stopping the witch trials. A tragic hero is someone who is not perfect but yet has reputable standing as did Proctor. To be considered a tragic hero one would also have to have a flaw, leading to one's own demise, but the tragic fate is not necessarily deserved. (Straker par. 1). However, his flaws lead him to deserve his fate. He died to save others and to stop the witch trials which he had caused by his own wrong doing (Miller 1137). Despite the respect John Proctor had as well as his his flaws, which ignited the flame of the witch trials, he is not a tragic hero because he is innately good. To start, Proctor was a man that was well respected in the community, but his flaw of lust broke the stronghold of his marriage and what happened would incite the town's loss of sanity and thus began the witch trials.

John Proctor was married to Elizabeth Proctor and was a respected man and was very influential in the village (Miller 1245). *The Crucible* described him as, " The kind of man-powerful body, even tempered, and not easily led" (Miller 1245). However, a little later, *The Crucible*, states, " Proctor, respected and even feared in Salem, has come to regard himself as a fraud" (Miller 1245). Why? To explain, he and seventeen year old Abigail Williams had an affair. He, feeling like a fraud illustrates the fact that perhaps Proctor

didn't have as much pride as one would think. Abigail was wholly convinced John loved her and seemed as if she would not take no for answer.

Additionally, Abigail wanted to then replace his wife, so she accused her of being a witch to get her out of the way (Miller 1250). This began the witch trials where a snowball effect caused many innocent people to be accused of witchcraft as well. Furthermore, in Act III of *The Crucible*, when Elizabeth was jailed, Proctor had his servant testify to the court that the Abigail and the other girls were only pretending to be afflicted by spirits.

He then submitted a deposition signed by ninety-one land-owning farmers attesting to the good characters of Elizabeth because of how respected they both were in the community. When Abigail and the girls are brought in they tell the court that Mary, the servant of Proctor is lying. Now, the only thing that Proctor had left to do to try and save his wife was to admit to the affair he had had. Even though his good name would be ruined, he loved his wife and was innately good. Therefore, he admitted to the affair and the told them how Abigail wanted to get rid of Elizabeth. He admits to the court, “ A man may think God sleeps, but God sees everything, I know it now. I beg you, sir, I beg you, see her what she is. She thinks to dance with me on my wife's grave!” (Miller 110). He told the court to ask his wife who could not lie. However, when called in she lied to save her husband before John could tell her he had admitted to it.

After, all the girls pretended to be afflicted and Mary being influenced by the hysteria of the girls, and told the court Proctor works with the devil, and he was arrested. Moreover, Proctor was told he was supposed to confess to working with the devil or hang. Judge Danforth and Reverenced Hale tried to

get Elizabeth to tell him to confess after Proctor kept refusing to do so, after hearing his confession would go on the church door and seeing one of his dear friends Rebecca look at him in shame if he were to admit to witchcraft (Miller 1139-141). Additionally, Danforth had asked John to reveal names of other people who had done the devil's work, but he refused to tell as well. However, Elizabeth would not talk to him telling them, "“ He have goodness now, God forbid I take it from him”" (Miller 145). After admitting what he had done Elizabeth was going to let him do what he thought was right. The only way to stop what was going on is that if Proctor denied witchcraft and was hung to save people.

He chose the path for goodness after all, but no sympathy should be felt for him because after all, his doing had ignited the witchcraft. He did deserve to be hung, but being hung helped stop Salem being reared toward total Bedlam. Being a person of reputable standing, people would start to question the court if he was hung. Furthermore, after his execution, it came to be that the theocracy of Massachusetts faced defeat (Miller Echoes down the corridor). As one can see, Proctor was a good person, dying to save other people and trying to save his wife, who from the start, did nothing wrong. He deserved his fate though, being unfaithful to his wife and causing innocent people to be killed. If he never had an affair with Abigail, she wouldn't have tried to replace his wife. He is good, but made a wrong decision that spun out of control and the only way for the fire to burn out was to be hung and refuse to confess. John Proctor struggled to put his own issues aside, but he is not a tragic hero because he was able to rise above his own concerns to save and amend others.