

"the crucible" by
arthur miller. act 4
analysis. "what is
your final impression
o...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ The crucible” by Arthur Miller. Act 4 analysis. “ What is your final impression of Proctor?” Essay Sample

At the end of Act four in Arthur Miller’s allegorical tale, ‘ The crucible’, the play reaches its final and conclusive climax. John Proctor is forced by his conscience, his reason and the authority to reach a decision. On this decision balances his life, his reputation and his soul. The audience and Proctor’s own conscience will either brand him a coward or a hero depending on this single choice. Ultimately, he chooses the path of the hero. However, John Proctor is a tragic hero, who until that point in the play has carried with him a horrid sin, which coupled with his morality led to his downfall. The final impression of Proctor is an inherently conflicting image. On one hand he is seen as a hero, because he sacrificed his life selflessly, and on the other hand, a sinner, because he committed a moral crime.

One reason why Proctor may be considered a hero is because he shows the common and accepted characteristics of a hero. These characteristics include tenacity in the face of danger and fear, which is shown in act four by the way Herrick describes him in a jail cell, “ He sits like some great bird, you’d not know he lived except he will take food from time to time”. This instance in the play illustrates the passive, stubborn courage that Proctor’s character encompasses. Another is honesty, which is apparent in the conversation between Proctor and his wife in Act two, “ I wilted and like a Christian, I confessed”.

Proctor’s morality and righteousness are also evident in the play’s entirety; for example, his abstinence from further lust for Abigail in the beginning of

the play, " No, no Abby that's done with," and his restraint from confession in order to save the reputation of his friends. Proctor's traits are also embellished with his independence, intelligence and quick wits all of which are demonstrated in his interaction with other characters. His independence and honesty is evident when Proctor claims, " I may speak my heart, I think." Proctor's charisma, quick witted intelligence, his " aura of strength" and fearful independence are all revealed as soon as he enters the play, " I'll show you a great doing on your arse," and Mercy Lewis's reaction, "(both afraid of him and strangely titillated.)". These qualities help Proctor eventually overcome his guilt, his fears and to become a hero in the eyes of the audience.

Even though Proctor displays some of the commonly attributed characteristics of a hero, he still can not be considered a saint; for he also shows characteristics which are associated with sinners. Miller, by using a mix of both sinful and saintly traits, has created a protagonist who is flawed and is therefore equal to an ordinary human being. This ordinariness elevates Proctor's final hero status at the conclusion of the play in many ways. As Proctor does not begin the play as a perfect individual, the end result where he finds goodness in himself and then is hanged for showing defiance and upholding his moral values produces sympathy and admiration from the audience. The audience empathizes with the protagonist's suffering and applauds his courage and heroism as they are able to relate to Proctor as an ordinary person, who dares to contradict a hysterical society.

Proctor can also be considered a tragic hero whose downfall is a result of his erroneous application of judgment. His most obvious folly is his adultery with <https://assignbuster.com/the-crucible-by-arthur-miller-act-4-analysis-what-is-your-final-impression-of-proctor-essay-sample/>

Abigail, which occurred before the commencement of the play. Through out the play Proctor fights a perpetual inner battle as a consequence of this incident. Proctor's guilt, contrition and the hope of exposing Abigail leads him to reveal his sinful act to the court, " It is a whore," " God help me, I lusted." In doing so Proctor has finally rid himself of his ingrained guilt and hypocrisy and gains some reprieve from his conscience. His confession also reveals his resoluteness and willingness to not only risk his name to save his wife but also to put a stop to the growing hysteria. This is reinforced in the scene in which Proctor is offered his wife's bail exchange for the accusation of Abigail to stop. Here, Proctor is given a choice, to either leave the case with a wife or to continue it in order to save his friends thereby risking the revelation of his lechery. He replies, " I think I, I can not...these are my friends. Their wives are also accused." Proctor's determination and rejection of abandoning Giles and Francis at the time of their need shows a truly heroic quality in Proctor.

In the play Proctor is seen to break away from the norms of his society. Even though this too leads to his downfall, it helps achieve the hero status in the mind of the reader. There are a number of instances in which Proctor is seen as eccentric in comparison to the rest of the society. The most outstanding is probably his attendance at church, or lack thereof. It is evident, that this ' abnormal' act has a great impact on Proctor's appearance in society, " I note that you are rarely at church at Sabbath day." This is also evident in Danforth's reaction, to Cheever's comment, " he plough on Sunday sir." Although Proctor's eccentricity has detrimental effects on other character's perceptions of him, the reader is made aware that Proctor is a god-loving

man, as seen by his wide knowledge of biblical texts, "remember what angel Raphael said to the boy Tobias."

