

What do you learn  
about the characters  
involved in this  
interchange



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At the beginning of this extract John, Mary, Abigail and Mercy are in the room.

Betty is lying on the bed supposedly unconscious. John enters and interrupts a conversation between the girls about what happened in the woods, at the beginning of this extract the atmosphere changes. This extract reveals a lot about two of the main characters in the play, Abigail and John Proctor; this is revealed through their language and the stage directions given by Miller.

When John enters the room Abigail's first reaction is to stand on tiptoes, this shows that she is trying to bring herself up to John's level and be noticed by him.

Abigail absorbs John's presence we are told this through Miller's stage directions, "[absorbing his presence, wide-eyed]" this suggests that Abigail loves John as she savours every moment in his presence. The first thing that Abigail says to John shows her admiration for him, " I'd almost forgotten how strong you are. " When John asks what has happened to Betty Abigail does not tell him the truth, " she's only gone silly" this shows that Abigail does not even trust the person she loves; suggests that she may not truly love John. John mentions to Abigail that people are talking of witchcraft, her way of dealing with this is to move closer as if trying to seduce him. This shows another one of her methods of persuading people to her way of thinking. Miller shows that what is going on between John and Abby is a sin in his stage directions, "[she dares come closer]" and "[feverishly looking into his eyes]" I think that these quotes also show Abigail is afraid of what John's reactions will be to her advances.

Abigail is desperate for John, when he takes a step to go she, “[springs into his path]” as if she is trapping her prey. Abigail begs John for a soft word, I think that this shows just how desperate Abby is to be loved, “ Give me a word, John. A soft word. ” Abigail then seems to change her tactics, she teases John by telling him she does not believe he has come to see Betty, “ I know you better. ” This shows that Abigail has a lot of self-confidence to make such an assumption; Miller also shows this when John makes another rejection, “[she can’t believe it. ]”.

We can see that Abigail is used to having her own way, she really does not believe that she is being rejected, “ You’re surely sportin’ with me”. Abigail cannot believe that John does not love her, but from the example she gives of his ‘ love’ shows that she appears to have lust confused with love, “ you sweated like a stallion whenever I came near! ” Abigail tells John that he is, “ no wintry man” she thinks this because of the passion they have shared, associating their passion with warmth and the sun. Abigail loses control and begins weeping she grabs John as if it is her last chance of securing his love, “[clutches him desperately]. I think that Abigail’s weakness comes from being emotionally involved; she regains herself with angry remarks. John calls Abby a child she gets angry and shows that she will not stand for people patronizing her.

The argument between Abby and John then moves on and becomes bitter. Abigail is manipulative she knows how to hurt John and does, by mentioning his wife, “ she is a cold snivelling woman. ” At the end of the extract Abby shows that she believes John did love her, “ you loved me,” and that he still does, “ you love me yet. This may not be true but this is what Abby wants to

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believe, this shows a lot about Abby's character and her role in the play, as the accuser, further on in the play it is not only Abby who believe her wild accusations. This is the first extract in which John features in we are told when he enters that he has a strong physical appearance; this is probably what attracted Abby to him in the first place. When John enters the room he immediately shows his superiority over the girls by sending Mary home and threatening her, " I'll show you a great doin' on your arse.

Abby is the only one in the room who is not afraid when John enters, we are told by Miller that Mercy is "[afraid of him]" and that she "[sidles out]". John is not like the other people in the village and does not assume witchcraft is what has caused Betty's condition, " What's this mischief here? " This shows that even though he may not be as intelligent as some people in the village he is sensible. John knows that Abby is not the angel she makes herself out to be, he is not naive, he says to Abby, " you're wicked yet, aren't y'! At this stage in the extract John is teasing Abby but then her "[concentrated desire destroys his smile. ]" He does not want to sin again, " No, no Abby. That's done with.

" We can see from what John says and Miller's stage directions that he tries to not give in to Abby because he is a good man and does not want to sin, again. John is a firm but fair man and tries to leave Abby in no doubt that he does not want her, " I'll not be comin' for you more. " Like any man John does have his weakness' he confess' to Abby that he may have looked up to her window at night, " I may have looked up. This shows John's foolishness, he should have thought before what he said because this gives Abby new hope.

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John is a strong willed character, we can see that he may have felt something for Abby but knows it is wrong, “[presses her from him, with great sympathy but firmly]. ” I think that John knows his affair with Abby has been purely lust on her side but I do not think he had bargained for how she would feel; to him the affair was a bit of fun and excitement. John thinks of Abby’s behaviour as childish, “ Child-“. John then tries another way of rejecting Abby by denying all that happened between them, “ We never touched.

This shows a certain degree of cowardice, he should just tell Abby once and for all it is over. John is a good honourable man, he get angry when Abby speaks badly of Elizabeth, “[angered - at himself as well]” John is angry at himself because he knows he has sinned and done wrong to Elizabeth. John even goes so far as to get violent with Abby, “[shaking her]” this shows how he regrets ever getting involved with Abby. Mercy and Mary are very minor characters in this extract and we do not really learn anything about their characters they will be featured further on in the play and I think we will learn more later on. A lot of the character points that are revealed of the two main characters are shown through Millers stage directions these directions also make the scene dramatic.

There are many directions which give the reader a good idea of the scene and what is going on, this involves the reader more in the play. In the dialogue between Abby and John they often interrupt each other this adds tension to the scene. The pace is fast moving as John and Abby change tone of voice at stages in the extract which adds excitement to the scene.