

Role of abigail williams from the crucible by arthur miller

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



In the era where women and men were accused, witches were burned, and innocent citizens were rejected, was not only a time of grief, but it also was a time for dishonesty, cruelty, and neglect. The Puritans believed in hard work, prudence, and self-discipline which created a variety of issues within the towns. These strict ideals hep by Puritan society resulted in a constant repression of women that was not questioned. Women within the Puritan culture at this time were underappreciated, causing them to strive for the attention of the townspeople. In Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Abigail Williams serves as an instigator, but she also represents the repressed desires of the Puritan women.

Abigail Williams has the beauty and the respect all of the young women in Puritan society strive for, and she uses this beauty to gain the trust of the townsfolk. Abigail's beauty distracts the town from her lies and dishonesty. Since the beginning of the play, she is illustrated as "...a strikingly beautiful girl...with an endless capacity for dissembling" (1092). She is described in this light since her beauty overrides the ability for people to believe she is a liar. Her beauty serves as a barrier between her truth and her lies, which these women also wish to have. For instance, Elizabeth Proctor uses her honesty throughout the whole play, however, she is ignored and still accused of witchcraft. Elizabeth, older and not as pretty as Abigail, is not taken serious, even though she is much more honest than Abby. Brought upon stage directions, and how Goody Proctor acts, it is clear that Elizabeth shows a small amount of jealousy towards her. This is seen especially when it comes to the attention her husband, John Proctor, had given Abby at one point in time. Abigail is also able to use her beauty to manipulate men in the

town. Women lack power over men within this era, however, their beauty allows for the girls to obtain this control they strive for. Abigail, through her attractive charm, is able to use her beauty to gain this type of power over these men. Although only seventeen years old, men view her as older and more mature due to the fact that her actions and cognitive thinking display such maturity. By using her appearance, she can make men lust her. She gains control over the men, and while they, like John Proctor, have good intentions, she knows how to turn them into sinners. Abigail represents this quality that many Puritan women wish to acquire: a strong appearance to distract others, while she can plot her lies.

Puritan women typically lack education, yet Abigail is highly intelligent, leading her to be quick-witted and clever. Abigail's mastery of responding quickly and effectively is the reason she is able to deceive the town. She is often placed in situations where she is socially defeated, and she must think on her feet in order to alter the beliefs of the town. When Abby is accused by John Proctor and Mary Warren, she draws attention away from herself by "pointing with fear...raising up her frightened eyes, her awed face, toward the ceiling..." (1148). Through her quick-responses, Abby is able to eliminate negative attention and place it onto other characters. Since in such little time she can act out in a certain manner, it makes it hard for witnesses to believe that she is being dishonest. Given that women in this era are not allowed to be educated, Abby's natural intelligence provides her with the cleverness she needs to act during accusations against her. If other women were half as clever as Abigail, many of the accused women would not have

been charged of witchcraft. Although, the women accused are not associated with witchcraft as Abigail is, her quick-witted personality allows her to convince the town otherwise. In order for these women to successfully deny all acts of the Devil, they must be smart enough to trick the town into believing them since the town is revolved around eliminating witchcraft with little evidence. For instance, Martha Corey reads her books in order to become educated like Abby. However, she is mistaken as reading and performing sinful acts because of the book. She is not as intelligent as she would like to be, and she ends up jeopardizing her life for it. By achieving a certain level of intelligence, women will be able to gain control and respect.

Many women in the Puritan culture wish to gain as much control over other individuals as Abigail does through her wickedness. Abigail's viciousness makes the young girls fear and follow in her footsteps into a sinful world. Abby, in her own way, is wicked and evil, leading to the girls fearing her. She knows how to scare people into following her, as well as doing her dirty work and taking the blame for her. When she is at risk of being exposed, she can use her wicked powers of manipulation for forcing the girls to stay by her side. She demonstrates her evil intentions when she threatens the girls that she will "come to [the girls] in the pointy reckoning that will shudder [them]" if they "breathe a word, or the edge of a word" (1097). When her cousin shows even a slight hint that she may expose Abby's dealings with the Devil, Abby threatens her, along with the other girls. By threatening her own cousin, and adoptive sister, it is clear that a part of her is wicked and cruel. The girls, like Mary Warren, try hard to be like Abigail; however, they

wish to be more heinous like her, instead of being Abby's slave. Mary Warren begins to behave like Abigail after Mary is accused of witchcraft when she knowingly, falsely accused John Proctor of performing Devilish acts. Under crucial circumstances that could damage her reputation, Mary Warren develops an ability to be resourceful like Abby and draw the attention away from herself and onto others. If put into similar positions, the other girls will do the same, as they accuse random women of witchcraft, clearly showing that they withhold the desire to be like Abby. Abigail is vicious, but she has the capability of participating in horrid acts without remorse, thus showing that she a leader. Although a harsh leader, Abigail can easily obtain followers that will be loyal, such as Mary Warren and the rest of the girls who danced in the woods.

Abigail is illustrated as a beautiful and intelligent young woman who represents the desires of all Puritan woman. Her beauty distracts the other characters from her lies, while her intelligence allows her to plot and act quickly. She is seen as evil, yet the Puritan society was brutally evil itself. It denied the woman of their freedom to gain an education, power, and respect. The beliefs of Puritans created uproars for a majority of their villages, leading to much greater issues. The collection of lies and deceit lead to the wrongful deaths of thousands, and ultimately destroyed the culture altogether.