

The crucible – revenge



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When one is done wrong in a particularly hurtful or offending way, getting revenge is sometimes thought of as the most satisfying way of regaining ones sense of self worth. This plan, however, holds an immense possibility of backfiring in ways never dreamed of. In fact, the outcome of the situation at hand is sometimes made worse than it might have been if this course of action is taken.

Arthur Miller demonstrates this in his tragic play *The Crucible*, by showing the reader that although giving in to feelings of vengeance is easy to do, choosing the path of forgiveness often leads to better results in the long run. The foremost way Miller relays this message is through the unethical relationship of the married John Proctor and his young servant Abigail Williams. During their affair, Abigail came to love John, and in her eyes, he loved her as well. So when Elizabeth, John's wife, found out what had been going on and the affair was brought to an abrupt halt, Abigail believed Elizabeth to be the only thing standing in the way of the two of them leading a happy life together. John was forced to stop seeing her; otherwise he faced losing his wife and kids.

Upon being alone with him for the first time since she was dismissed from their household, she noticed a change in the way he acted towards her that she wasn't partial to and stated " I look for John Proctor that took me from my sleep and put knowledge in my heart! I never knew what pretense Salem was, I never knew the lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men! And now you bid me tear the light out of my eyes? I will not, I cannot! You loved me, John Proctor, and whatever sin it is, you love me yet! in an attempt to bring him to coming to face with the

fact that deep down, he still loved her as he once had (177). Abigail simply could not accept that he did not and possibly had never loved her in the way that she believed she loved him. Rather than accepting this and that she was in the wrong for being with a married man such as himself in the first place, Abigail choose instead to seek revenge on Elizabeth, the woman in the way of her love. So she devised a plan. Abigail proceeded to accuse Goody. Proctor of witchcraft, a heinous accusation that would almost certainly lead to her death.

Abigail appears to have thought that with his wife out of the way, she and John could be together again. However, this was not the case, as John did not want his wife out of the way. Her thirst for revenge soon led to John hating her. He came to despise her so much, in fact, that he testified against her to the court, heatedly stating; " She thinks to dance with me on my wife's grave! And well she might, for I thought of her softly.

God help me, I lusted, and there is a promise in such sweat. But it is a whore's vengeance, and you must see it! (220-221) in his attempt to prove her an imposter, bent on ruining his marriage for her own self-gain. John went to many extremes to prove Elizabeth's innocence; including forcing their household servant, Mary Warren, to testify to the fact that she had never seen any apparition or devil. Unfortunately for him, Mary Warren was not as brave as he had thought her to be.

She eventually turned on him out of fear of she herself being persecuted and hanged, and accused John of witchcraft, something that Abigail had not planned on happening. Between this accusation and the testimonies of all

the girls, John Proctor was sentenced to death, as he refused to name any other “witches” or sign his name to his statement. This, quite obviously, was not the ending that Abigail had intended. Instead of winning his love and affection, she gained his hatred and repulsion, and in due time, his death. Because of her yearning for revenge, her beloved John was gone. Had she taken the higher road and forgiven Elizabeth for what she, in reality, had ever right in doing, perhaps things could have ended better with she and John.

For one thing, he would almost certainly be alive, which is vast improvement from him being dead. Also, Abigail might have stood a chance of winning back at least some of Elizabeth’s forgiveness if she would have seen her error and allowed Elizabeth to forgive her for the crime she had committed. In time, John and Abigail might have been capable of being at least acquaintances, which would have been better than nothing at all, if she truly loved him as she said she did. This tragic incident is Miller’s way of showing the reader that forgiveness is often the best path to take, even if it is not the fun or more appealing option. In life, many opportunities to do the right thing occur, and the outcome of the predicament at hand depends on the choices that are made. Forgiveness in the face of an unfavorable incident is often time rather hard to do, but it typically leads to more positive outcome than vengeance would have lead to.

Revenge, though quite tempting in its prospects, has the possibility of rebounding and causing an unappealing product, often times one that is worse han what the revenge was being perused for in the first place.

Through this tragedy, Arthur Miller is able to show the audience the benefits

in forgiveness. He uses Abigail's misfortunate choice of action to communicate to the spectators that, while the temptation of vengeance is often a great one in the face of pain or offence, it holds the potential to rebound, when forgiveness typically holds no such potential. Every now and then, taking the higher road is better than taking the more satisfactory one.