

Compare the crucible to mccarthyism. assignment

[History](#)



McCarthy In The Crucible In The Crucible, written by Arthur Miller, the madness of the Salem witch trials is explored in great detail. There is more to the play than the witch trials, though. The Crucible was composed during a time when a similar hysteria was sweeping through America. A virtually unknown senator by the name of Joseph McCarthy was propelled into infamy when while at a speaking engagement at the Republican Women's Club of Wheeling, West Virginia he charged 205 persons in the U. S. State Department of being members of the Communist Party (Martinet 8).

Fear caused the American people to succumb to the preposterous charges brought forth by McCarthy displaying resemblance's to that of the Salem community in 1692 (Carrey 51). In Arthur Miller's play The Crucible, there is evidence of parallels between the Salem of 1692 and America of the 1950s, the American Government of the 1950s and its misuse of power, and the high court depicted in the play, using its power to impose a misguided July 1954. The Crucible takes place in Salem, Massachusetts in the spring of 1692 in a village shrouded with chaos.

The people of Salem were in uncertain times. Just a year earlier a witch in the nearby town of Beverly was executed and now the witch hysteria had spread to their village. Confused, the people didn't know who to blame whether it be the girls, the negro slave, or even the Devil himself. The insanity that came about was an indication of the fear of individual freedom (Miller 6). In The Crucible, hysteria and hidden agendas break down the social structure and then everyone must protect themselves from the people that they thought were their friends.

The church, the legal system, and the togetherness of the community died so that the girls and their families social status might be retorted. The fact that Salem was a Puritan community did not help matters either. Puritans were a strict religious group that tolerated no devious behavior. Being isolated from any other group of people with different beliefs created a church led Puritan society that was not able to accept a lot of change. Anyone who was not in good standing with the church was not even allowed in the community (Carrey 42).

They believed God elected those who were to go to Heaven by the same token though they believed the Devil could choose his disciples also (Carrey 43). Puritans deemed anything pleasurable was motivated by and came directly from the Devil. When *The Crucible* was written. The American society was threatened by communism much like Salem was threatened by witchcraft (Fly 32). On September 23, 1949, President Truman reported that the Soviet Union had developed an atomic bomb striking fear into the American nation (Martinet 8).

Miller even acknowledged this fear when he said, America had just finished fighting World War II with the help of the Soviet union against the Germans and now they felt threatened by them, knowing not whether they were still allies or if another war was inevitable. The war made people wary of communism. What Hitler had done was ugly. Americans feared this ugliness. Thou shall not suffer a witch to live (Exodus 22: 18). The puritans of Salem definitely believed in witches and guarded against them just as the Bible told them so, executing them.

Once a person was accused as a witch the only way to live was to turn back to God by repenting and revealing names of other witches so that they malign repent or De vanquish s EAI . Judge Donation was ovate to ten prosecution of witches. When he arrives in the town of Salem, Detonator sets in motion acts that bring about an evil destructive state of chaos (Carrey 15). He believed he inherited his authority directly from God, and therefore carried on the witching mercilessly (Fly 33).

He did not give up easily; once he decided someone was a witch he would not rest until a confession was made as is evident in the following quote: Will you confesses yourself befouled with Hell, or do you keep that black allegiance yet? (Miller 1 11). Detonator may have had too much power also; being the Deputy Governor of Massachusetts, Detonator had the power to try, convict, and execute anyone he decide was a witch (Fly 27). When writing The Crucible, Arthur Miller hose to speak through John Proctor on of the Salem witch trials victims.

Miller uses Proctor as his character that defies the authority of the Judges and their corrupt power (Carrey 14). Miller also uses Proctor as his hero which critic James J. Martinet recognized and captured when he said, John Proctor is heroic not merely because he points the finger at himself, but because his story allow him to point out the evil in his environment, the enemy of man's freedom, here the repressive structures of society that would take a man's name (79). At the first of the drama Proctor is not unconcerned with the witch madness or anything to do with the community.

One can see Proctor's lack of interest in the community when Thomas Putnam states: I never heard you worried so on this society, Mr.. Proctor. I do not think I saw you at Sabbath meeting since snow flew (Miller 27). Proctor changes though; when Proctor is accused of being a witch himself he gets interested. America, entering into the cold war, felt that the threat of Communism was real and with World War II just ended and the fear of another possible war, Americans of the fifties did not want people whose lattice ideology was so rash, violent, and disagreeable with their way of living (Carrey 51).

