

The crucible essay

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The Salem Witch Trials were among some of the most horrendous, irrational, and imprudent, events of the 17th century. Not only were numerous people imprisoned, based on false testimonies and lack of judicial intelligence, but hung, or in one case, pressed to death.

The claims of witchery caused calamity throughout the village, neighbors turning on one another; friends accusing each other just to salvage their own lives. In The Crucible, Puritan way of life revolves around the church. If you announce your opinion, you must disagree with the church.

If you disagree with the church, you disagree with God; and if you dare disagree with God, you my friend, are a true Devil's advocate. The Salem Witch Trials tended to base their arguments on fallacious statements made by imbecilic young girls, distraught middle-aged women, and a reverend, lustful for power—not exactly the precedent to set. However, claims of witchcraft were not the first seen in Salem Village, especially not for the power-hungry, Reverend Samuel Parris. Witchcraft was often seen and heard in England and widely known due to the Lancashire Witch trials.

Furthermore, it shows that knowledge of witchery was imbedded into the minds of these villagers. When the word witchcraft is said people often think of a long nosed, dark haired woman, boiling a pot of her wretched potion. Though the Puritan people viewed witchcraft as acts of the Devil, doing his dirty-work, one could say.

Acts of witchery were looked down upon in England and most certainly looked down upon in Salem Village. These Puritans did not celebrate Christmas or Mardi Gras for they were festive acts looked down upon as well.

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Yet, what exactly is a true act of witchery? The most common happenings such as a cow not being able to produce milk would be considered witchcraft; a housewife could not churn butter, she was a witch. In reality, the true Salem Witch Trials were somewhat different than those portrayed in *The Crucible*.

In the book, Tituba takes the girls along into the woods to perform spells and rituals. However, in reality, Tituba was asked to bake a “witchcake” to find out who was possessing Betty. Ruth Putnam was the first to be vexed by witchery, however historical notes point that Abigail and Betty Williams were the first to be hurt.

Ruth was not able to be woken up from a deep sleep, almost a coma. This was the only symptom of possession according to *The Crucible*. Nonetheless, actual symptoms would usually be violent, physical fits or outbursts. Mrs.

Parris is not in *The Crucible* because she has been dead for quite some time. However, Mrs. Parris was alive during the trials and died some years later. The book states Betty was present during the trials and in court. Truthfully, Betty was sent away once the actual trials began. Tituba was a slave from Barbados with no family.

Proven correctly, Tituba actually had a husband, John, and a daughter, Violet. The Proctor family is a bit different as well. The book describes John Proctor as somewhat young, probably in his mid-thirties, and a farmer.

Elizabeth is said to be John’s only wife, however she is actually his third wife. The family consisted not just of two young boys, but one son much older

around his thirties and two other children, a son and a daughter, both in their 'teens. Arthur Miller admitted that he rose Abigail's age from eleven to seventeen, but John was actually around sixty years of age and a tavern keeper. Elizabeth was around her early forties to be exact. Flaws appear with the Putnams and Rebecca Nurse also. The Putnam's daughter is named Ruth, yet her real name is Ann, like Goody Putnam. Goody Putnam states that Ruth is her only child remaining; false. The Putnam's had six living children, including Ann.

Rebecca Nurse hanged with John Proctor and Martha Corey on the same day; wrong again. Rebecca Nurse was hanged on July 19th, separate from both John Proctor and Martha Corey (neither person was hung with the other). Overall, the historical accuracy of The Crucible was, for the most part, correctly embodied. The Salem Witch Trials were events that still show the severe outcome of religious extremism and poor judicial standings. Not only did they cause hysteria throughout the towns, but they destroyed the lives of numerous people. The Salem Witch Trials can be seen as a major setback in American life today, just as McCarthyism was during the fifties.

I believe the Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism find each other in the same category. The definition of witchcraft is as followed: magical influence; witchery. If this definition is true, then isn't McCarthyism one of the biggest acts of witchcraft America has ever seen? On February 9, 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy from Wisconsin gave a speech at Wheeling, West Virginia. It was here that he claimed he held a list of two-hundred and five people that

were known to be Communists. We know today that Senator McCarthy was indeed lying; the list he proclaimed to have did not exist.

Senator McCarthy waved some papers around, claiming them to be evidence against the accused. Arthur Miller, a famous American playwright and author of *The Crucible*, was one of the many people to fall victim to McCarthyism. Miller was one of three-hundred and twenty artists who were blacklisted by the moronic believers of McCarthyism. The reputations and careers of many of these artists were destroyed by McCarthyism. Some of them might never have had their names cleared. Luckily for Miller, he did not have to live life as one of those people.

In fact, Miller wrote *The Crucible* because of the events that took place during the fifties. McCarthyism was a huge influence on Arthur Miller's writing of *The Crucible*. The drama itself is an allegorical interpretation of McCarthyism. Arthur Miller was, as stated, blacklisted, but that was just fuel to Miller's fire.

Miller used the facts and events taking place during the fifties and compared them to the events that took place during the 17th century. Miller in fact traveled to Salem, Massachusetts, in order to get background information on the Witch Trials. Miller needed to show the relation between the two events and the stupidity both brought along with them. Senator Joseph McCarthy fueled the flames of hysteria in the United States, such as Abigail, in Salem Village. Both were puerile in their decisions; they only looked to satisfy their own personal well-being.

Senator McCarthy desired power and re-election; Abigail desired John Proctor and the death of Elizabeth. Both were somewhat successful in their plans, however, are frowned upon today. Their actions brought total chaos and ruin for many people. McCarthyism and the Salem Witch Trials were very similar in many ways. McCarthyism caused people to accuse one another of being a Communist. It started with one key influential person, that being Senator Joseph McCarthy.

During the Witch Trials, Abigail was seen as “ in charge. ” As long as she gave names of those who were practicing witchcraft, she was in the clear. As a matter of fact, neither Senator McCarthy nor Abigail held any solid evidence against the accused, just their word. McCarthyism ruined the lives and reputations of many.

The Witch Trials accused hundreds of people as well and killed various people; they ruined the lives of families. There was never any proof for either of these events and yet, they both received a wide span of attention. McCarthyism was spread through the powers of media and the Witch Trials through word of mouth.

To be honest, McCarthyism did more harm than it did good. The intention was to find the Communists aiding the Soviet Union and punish them. It instead turned out to be a campaign designed to boost the power of one man. Senator McCarthy did try and prevent Communism in the United States, but caused a major setback in U. S. history that we know today. Abigail only wanted John Proctor to be with her; unfortunately, she caused

the deaths of many people along the way. Now, to go back to the previously stated definition of witchcraft; witchcraft: magical influence, witchery.

If anything, Senator McCarthy was one of the most famously known witches of all time. He single handedly influenced those around him into believing casuistic statements aimed to increase his political power. Communists were found in the U. S. , people were actually giving secrets to the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the amount of people who were actually Communists outweighs the ratio of those who were not Communists at all. Overall, McCarthyism and The Salem Witch Trials were both horrendous in their actions.

McCarthyism displayed acts of demagoguery, self-indulgence, mass hysteria and ineptness; Senator McCarthy made sure of that. The Salem Witch Trials showed the effects of religious extremism on an isolated town. The Witch Trials displayed acts of lust, judicial incompetence, and mass hysteria as well. To conclude, The Crucible was a very well written play. Arthur Miller interpreted the 2nd Red Scare very thoroughly and kept my attention throughout the entire play. The historical accuracy, the developed characters, and the overall suspense are what make the drama so successful. I think I should in some hypocritical way, thank McCarthyism for had it not occurred Arthur Miller might not have ever written such an excellent drama.

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