

The crucible



In Andrew Miller's *The Crucible*, a developing pilgrim town is thrown into disarray after Parris, a minister, finds his daughter, servant, niece and their friends dancing in the forest. As his daughter is unconscious from the surprise, the people of Salem think that it is witchcraft. Tituba, Parris's servant, Abigail, Parris's niece, and Betty, Parris's daughter, accuse people of being witches. The reason Tituba, Abigail, and Betty make these claims is because of the circumstances they were under during the time of investigation.

During the play, Tituba was the first person to make claims of people accompanying the Devil. She does so because of the extreme pressure she was put under. Accusing Tituba, Abigail begins with, "She made me do it! She made Betty do it! She makes me drink blood!" (847). Abigail uses Tituba as a scapegoat and places the blame on her.

Abigail does not want to be charged with witchcraft. Tituba tries to explain herself and deny these claims but they do not give her a chance. The threats and accusations of Tituba just escalate and worsen. Tituba: "I have no power on this child, sir." Hale: "You most certainly do, and you will free her from it now! When did you make compact with the Devil?" Tituba: "I don't compact with no Devil!" Parris: "You will confess yourself or I will take you out and whip you to your death, Tituba!" Putnam: "This woman must be hanged! She must be taken and hanged!" (847) Hale, Parris, and Putnam all accuse her of being a witch, regardless of the lack of evidence given.

Parris and Putnam threaten her violently, saying that she will be whipped, beaten, or hanged if she does not tell the truth. From all the pressure she

receives from the threats and accusations, she finally cracks and tells them what they want to hear out of self-preservation. Tituba offers up names ??? rocking and weeping???, saying, ??? and there was Goody Good??| and Goody Osburn??? (848). Because of the accusations of witchcraft and her powerless position, Tituba is motivated to declare that she saw certain people with the Devil. Throughout the act, Abigail is constantly under the pressure of being accused of witchcraft. To start, Parris was the first one to find out about Abby??™s actions in the forest. Parris presses and tries to extract information from Abby. He says, ??? But if you trafficked with spirits in the forest I must know it now, for surely my enemies will, and they will ruin me with it??? (833).

Parris constantly pushes Abigail to tell him all that happened in the forest. He is worried about his daughter but even more worried about his public image and ministry. Later on in Act I, the girls who took part in the forest event also cause Abby to stress more. Mary Warren exclaims, ??? The whole country??™s talkin??™ witchcraft! They??™ ll be callin??™ us witches, Abby! ??? (837). Mary Warren wants to confess the truth to the public for fear of worse punishment. However, Abigail tries to keep the situation contained between the girls by telling them to say only certain information and hide the truth. At the climax of Act I, Abby finally confesses.

After Hale??™s and Parris??™ persistent questioning, Abigail was already involved deeply with the situation. Right after Tituba started to confess, Abigail found her opportunity to join along in the accusations. ??? 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 Gody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with

the Devil!??? (848-849). Abby knows she can't escape it so she confesses to try to lower her punishment. She follows Tituba's lead and spews out names of people she saw with the Devil.

Abigail's interactions with Parris, the girls, and Tituba's accusations motivates her to confess to witchcraft. Like the others, Betty felt the pressure of being accused of witchcraft and being punished so she confessed to being a witch. Being the daughter of the town's minister, Betty had a reputation to live up to and did not want to be soiling her father's reputation. She would especially be punished because she is the daughter of a holy man and should not be partaking in these demonic rituals. She pretends to be unconscious so she does not have to face her penalty directly. Furthermore, Betty felt pressured to tell Abigail's secret. When the girls were talking, Betty claimed, "You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!" (837). Abigail slaps her across the face to get her to shut up.

All these problems stack up and they are all let out at the end of the act. Betty joins in on Tituba and Abigail's confessions and starts to confess too. She says, "I saw George Jacobs with the Devil!" (849). She tries to scapegoat everyone else into their predicament to redirect the blame off of her. The motivations of Tituba, Abigail, and Betty are all similar in multiple ways. The examples show that social pressure can cause a person to say and do things that may not be true just to relieve this pressure.

These girls all confess to witchcraft when they all know that they didn't do anything wrong. The pressure built up throughout the act and when they couldn't take it anymore, they let it all out. With the help of Hale, Parris,

Putnam, and the townspeople, these three people were able to spread hysteria throughout a superstitious settlement.