

The crucible



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

How does Arthur Miller create tension and conflict between John and Elizabeth at the start of act 2? The crucible was written by Arthur Miller in the year 1953 and is set almost 300 years previously in the small town of Salem, Massachusetts. Miller has added elements of Greek tragedy.

The play revolves around the lives of a small group of Protestant settlers who spent their time either forced to fight the land like heroes or in deep worship. This relatively somber reality is completely shattered when the reverend's daughter is taken ill and cannot move after alleged witchcraft. These revelations come at the worst of time especially as the trust barrier between the reverend and his communion is bordering grey to none. It doesn't take long before these small rumors turn into fully fledged allegations. Furthermore the entrance of one Abigail Williams acts as a catalyst when she accuses the wife of estranged lover John Procter of witchcraft. The play was written at a time of great desperation and deep rooted prejudice towards the Soviet Union. Furthermore these prejudices and accusations generally lacked correct if any evidence and also were largely based on suspicions and hearsay.

This is widely known as McCarthyism and is what Arthur Miller was subjected to at the time of the writing of the play. Throughout the play we follow the lives of the characters of John and Elizabeth and the drastic progression of their marriage, and how the facade and act of a happily married couple turns out to be the complete opposite. This deterioration and volatile state is most clearly seen in act two yet. We are made able to relate to some of the many contrasting aspects within their relationship such as the arguments and the

constant need to make the other happy. This is seen when John says to Elizabeth "I mean to please you, Elizabeth?"™ this shows that he still regards her happiness as a very important element within their marriage it also shows that he is trying to make up for something. This because he wants to get back into her good books and that is what he means by "please you?"™ he wants her forgiveness.

This instantly shows that this marriage isn't a very stereotypical puritan household because of the sheer fact he seeks to please her.

Generally the male is meant to be the most dominant and so therefore he needs to be pleased but here where he says this it shows that he may not be the most dominant character in the marriage. Miller has also drawn comparisons with their marriage and a common modern day couple because a majority of the issues which come up within the play are still very rife and common in modern day society. Things such as cheating within a relationship, lack of trust and also female dominance. John and Elizabeth are introduced to us in separate scenes, John being introduced first. He is first mentioned in act one at the house of the reverend. From John coming alone and Elizabeth staying behind this shows Elizabeth's dominance over John; every other male within the scene has been accompanied by their wives. This shows dominance because they are obeying their husbands orders and also respecting him.

But by Elizabeth not accompanying him this is an act of defiance and refusal to conform. This shows that she is much more dominant and that she is in power because of her will to say no to him. Furthermore we instantly see the distance in their relationship, and that she would rather him go on his own

than with his wife this statement really shows the real lack of togetherness they have in the relationship and really sets the tone for the beginning of act 2. John himself is depicted by the chorus as ??? powerful of body, even tempered??™ man and being ??? respected and feared??™ within the town. This initially paints a very different image of Procter than what he actually is like. As the play progress this image of an ??? even tempered man??™ is quickly dashed out and especially in scene two. We are introduced to Elizabeth in act 2 were her and Procter are having dinner and he has just arrived late.

From this scene The scene is set up in a really dark way with the lighting and also the awkwardness throughout. Throughout there is a reluctance to cause an argument or even bring anything up which might not please the other. The first sign of this is were Elizabeth asks him ??? what keeps you so late it??™s almost dark??? this is a question which a husband tends to ask his wife but now that he is being asked this we suddenly start to question who is the dominant figure in this house hold. Also he enters with her waiting this simply shows a huge lack of trust in this relationship. Were as if trust was in abundance or it was present in the relationship then this would be amongst the last things on here mind where as now this is how we are introduced to Elizabeth and Johns relationship with a question.

This more than anything shows the huge lack of trust and doubt in the other person. To add to all of this Miller uses several techniques such as dramatic irony in order to make the scene that bit tenser for us. This was done by showing us at the start of the play him having a conversation with Abigail on with no one there other than them to. When john tells Elizabeth this she flips

suddenly this fear of friction is gone and she questions why he did not tell him this at the start. If you have not inferred the disastrous kind of relationship these two have you must of by now. Another thing Miller has done to make this play more applicable and universal is made the characters John and Elizabeth both quite a generic dysfunctional marriage.

This in it self has happened over the ages but here it as if both have lost all love and are only together because of the kids. This marriage is so generic because most married couples who have children stay together because of them. To add to this there reluctance to squabble also underlines this, it may be again to do with the kids but I think its because they still have a deep rooted love for each other and are still waiting for it to return. A major sign of there reluctance to argue is also in act 2 the opening scene, when john arrives late.

In the stage directions it says ??? she doesn't want friction but she must??? this shows how their lack of trust has had to come into play now and has overpowered her reluctance. A