

Similarities between mccarthy hearings, the mcmartin trials, and the salem witch ...

[History](#)



History Repeats

The Crucible contains several themes and happenings that can be seen in the McCarthy hearings, the McMartin trials, and the Salem witch trials.

Accusing innocent people and having their lives eternally affected are two major themes. Each one of these incidents have negatively affected all of the people involved as well as the world around them. These trials are proof that history can repeat itself, even if it's not exactly the same each time it does.

The Crucible is about a small town in Massachusetts called Salem. A group of young girls were discovered dancing in the woods with a slave named Tituba around a caldron by Reverend Parris, the town minister. The town starts to talk, mentioning how the girls must have been doing witchcraft, especially considering that the reverend's daughter, who took part in the dancing, was in a deep sleep that she couldn't wake from. Once Reverend Hale, an expert minister on the supernatural, arrives, Tituba is questioned about compacting with the devil thanks to Abigail Williams' false accusations of her. In order to live, Tituba lies and accuses a few town women of witchcraft. Seeing this as their way out, Abigail and the other girls start to accuse the innocent women as well. The women accused must confess and get jail time, or deny the accusations and get hung. Many innocent women perished due to the faulty accusations led by Abigail.

There are several similarities between the McCarthy hearings and The Crucible. They both struck fear in people by considering all of the accused guilty until they confessed. During the McCarthy hearings, the fear of communism spreading within the United States, especially in the state

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department, caused many to support the hearings because they were scared. The mass hysteria of the people was the reason that these hearings continued. Once the innocent people were accused, their lives were ruined. Denying that they were communists just had them suspected to be even more, and even if they did make it out without punishment, the fact that they were even considered to be communists caused them to be social pariahs. In *The Crucible*, the children were acting strange, so when an explanation arose for why, everyone was willing to support it. When the women who were accused showed up in court, they had to admit they had committed witchcraft or else they would be hung. In both the trial and the play, the people forced the accused to either admit something they didn't do or get punished for it anyway. Another commonality between these two would be that lives were ruined because of the accusations and punishments. During the hearings, people of the United States supported them and McCarthy out of their fear of communism. Those that stood up to McCarthy and the House Committee of Un-American Activities (HUAC), who were directly involved with the hearings and accusations of Hollywood producers, directors, and screenwriters, were considered communists. The accused, guilty or not, would always be viewed as a communist. As for the play, a majority of the people in Salem supported the witch hunts and followed their leaders because of their fear. Those that stood up against the witch hunts were considered witches. The only way to escape death was to confess and repent, even if they were not guilty. All accused in the McCarthy hearings and *The Crucible* were found guilty with little proof. Because of the people's fears, the allegations were thought to be true even with the little

evidence provided. McCarthy and the HUAC both relate to Abigail because they both accused innocent people of horrendous crimes of their time.

Both the McMartin trials and *The Crucible* shared multiple similarities. Both heavily relied on children and their testimonies, and people urged others to believe them. In the trials, the children of the preschool were interviewed continuously until they gave the answers that the investigators and accusers wanted. In Salem, the young girls made false allegations in order to get out of trouble. In both cases, only a few people were accused at first, but as the hysteria spread, so did the accusations. Usually, the new people that were accused after the first few were those who defended someone that was accused or had any suspicions about the charges. Also, in both cases, experts found meaning in unlikely places. In the trials, the drawing of hands on stick figures was considered evidence that the child who drew them was molested. In Salem, a wart or other physical blemish was considered an entry point for the devil. The investigations in both cases were a problem themselves. The investigators asked questions or gave evidence that forced the accused to try and prove their innocence. In the trials, the investigators implemented that the children would not be saying names of sexual body parts if they were not molested when in fact the use of these words constantly throughout the investigation was most likely the explanation. In Salem, the judges and leaders asked the accused to explain how just their presence could cause such reactions from the young girls.

Along with the McCarthy hearings and the McMartin trials, the Salem witch trials can also be compared to *The Crucible*. Actually, they could almost be

considered the same thing. Both take place in Salem and have a young group of girls that accuse the town women of witchcraft to get out of trouble, starting with Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. They both also had the leader of the young girls, Abigail Williams, accuse Tituba of practicing witchcraft on them as well as forcing them to take part in it. In both the trials and the play, more accusations were charged as the hysteria spread amongst the town, and twenty people died as a result of it. For the most part, these twenty people were the same. Although the major themes and happenings of both the trials and the play are significantly similar, they do have differences that separate them from being the same thing. For example, in the play, Abigail is seventeen years old whereas in the trials, she was about twelve. Another example would be that Tituba was perceived to be from African lineage in the play, but was actually Indian in the trials.

The similarities of the McCarthy hearings, the McMartin trials, the Salem witch trials, and *The Crucible* prove that history can repeat itself. Although they are different, their sharing of common themes and happenings show that only bad can come from people letting their fears and prejudice dictate their thoughts and judgement. Accusing innocent people and letting their lives be negatively affected for the rest of their lives is the price that those people made in the past due to the mass hysteria. The world would be a better place without it.