

# The crucible: characters and act i



Reverend Parris the minister of Salem, Massachusetts; the witch scare began with his daughter's mysterious illness Betty Parris 10 years old; Rev. Parris' daughter; one of the initial accusers Tituba the Parris' slave from Barbados Abigail Williams Parris' niece and chief among the accusers; formerly a servant in the Proctor household Susanna Walcott accused of witchcraft Mrs. Ann Putnam bitter woman who sides with the accusers; mother of Ruth; 7 children of hers have died Thomas Putnam enemy of Rev. Parris; always eyeing land Mercy Lewis the Putnam's servant; one of the accusers; friend of Abigail Mary Warren The Proctor's servant; one of the accusers; replaced Abigail John Proctor prominent landholder and farmer in Salem; had affair with Abigail; later taken to jail for witchcraft Rebecca Nurse prominent citizen of Salem; famous for her virtue and charity; later hung for witchcraft Giles Corey prominent landholder in Salem; married to Martha; arrested for withholding evidence Reverend John Hale another minister from Beverly, Mass.; famous for his study of witchcraft and witches Elizabeth Proctor John's wife; pregnant while John in jail; supposedly never lies but did to try to save her husband Francis Nurse Rebecca's husband; argues over land with Putnam Ezekiel Cheever town constable Marshal Herrick town jailer; often drunk Judge Hawthorne the inflexible judge in the witch trials; distant ancestor of Nathaniel Hawthorne Deputy Governor Danforth presiding officer of the court Sarah Good one of the condemned Hopkins a guard in the jail

Act I: What purpose does the overture serve? To introduce the characters and also compare the Puritans and the 1950's America

Act I: What does the "spareness" of the Puritan setting reveal about the lives of the townspeople of Salem? The Puritans lived simple lives with no fancy furniture

Act I: What Puritan primary fear is apparent in the philosophy, "In unity still lay the best

promise of safety"? Everyone is the same; if someone were to be different they were seen as working with the devil in some way

Act I: Explain the significance of the forest to the Puritans. Dangerous; the Native Americans often killed animals in there and were scared of interacting with them

Act I: Explain the irony in the Puritans' pilgrimage to Salem to escape persecution. They left England to gain freedom; but in the new world they persecuted all those who were different; no freedom

Act I: When Abigail enters, she is described as "a strikingly beautiful girl... with an endless capacity for dissembling." What does the phrase "endless capacity for dissembling" suggest? She lies all the time and she is not trustworthy whatsoever

Act I: When Susanna exits, Abigail makes a confession to Parris, which she recants near the end of Act I. What is her confession, and why does she change her mind? She confesses that there is no witchcraft. All she did was dance in the woods. Later Tituba is blamed for bewitching the girls.

Act I: Based on his words, what seems to be Parris' motivation for inadvertently causing the hysteria? His only concern is for keeping his reputation clean.

Act I: Explain the relationship between Abigail and Elizabeth Proctor. Elizabeth fired Abigail for not doing her job very well and Abigail wanted to kill Elizabeth so she can have John all to herself.

Act I: What are the Putnam's motivations for his actions in Salem? Thomas acts out of greed; argues over land with Proctors

Act I: Explain the dramatic irony when Parris says, "I know that you- you least of all, Thomas, would ever wish so disastrous a charge laid upon me." Putnam wants to ruin Parris; but Parris believes that he is his main support guy

Act I: What role did Ann Putnam play in the dancing in the forest? She asked her daughter, Ruth, to conjure the spirits of her seven dead children.

Act I: Explain briefly how Putnam coerces Parris to declare

witchcraft. The congregation will love him if he destroys the Devil in Salem; again, trying to save his reputation

Act I: What does Betty's information about dancing in the forest reveal about Abigail's true motivation? Abigail drank chicken's blood to try to murder Elizabeth Proctor

Act I: What does the threat of a "pointy reckoning" reveal about Abigail's true nature? Abigail physically threatens the other girls; we learn that she is the driving force of plot and hysteria

Act I: What does Miller mean by: "A Proctor is always marked for calumny"? Proctor openly goes against the status quo; society protects themselves from people like him by making up stories about him

Act I: Describe Mary Warren's personality. Submissive; wants to tell the truth; often compared to a mouse

Act I: Contrast Proctor's verbal excuse about why he has come to Parris' house with what his actions indicate may be his true motivation for coming. Proctor says he is just seeing what Parris is up too but he doesn't talk to anyone but Abigail; his really only came to talk to her

Act I: Explain Proctor and Abigail's relationship. Had an affair while Abigail was working for the Proctors.

Act I: What does Abigail say that leads Parris, Putnam, and Mrs. Putnam to believe Betty is bewitched? Abigail tells them that Betty screamed because she heard the church singing

Act I: Describe Rebecca Nurse physically and by reputation. 72 years old; highly regarded in society

Act I: What three grudges could the Putnam's have against the Nurses? Nurses have 300 acres of land-Putnam believes that some of the land is rightfully his own. The Nurse's had been some of the people who kept Putnam's relative from getting the minister position

Act I: In Proctor's argument with Rev. Parris, the theme of authority arises. What are the two points of view? Parris: He is the final authority on what is good for the soul and what isn't

Proctor: Individual heart and conscience are his authority  
Act I: Describe Giles Corey both physically and personally. 83 years old; muscular; crank and nuisance but also innocent and brave  
Act I: What is Rebecca's solution to Betty's and Ruth's ailments, and why does this solution anger Ann Putnam? Rebecca had 11 kids with 26 grand-kids; she says that they will stop playing when they get tired; Ann has lost 7 children and takes Rebecca's phrase as an insult  
Act I: What is Reverend Hale's motivation? Dedicated his whole life to studying and searching for witches and is determined to find one  
Act I: In terms of indirect characterization, why is it significant that Hales recognizes one of the characters by reputation? He says Rebecca Nurse is as a good soul should be; shows how he reputation is based on her goodness  
Act I: What question does Giles ask Hales that shows his comical, innocent personality? Giles asks Hale why his wife reads "strange books"; he is opening persecution for his wife Martha  
Act I: What effect does Miller create by lowering the curtain for this act during the girls' cries of witchcraft? Leaves us thinking that everyone is a suspect  
Act I: What motivates Abby and Betty to begin denouncing everyone? Abby is redeeming herself through confession; Betty is caught up in the hysteria of the situation and following Abby's lead  
Who was in the forest? Tituba, Abigail, Betty, Mercy, Mary, Ruth  
What really went down in the woods? Tituba was performing traditional Barbados rituals; Ann Putnam told Ruth to conjure up her dead siblings; Abigail wanted to ask Tituba for help with getting rid of Elizabeth; the girls danced and chanted to Barbados culture; Abby drank chicken blood to try to kill Elizabeth; Mercy Lewis was naked at some point  
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