

The crucible- fear
causes irrationality



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Fear Causes Irrationality A government requires very delicate balances; the slightest disturbance will cause it to come crashing down. For example, governments must have a balance between their values and their desire to make things happen. In 1933 Germany's balance was disrupted when Adolf Hitler became chancellor. He tipped the scale away from values and morals, and eventually led to the collapse of a previously great country. Examples can be found throughout history of governments and leaders falling, after their balances are tipped.

In Salem, 1692, the balance between fear and rationality was disrupted, causing the collapse of the Salem court and its leaders. In his play, *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller exhibits how fear causes irrationality and can destroy the credibility of a government through the fall of the Salem court during the witch hysteria. Fear of the Devil, and those who compacted with him, effect each person either directly or indirectly in *The Crucible*, whether or not they believed in the trials. Those who do not support the court are affected indirectly by the people around them, who are in hysterics and accusing innocent people of witchcraft.

John Proctor is disgusted with the religious leaders who are directing the witch trials. Proctor is expressing his thoughts of corruption among them when he exclaims (Miller 1212), " God is dead! " Proctor is denouncing the church leaders, saying that God is absent, or dead, in their minds and lives. The quote exhibits how the witch trials have affected Proctor. They have caused him to lose what little respect he had for characters affiliated with both the court and the church, such as Hawthorne, Danforth, and especially Paris.

The lives of most people in Salem are being monopolized by the fear of witches, and those who are not afraid of the witches are afraid of being accused of witchcraft. Salem is being plagued by fear; this fear is causing the people of Salem to act irrationally and illogically. At the start of *The Crucible* Betty Paris is very ill, and Abigail is about to be accused of cursing her in the woods. After Tituba confesses to witchcraft Abigail panics and does the same by proclaiming (1156), I want to open myself! . . . I want the light of God, I want the sweet love of Jesus!

I danced for the Devil; I saw him, I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss His hand. I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil! If a person in Salem is accused of witchcraft and is found guilty they will be hanged. Abigail, in an effort to save herself and place blame upon another's shoulders, admits to compacting with the Devil and accuses other women of the same. Tituba's confession shows Abigail a way to save herself from accusations, and Abigail's example leads the other girls to chime in.

It is illogical that by admitting to witchcraft and accusing others Abigail is exonerated of her crimes. It is Abigail's fear of being punished for a crime she did not commit that drives her to act illogically, by confessing to the crime of witchcraft. The men's fear of the Devil leads the court to trust Abigail and the other girls, even though they are admitting to the most heinous of crimes. Due to its fear the court is irrationally being lead by a band of scared young girls. Irrational and rash decisions of the Salem court cause its loss of credibility, among important members of the community, and its eventual collapse.

Elizabeth Proctor was taken from her home with very little, substantial evidence against her, besides an accusation by Abigail. Proctor, Nurse, and Giles's wives are arrested in a similar way. They go to the court to present a defense for them. While they are pleading their wives innocence, Hawthorne announces, " You must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between. This is a sharp time, now, a precise time," (1194). The members of the court believe it is a very delicate time in Salem and they need all people to support them to weed out the Devil.

Hawthorne is claiming that by providing a defense the men are attacking the court. This illogical reasoning of the court causes the three men of high status to lose all faith in it. At this point during Miller's play people begin to realize the court is flawed; they see the hysteria has caused more harm to the community than good. This marks the lowest point of the court. The irrational and illogical court no longer is doing its duty to protect its people, but rather it is harming them. Miller explains through his play, *The Crucible*, how fear spread like a plague during the witch hysteria of 1692.

People began to act irrationally due to their fears; this irrationality and illogical reasoning spread through Salem, even into the governing court. The witch hysteria eventually leads to the crash the court in Salem. Fear of the Devil lights a fire of irrationality and hysteria in Salem that rages throughout the town causing chaos and consuming the governing body until all that is left is ash. Works Cited Miller, Arthur. " *The Crucible* ." 2012. Prentice Hall Literature: The American Experience. Ed, Grand, Wiggins. Boston: Person Lit. 1123-213. Print

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