

The scarlet letter



True Intentions Corruption and narrow-minded ways of thinking often add to the chaos and confusion of a growing problem. The play, *The Crucible*, by Arthur Miller is set during the Salem witch trials. During these trials, fear and suspicion grow off of superstitious victims and an outbreak of hysteria in Salem. In *The Crucible*, three characters in particular use the commotion caused by the trials to their advantage to fulfill their private motives. The characters, Abigail Williams, Reverend Samuel Parris, and Thomas Putnam each discover that the consequences of their actions prove to be more fatal than the present problem. Abigail Williams, as portrayed in the play, is seen as a scheming and, manipulative character creating uproar only to save herself from condemnation and to carry out her selfish intentions. Abigail is first introduced as a suspect to an act not so tolerated by the authority in the village of Salem; this act was simply dancing.

However, to Abigail and girls who were with her, the gathering was not just of leisurely dancing. As implied in the following quote from Betty to Abigail, ??? You did, you did! You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!??? (18), Abigail was only pretending to commit witchcraft in imaginative retaliation towards Elizabeth Proctor, the wife of Abigail??™s potential lover, John Proctor. When the girls of the village and Abigail realize that they will be punished, they start to panic and lie; Lies which lead to the infamous Salem witch trials. The girls, along with Abigail acting as the ringleader, ??? rises, staring as though inspired and cries out??? (48) names of innocent victims so that the attention and suspicion is diverted away from the girls??™ wrongdoings and onto suspects of a bigger crime: witchcraft. One last example of Abigail manipulating a situation for her own benefit is during the

hearing with Mary Warren, during which Hale proclaims, ??? This girl has always struck me false!..??? (114) Abigail seizes the opportunity to use Mary Warren as a scapegoat by mimicking Mary??™s words and actions as a way to get the court to believe Abigail??™s account. With the court manipulated, the trials are subliminally controlled by Abigail Williams.

This all concludes when Abigail runs off once she realizes she has nothing more to gain in Salem. The character of Reverend Samuel Parris is dubious, self-interested, and pestering. Parris is constantly nagging and complaining of how he struggled to climb up the social ladder to a respected position. For the household of a reverend to be the center of a religious offense, Parris is always worrying, ??? And I pray to you feel the weight of truth upon you, for now my ministry??™s at stake, my ministry and perhaps your cousin??™s life.??? (11) This quote also shows how out of line his priorities are. Parris has more doubts about his ministry and monetary income rather than his own family, which is also proved in the quote after Abigail leaves; ??? Thirty-one pound is gone. I am penniless.??? (126) Throughout the play, Parris is persistently trying to persuade the court to immediately convict the suspects in hopes to stop the pressures of the village because he believes, ??? There is danger for me.

I dare not step outside at night!??? (128) and as a means to end the madness in the swiftest way possible. Instead of trying to find justice in Salem, Parris is only concerned with trying to go on with the rest of his life, yet, once the trials come to an end, Parris eventually resigns as Reverend, never to be heard of again. The last character, Thomas Putnam has a minor

role within *The Crucible*, but his motive did ultimately lead to more doubt about the witch trials at hand.

Thomas Putnam has had past quarrels and grudges Francis Nurse and other landowners. With his own daughter being a prospect of the court, Putnam influences Ruth into confessing the names of landowners, so that once the suspects were hung, he was able to buy the land ??? And there is none but Putnam with the coin to buy so great a piece. This man is killing his neighbors for their land!??? (96). Although this claim causes suspicion, the corrupt court is in favor of anyone siding with the court and declares a lack of evidence. During the actual timeframe of this play, cases such as Thomas Putnam??™s were common. In conclusion, each character had a suspicion that these witchcraft trials were just a hoax, still, the opportunities to grasp in the midst of the hysteria was so easy to take when greed distorted moral code. *The Crucible* reveals the true personal motives behind the Salem witch trials.