

The crucible and mccarthyism



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The Crucible and McCarthyism Arthur Miller lived through the Red Scare, also known as McCarthyism. After living through this era and being one of the accused communists Miller wrote the book titled The Crucible in 1952. This book told the story of the Salem witch trials with some modifications to make it more relevant to the current situation. The book ultimately became an allegory devoted solely to McCarthyism. In The Crucible uses situations such as the actual trials, direct comparisons from the characters in the book to those that participated in the McCarthy trials and, the atmosphere of the two events were almost identical.

The trials in the Red Scare were designed to prosecute communists that were supposedly "invading" America. In these trials all those who were accused were considered "guilty until proven innocent" opposed to the traditional American Court belief of "innocent until proven guilty". In addition the Red Scare courts used evidence that was all based on witnesses and rumors. The judges for the Supreme Court would maintain their power if the accused were found guilty. For the Salem witch trials all of the accused of witch-craft were "guilty until confession" unless they accused someone else of making them "conjure spirits".

The majority of the evidence used in the Salem witch trials was "specter evidence" which was spiritual evidence that only the afflicted and the witches could see. The judges of the witch-craft trials would benefit greatly if the accused was found guilty. The reasoning and practices of both trials are almost identical and leaves little room for doubt that they are not related. Those involved in the McCarthy trials are almost directly represented in The

Crucible. Arthur Miller portrays himself as John Proctor. Both are accused and brought before the court and refuse to plead guilty or accuse others.

McCarthy is represented as Reverend Parris. They both make accusations in order to stay in power and make themselves look like a hero. HUAC is shown as the judges from the court. Both do not have any defined limitation of power and both of their primary concern is to keep the power in the government/court. The atmosphere of both The Crucible and the McCarthy era was one of hysteria. The majority of the people of Salem knew nothing better than what they were told by the court and by the church. When word got out that witch-craft might be occurring in Salem people panicked.

The same principles applied to Americans during the 1940's. Everyone turned to the government for the truth and protection. When the Cold War began and rumors started that communists were attempting to "invade" America people panicked. Both Salem and America were in states of hysteria and listened to whoever could provide explanations and someone to blame. Arthur Miller used The Crucible as an allegory by using similarities in trials, direct comparisons of characters to their real life counterparts, and recreating the atmosphere of panic and hysteria.