Martinet called them for what they were, and that was simply witches (9). Senator Joseph McCarthy was devoted to the prosecution of communists. McCarthy was ruthless in his investigations; anyone who opposed his hearings or even criticized them was quickly defending himself on the charges that he was a communist (Carrey 51). McCarthy also had power; in September 1950, McCarthy was able to pass the Maccaras International Security Act required that all members of the Communist Party register with the Justice Department and all communist-front organizations reveal their membership (Martinet 9).

Arthur Miller himself was also put on trial by the House Committee so that he might testify on Un-American activities. Miller refused to name any names and was found in contempt of Congress. Miller imitates Proctor in this way of refusing to give in even though there would be consequences. In Salem, Massachusetts in 1692, a dozen teenage girls and a black slave woman were caught dancing in the forest and were accused of being witches after two of

them become sick. There was one girl in particular who was very cunning; her name was Abigail.

Abigail is a devious girl which critic William Fly explains in his quote: Abigail lies without shame, threatens without fear, and thinks nothing of sticking a needle two inches into her belly in order to bring about the murder of Elizabeth Proctor (20). She, and she alone, led the town of Salem in murdering 19 people, all accused of witchcraft. Once the girls are found out, they start accusing people of being witches and Abigail starts with Elizabeth Proctor, John Proctor's wife. Not long later even one of the most respectable women in Salem, Recall Nurse, was accused of being a witch.

When court was called into session more accusations came; one of the girls, Mary Warren, out of fear of being hanged, confesses that John Proctor is the Devil's man! (Miller 110). At the beginning of the drama, Reverend Parris stumbles upon the girls dancing naked and later he finds out they were not only dancing but also drinking charms and conjuring the dead. After this the girls start confessing and most people that were charged were charged purely on the testimony of the girls' evidence that they were with the devil.

Leonard moss realized this fact and speaks about it in the following quote: The authority of the prosecutors has suddenly come to depend upon confession by those victims recently condemned, so that continued defiance by a highly regarded citizen like John Proctor will cure the town's fever (Moss 43). A total of 19 persons were hanged, 1 person was pressed to death, and two dogs were hanged for witchcraft during the Salem Witchcraft Trials

(Carrey 49). Judge Detonator sentenced most including Rebecca Nurse and John Proctor for witchcraft and other morality.

When Joseph McCarthy announced the contents of his blacklist in 1950 people started accusing others of being communist Just like in Salem 1692. This did not stop McCarthy though. In 1953, McCarthy led 157 more investigations especially into the Voice of America and even the Army Signal Corps in New Jersey. These further investigations go on to parallel that of the Judges of the Salem trials and their efforts to find anyone guilty that they possibly could. People such as former U. S. Department of State official, Alger Hiss was accused of being a communist spy.

The accusations by McCarthy were so powerful that President Truman himself decided to put in loyalty boards to keep communist out of America (Miller 1). McCarthy did not have enough evidence to convince an investigating committee, led by Senator Millard E. Tidings. His evidence merely depended on others naming people that were communists Just as the evidence of the Salem trials was merely the girls naming names. The accusations and investigations spread quickly and affected thousands of people. Librarians, college professors, entertainers, Journalists, clergy, and others came under suspicion.

McCarthy did not have any evidence though and he eventually lost his support from the people. A few people spent time in Jail and thousands were denied Jobs, memberships, and other moralities because they had been accused of being communist. It is not difficult to see why a catastrophe such as the Salem witch trials occurred. Once one accusation was made, it was

easy to release all the buried suspicions and hatred into a wave of madness. The Judges of Salem were fooled and many people paid with their life. In the fifties a catastrophe much the same occurred just without the same end results.

People in Salem who tried to undermine the court were accused as witches themselves just as anyone in America in 1950 who opposed McCarthy trials were accused of being communist (Carrey 52). America fell prey to the McCarthy hysteria at first but then realized there was no evidence and put down the idiocy. The Salem witch trials and the McCarthy Investigations were so closely related that one can only wonder when or if it will happen again. In both cases, a party ended up with too much power than they should have as Detonator and McCarthy do. Who is the next to be accused?