This reveals Proctor to be a private man, who values honesty and loathes superficial hypocrites and the fact that one is judged by society according to outward appearances. Proctor is also different from his peers in his personality. Through out the play, Proctor tends to be more challenging, open-minded and fearless, as shown when he claims "I have wondered if there be witches in the world, although I cannot believe they come among us," and "A fire, a fire is burning and I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face and yours, Danforth!" In the end, even though, Proctor's deviance in his actions and his way of thinking leads to persecution by his society it elevates him in the reader's eye into the status of a hero.

The final impression of Proctor's character is accentuated through comparison with the other characters in the play. Near the conclusion of Act one, Tituba was the first to falsely confess to the crime of witchcraft and spark off the hysteria which was to follow. Her sole reason was because she was threatened, "you will confess or I will whip you to your death, Tituba," and under such intense pressure her spirit succumbed. This event is in stark contrast to Proctor's trial in which the pressure from the judges to publicly announce his confession only enhanced his will to deny the wrongful accusations. Therefore, Proctor, in comparison to Tituba, has higher principles and has the audacity to uphold them despite the danger to his life. Another character which is able to be contrasted to Proctor is Reverend Hale.

In Act three, Hale's allegiance to the court is challenged due to Proctor's

logical argument in the previous chapter. However, although Hale interjects <https://assignbuster.com/the-crucible-by-arthur-miller-act-4-analysis-what-is-your-final-impression-of-proctor-essay-sample/>

at certain times to defend Proctor, " But the child claims the girls are not truthful," he is quickly overwhelmed and his argument is shattered, "(defeated)

I surely do not sir." Proctor on the other hand, due to his challenging nature and bold courage endeavors to confront the judges and force them rethink their position on the matter, "(Danforth sternly and surprised)." In contrast, comparison of Proctor with Rebecca Nurse reveals the weaknesses in Proctor's character. Rebecca Nurse is a highly respected and even saintly figure in the Salem society, " you look such as a good soul should. We have all heard of your great charities." When the audience compares Proctor to Rebecca, which even he himself does, " let Rebecca go like a saint for me it is fraud," it is apparent Proctor does not possess the same qualities that Rebecca does. Therefore the claim that Proctor is represented as a saint in the play is unsupported as Proctor himself disagrees.

As the play continues, the hysteria and the witch-trials gain momentum. Slowly the accusations and hangings have a snowball effect by which it grows to an unstoppable size. In Act 4 even the judges who condemned the victims see this occurring, but they too are powerless to stop it, " Postponement now speaks floundering...pardon must cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now." It is Proctor and a few others who have the courage and tenacity to stand against society and put a stop to the hysteria and senseless murder, even at the cost of their own lives. At first however Proctor is tempted to cowardly accept the false confession of witchcraft to save his life. " Good, then it is evil, and I do it."

But it is evident that Proctor feels strong guilt in condemning the other victims and his name, " I have three children, how may I teach them to walk like men, and I have sold my friends." In the scene that follows Proctor struggles with an intense moral conflict, " How may I live without my name, I have given you my soul, leave me my name." But eventually, like a true hero, Proctor chooses the path which condemns his life but saves his name and his soul. He resolves his inner conflict and finally rejoices in the fact that " he sees some shred of goodness in himself." In the end, Proctor has paid for his earlier sin of adultery with his committed resolution to save his own reputation and that of his friends and consequently his soul. Although this may not be enough to call him a saint, it is enough to clear his troubled conscience and the reader's perception of him, thus making him a hero.

In the play, " the crucible", Proctor is viewed as a hero, with a fatal flaw. Proctor's flaw coupled with his pride and righteousness results in his ultimate downfall. However, John Proctor leaves the play, not a sinner but a hero in the eyes of the audience. Through out the play, Proctor's character is refined through his suffering, self-judgment and moral conflict and this brings out the true heroic traits in him. He may have lost a battle against his society and its authority in the court, but he has won a conflict between his mind and his soul. Although he displays qualities such as courage, tenacity, honor and honesty, which are common to most heroes, it is Proctor's sacrifice in order to save his name, his principles and to put a stop to the senseless witch-trials, that ultimately makes him a hero.