

# The crucible a.p. book report



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## **The Crucible A. P. Book Report**

1. The Crucible

2. Arthur Miller, 1950's

3. America, California

### **4. John Proctor**

- Honorable and rational, he is the “ leader” of the few sane people of Salem. Although plagued by his affair with Abigail, the biased and foolish leaders of the church, and the underhanded intentions of his fellow neighbors, he still somehow is able to remain in our minds as a respectable man that stood honest until the end.

### **Abigail Williams**

- Masterfully deceitful and envious, she is the main cause of the Salem witch trials. Originally fueled by lust for John Proctor, she is forced to victimize the entire village after weaving too thick a web of deceit about her affair.

### **Judge Danforth**

- Self-Righteous and stiff, Judge Danforth is the towering character that believes in the church's, and his own, holiness. He judges the Salem trials somewhat sensibly, but his stubbornness in Puritan values blinds him towards the ulterior motives of many Salem inhabitants.

Reverend Parris – Scornful and pathetic, Parris is a deplorable minister that cares only about his image. He discover Abigail flagrantly disobeying his orders, but tries to keep her deeds secret, in fear for his reputation.

**Elizabeth Proctor (minor)**

– Wise and forgiving, Elizabeth is a modest woman that has quietly lived with John, even through his affair. Although she doesn't appear joyful or happy, she is never blinded by Salem's uproar and easily shines as a moral character through the harsh times.

**Reverend John Hale (minor)**

– Overconfident but sensible, Reverend John Hale is a character that majorly develops as the novel progresses. He first shows up as a brash reverend ready to fight witchcraft, but develops into a humble and sensible man that realizes the calamity in Salem. He is one of John's few allies, and is wrecked with guilt after the trials are over.

**5. Salem, Massachusetts (Village)****– John Proctor's House:**

Although located somewhat outside of Salem, it doesn't take long for the craze to reach his house. The mood in the house is dreary and stiff, since an air of mistrust pervades the rooms. Hale originally comes here to examine the Proctor's family, but comes to believe in John's cause after the injustice done to Elizabeth.

**– Salem Meeting House:**

Forbidding and ominous, the meeting house turned courtroom is the center stage for the witch trials. Poorly made walls and simple furniture make up the room, and this creates awkward tension for the reader and the accused. All accused "witches" are condemned here by Judge Danforth, with Abigail leading her deceitful group.

**– Parris’s House:**

Originally clean and white, this place soon houses the horrible misdeeds of the Salem Witch craze. Betty was originally confined to her bed here with a mild sickness, but certain accusations against her, paired with Tituba’s confession and Abigail’s quick plot, turned this house into the spawning point for the witch hunt.

6. In the village of Salem, Betty Parris is stricken with a disease after secretly dancing in the woods with the village girls. The townspeople bring in Reverend Hale, a witch craft expert, and he accuses the leaders of the girls, Abigail and Tituba, of complying with the devil. However, the girls claim they were possessed, and blame random member of the village to reinforce their confession. The Salem Witch hunt officially starts. In a house far outside Salem, John and Elizabeth Proctor converse over marriage issues. Soon after, Hale comes to question the Proctors, but instead learns from John of Abigail’s deceit and intention. The marshals then arrive, and bring a warrant for Elizabeth’s arrest on account of being a witch. Though they have little evidence and Hale’s disapproval, the marshals take her anyways.

Proctor, Mary Warren, Giles Corey, and Francis Nurse storm into the court and demand for the release of their wives. Mary Warren, originally part of Abigail’s group, confesses that everything is a lie. Proctor brings more evidence, claiming that Abigail is a whore that wishes to see his wife dead, and that his wife knew all about the affair. Judge Danforth gives a series of tests to Proctor to confirm this, bringing in Elizabeth to confirm the statement. She denies it to save Proctor’s dignity and both are jailed, ultimately due for the gallows. The seasons change, and Abigail has run

away from Salem. John is given a chance to live by signing a confession, but tears it up when he learns it must be shown to the public and ruin his name. At the end, he is sent to the gallows.

### **7. Religious Extremism/Intolerance:**

Although superstition and religious values sparked the ideas of witchcraft around the town, it was intolerance and Puritan extremism that truly set the fire ablaze. Basically, anything against Puritan values was stricken down as devil-worship. Ironically, the only reason the Salem Trials became believable was because of Hale's relentless push for a confession between Tibuta and Abigail, and Judge Danforth's one-track mind against the proclaimed "witches."

### **Accountability and Hidden Agendas:**

In a culture founded on strict standards and uptight morals, it was inevitable that private transgressions would form. The Crucible documents a time in which all sins were looked upon as extremely taboo and devil-influenced. Consciously or subconsciously, people still bore personal sins, and this harboring led to the rapid pace of accusations. By accusing others, feelings of self-morality were produced; villagers turned on villagers, and the Salem Trials went down in history as a dark time for everyone.

