

# [The effect of disintegrating faith in year of wonders](https://assignbuster.com/the-effect-of-disintegrating-faith-in-year-of-wonders/)

When faith is diminished in a community where it was once crucial, it is logical for the citizens’ reactions to be varied and occasionally destructive. In Geraldine Brooks’ historical novel “ Year of Wonders,” villagers display myriad responses as they question the very foundations on which their lives were built. While some, including the exceptionally brave Anna Frith, flourish as a result, others become crippled by the devastation of losing their primary source of comfort and certainty. When Anna’s faith disintegrates her mind is opened up to a range of concepts long suppressed by her religion, resulting in her blossoming into a well-rounded individual full of compassion, hope and a burning desire to help others. It is a long and fruitful journey that leads to Anna seeing the plague as a “ thing in nature merely”, as she turns to science to assist her in clearing the confusion and pain that at times cloud her vision. From this moment on Anna buries herself in books and strains her mind to think of potential remedies, urged on by Elinor who, when they are together in Anys’ home, predicts that “ the key to defeating this Plague…must lie here, in the virtue of these plants”. As a consequence the two women bring relief to many of the dying including the young boy covered in thorns by his superstitious parents when she covers him with a soothing salve from the herbal remedies discovered in the Gowdie home. Her scientific revelations continue as she discovers that she is meant to go “ from birth to birth”, overcoming her fear of childbirth and her religions condemnation of science when birthing Mary Daniel’s child and consequently discovering the joy that accompanies bringing new life into the world. Overall, science plays a large role in assisting Anna in filling the void left by her diminished religious beliefs. While science is the most monumental outlet for Anna’s shattered religious faith, her mind follows several other pathways and while one is riddled with darkness, she also gains belief in both herself and those around her. Anna’s faith in humanity is incredible considering the many despicable acts she witnessed throughout the plague year, illustrated when she raises her hand to Michael at the novels end, the small gesture implying Anna’s admirable capacity for forgiveness and her persistent belief in the fundamental decency of human kind. Anna also learns that the only person that she can rely on without doubt is herself, the transformative experience of the plague year allowing her to become “ tempered and made strong”. It is ultimately Anna’s steely self confidence that drives her to remove herself entirely from her past and create a vibrant, independent future for herself and her child. Anna’s realisations, however, did not come without her first having to overcome the extraordinary grief that penetrated her soul. After the death of her two young boys, she turned to poppy in an attempt to salve her sorrows, desperate for “ sweet dreams” and clinging to the fragile remains of her sanity. This weak moment makes her ultimately courageous, selfless decision to save the Bradford’s new born and travel to an unknown land all the more commendable, as the flaws in her personality are far outweighed by her unyielding compassion and bravery. So ultimately it was essential that Anna lost faith as it allowed her to discover inner strength and independence in the novel. Logic was not at the forefront of Aphra Bont’s mind as the horrors of the plague descended upon her home, and her “ deeply superstitious” personality led to her being crippled by madness as the year progressed. When her last daughter died she “ had Faith’s body strung up like a puppet” as she cast an array of spells upon her. She also overcharged villagers in exchange for useless spells, the allure of criminal activity all too enticing after it became apparent to her God was not there to punish her. Josiah Bont had a similar response when he took valuable items from villager’s homes in exchange for digging their loved ones graves. Such an activity appeared entirely reasonable to him, as he remained convinced that the villagers and any potential higher powers were out to get him. Jane Martin was a third villager whose descent into faithlessness affected in a detrimental way, as Anna saw her go from being an innocent Puritan girl to one reduced to alcohol abuse and sleeping around in a vain attempt to numb her pain. Such pain, however, is difficult to numb, and a number of villagers turned to mob violence as a mechanism of shifting the blame for the devastating events onto someone other than God. Mary Hadfield along with a number of others believed the Gowdies apparent “ malice has brought plague” to their loved ones, consequently taking two lives as their grief manifested itself as anger unfortunately misdirected upon innocent bystanders. The minor characters of the novel showed a myriad of destructive reactions as their faith dissolved, their strength and resolve diminished as they lost their primary source of certainty. Ultimately, the characters in Year of Wonders resort to a range of different means in an attempt to fill the void the faith that had once been a quintessential part of their existence left. Many characters lose faith completely and opt to follow a range of pathways differing in their morality. Whatever their survival mechanisms, they are all driven by a singular force as they struggle to find fulfilment in a suddenly terrifying world.