

An allegorical comparison between witches hunts and the red scare in the crucible...

[History](#)



Crucible Social Commentary

The crucible was a wonderful piece written by Arthur Miller about the Salem witch trials. However, Arthur Miller never intended for the play to be solely about witches and magic. Arthur Miller wrote the crucible for something much bigger, but not at all different from the witch trials that happened so long ago. Arthur Miller's purpose for the true message of the crucible was to provide his commentary about what was happening around him, with the red scare and the cold war.

The two events were nearly identical; the red scare was a modern day witch hunt, replacing the witches with communists. Arthur Miller beautifully illustrated the events going on around him through the events of the crucible. In the crucible, we see fear develop in Salem, and people started accusing each other of witchcraft, until the witches were put on trial and hanged. The cold war had a similar effect on the U. S. Fear developed that Soviet Russia was planning an ultimate takeover in the U. S government. Anyone who had even a remote association with communism or socialism accused, and the only way that they could possibly ease out of being condemned was to name more names. Accused often took this to their advantage and named people that they had some sort of altercation with, looking to accuse those people purely for personal gain. In the essay, Arthur Miller said that the red scare and the witch trials were seeming to become nearly one in the same, and that's because they were. Another way the crucible details the the events in the cold war is through the people that weren't accused. We generally hear very little mention of them in the

crucible because they tended to stay quiet; speak out and you would attract attention to yourself. This was much the case during the cold war. Nobody spoke out against the injustices of the court in convicting innocent people because they were afraid that they would soon become the accused themselves. Only a few people took a stand against the injustices that were shown to happen in the witch and McCarthy trials. Two of these people, Edward R. Murrow and John Proctor, resemble very similar characteristics when they go against the social injustice of the church and the state. John Proctor, when asked about his true intentions, says that " Why, I - I would free my wife, sir." However, he is accused of consulting with the devil, and he yells out " You are Pulling down heaven and raising up a whore!" Edward R. Murrow on his broadcasts against McCarthy went along those lines by starting out with a program that was supposedly just meant to cover a story about a person in the Air Force who was relieved of duty for being a ' security risk.' This person was Mr. Radulovich, a young air force weatherman. According to the article ' Edward R. Murrow and the Time of his Time,' " The Air Force secretly accused his father and sister of holding radical views." Murrow publicized the story on See it Now, and a few weeks later, the Air Force released a statement that Mr. Radulovich had his commission back. Murrow was soon accused of being on the Communist party payroll when someone ' dug up files on him.' They used phrases like " If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck - it's a duck" (Edward R. Murrow and the Time of his Time,) to try to cement the claims that Murrow was a communist. After the accusations were made, See It Now, the host Murrow was a part of, set out on a campaign to cover the injustices of the

Red Scare, specifically targeting McCarthy and other affiliates. Proctor and Murrow met very different ends, but they operated along similar trains of thought, giving another eerie realism to the Crucible. Arthur Miller was able to link these two events and not only make the play emotionally compelling, but also use the play as a way to educate and understand the events of the paranoia of the far left and the accusations that soon followed. Arthur Miller has provided the link to prove that history does in fact repeat itself, and if we are not careful, we may find ourselves repeating the injustices of the past.

Arthur Miller was also able to commentate on the injustice of the time period through the work of the crucible. Arthur Miller, through his work, has displayed exactly what went down in those courts. He has, through the use of spectral evidence in the crucible, illustrated the questionable tactics and evidence used in order to convict many innocent people of being USSR sympathizers. Choking, Needle punctures, and seeing apparitions in the Crucible took the place of the hearsay evidence that was all too common in the trial and conviction of supposed communists. As these events played out, many were angry and fearful of what was happening and what would happen if they happened to be one of the accused. The court was able to bring up anything about a person's past that may have some vague relationship towards communism. Represented in the Crucible by a quote from Mr. Cheever talking about Proctor: " He plow on Sunday." Even a minute detail such as this and some hearsay evidence were enough to convict in the McCarthy trials. Arthur Miller wrote the crucible to illustrate the fear that had developed in his time period through a means that would not draw any attention to him and any accusations that he may be a communist.

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Something bolder would have surely landed him in a position where he would be put in exactly the same situation as John Proctor was in the Crucible, Scene 3: bringing evidence that the court is false, but then being turned around and becoming one of the accused. When John Proctor and company hand over a list of names of people who thought that Goody Nurse was indeed innocent, the court had officers go out and interrogate the people on the list. This also paralleled what had happened in the red scare. Anyone who was thought to even be thinking about speaking out against the proceedings was rounded up and interrogated. Many were convicted as well. The injustice of the courts was one of the prime parallels between the world of Salem and the world of the cold war, and this was beautifully shown in Arthur Miller's writing.

Both events, the witch trials and the red scare, were felt on a personal level by both characters and people. The events in both timelines left lasting effects on a person's life, especially if they were accused. This was shown in the crucible when people started to be jailed for witchcraft and hung. Those who were lower down in social status were despised, turned against, lost everything they had, and were even some of the first to be hung for witchcraft. This was the same with what happened in the time of Arthur Miller. Those who were accused of being sympathetic towards communist ideals lost their jobs, had their families turn away from them, and they were disgraced by society. The damage to the lives of the people in each event was extraordinary and those people and characters would not recover from what had happened to them. However, we get to the people who are higher up in the community and we begin to see something different. Those who

were on the high end of the social status in the community of Salem had more support when they were accused and convicted. People started seeing that there was something happening, and that potentially the courts were wrong. This was the same with the cold war. Actors and artists that were relatively well known had more support when they were accused because people simply could not see how those people would cause danger to society. Sure, there were many people who still called out " TRAITOR" against their names, but those artists still had sort of audience to fall back on. According to Arthur Miller's essay, even though actors at least had some support, the constant barrage of disgraceful comments and hate towards them persuaded a select few to take their own lives. Tragic as it is, the claws of radical accusations cut deep into the minds and hearts of the accused, irreversibly changing those people for the rest of their lives. This is partly why Arthur Miller intended to write the Crucible: to expose the fraud that was happening and reveal how different people were affected.

The red scare was the primary thing on Arthur Miller's mind when he was writing the Crucible. His way of writing it made him able to subtly call out what was happening in the U. S government. His work allows us to shine a new light on many different scenarios, not only the red scare. He has masterfully written about the injustice of both time periods, and we could potentially link it to other events to come.