### **Reputation and Guilt:**

Reputation is an extremely influential factor in every decision of The Crucible, but it often makes the decisions unbeneficial to everyone. Reverend Parris chooses to cover up his niece's deeds in regards to his reputation; however this decision only creates more speculation and gives Abigail more time to create a believable story. Danforth's failure to admit

wrongdoing due to his respectable record clearly leads to many unwarranted deaths, while Hale's admittance makes him a respectable and honest character. Finally, John Proctor's decision to reveal his affair in order to condemn Abigail ironically makes him the most upright character out of all the self-serving Puritans.

### **8. The Witch Trials:**

Although already important in itself, the witch trials generally represented the idea of unfair accusation, and raised the question on the validity of the accuser. It also represented the idea of an accuser getting the accused to speak the answer that he or she would want to hear, no matter the technique. These questionable situations can be matched with the big issue at hand during the second red scare, McCarthyism. The United States Government, using little evidence, accused thousands of Americans of being communists, and Arthur Miller used the Salem Trials to represent the absurdity of these accusations.

### **Foreign Objects (The Woods, Poppet, Tituba's Ritual):**

Although completely different things, these three share a commonality: they are foreign to the Puritan beliefs. The woods represent the unknown, seemingly equaling the darkness of the devil. To Reverend Parris, the woods emphasize Tituba's ritual as a satanic device, starting the whole ordeal of a witch craze. The poppet also represents a clash of beliefs, as it also represents a foreign concept to the Puritans. Ultimately used as evidence against Elizabeth, a seemingly harmless poppet harnesses deadly superstitions that almost earn Elizabeth a death sentence. Overall, these

three concepts represent the Puritans fear of the unknown, and their rebranding of anything suspicious as devilish and superstitious.

9. Abigail: I have a sense for heat, John, and yours has drawn me to my window, and I have seen you looking up, burning in your loneliness. Do you tell me you've never looked up at my window?

In *The Crucible*, heat and fire are strong images of the lustful relationship between Abigail and Proctor. In Act I, Abigail still wants their private relationship to go on, as she claims she has “a sense for heat” and has seen John “burning up” in his loneliness. Basically, she still has a passion for him, and hopes to convince John that he still loves her. Later, the absence of heat in his own home describes his stiff relationship with Elizabeth. His house is described as low and dark, imagery that represents the cold affair that emotionally separates the two.

Proctor: I have made a bell of my honor! I have run the doom of my good name – you will believe me, Mr. Danforth!

The metaphor of his honor becoming a bell is strangely true in regards to the Puritan village. Bells in a city are used to alarm citizens or remind them of an event; Proctor's honor is doing exactly that. Ironically, Proctor's show of honesty in revealing his affair is the first true act of a Puritan, ringing true throughout the court. However, the only sound that is actually heard in the court is his doom, since his originally suspicious character does not merit truthfulness.

10. A crucible is literally defined as a “ container of metal or refractory material employed for heating substances to high temperatures,” or “ a severe, searching test or trial.” These two definitions basically sum up the entire story; the whole book is literally a court trial, and symbolically a trial of villagers’ morality and practicality. Most fail the test by succumbing to false accusations (high temperatures), and subsequently shoving the blame onto someone else. However, this play really shines when we actually find a real “ crucible”, representing John Proctor. Although he is hanged, he is understandably one of the only few that actually endures the flames and trials, and stays in our mind as a true crucible.

### **11. Style/Dialect:**

One important aspect Arthur Miller wanted to emphasize while writing this work is its realism. He wanted us to understand that this actually happened. By writing an entire play using the dialect spoken in the late 1690’s, Miller is able to bring this play to life. Through the use of old style wording that includes real accounts from Salem documents, we can witness everything in a historically accurate recreation.

### **Form of Narration:**

By choosing to recreate the Salem Trials through a play and not a novel, Arthur Miller allows us to fully view what really happened without keeping us in a detached state of mind. If one would watch the play, he or she would witness real dialogue and real actions; novels give us an enjoyment, but never allow us to feel the real fervor of the characters involved. In novels, the author decides what we watch. However in plays, the author gives us an entire scene and allows us to focus on specific parts, just like real life.



**12. Elizabeth:**

He were not hanged. He would not answer aye or nay to his indictment; for if he denied the charge they'd hang him surely, and auction out his property. So he stand mute, and died Christian under the law...Great stones they lay upon his chest...they say he give them but two words, " More weight," he says. And died. (135)

Proctor: No it is not the same! What others say and what I sign to is not the same!... Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! ... How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name! (143)

Proctor: Why, we – have no fear of questions, sir.

Hale: Good, then... I note that you are rarely in the church on Sabbath Day.

Proctor: What's your suspicion, Mr. Hale?

Hale: No, no, I have no –

Proctor: I nailed the roof upon the church, I hung the door – a

Hale: Oh, did you! That's a good sign, then. (64, 66)

From a general summary to chapter summaries to explanations of famous quotes, the SparkNotes