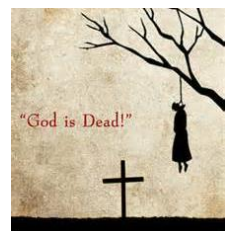


*Arthur Miller's*

# The Crucible



## Revision Guide



## Characters

### John Proctor

Proctor is the main protagonist within Miller's 'The Crucible'. He is a strong, powerful and committed Christian who is filled with guilt after his affair with Abigail Williams. Because of this, JP is trying to make amends with his wife Elizabeth Proctor. However, this turns out to be his mistake, as the fear and hesitation to reveal the truth is ultimately his downfall.

JP openly criticises the justice system within the village and he doubts the purity of reverend Parris, and his plight within the play becomes symbolic for the village as a whole.

In the final scenes of 'The Crucible' we see JP as he truly is; he condemns himself by confessing his lie and pays the ultimate price for his sin.

The audience attempts justify Proctor's affair and see him as a 'good' character. Miller is able to gain sympathy for Proctor, as the audience can recognise parts of themselves within him.

**Key Words to describe:** Loyal, Family man, Powerful, Religious, Intellectual, Stern, Strong Morale.

#### **Catalytic moments and Key actions:**

- Refuses to sign confession as he does not want his name marked, and to symbolise his loyalty to himself.
- Attempt to stop Cheever taking his wife, shows his love for her and trust.
- Convinces Mary to confess the girls lying, however she gives in to Abigail.
- Tells the court that Elizabeth will never lie, symbolising his utmost love for her and reflecting her stoic figure.
- Tells audience he had the affair, giving in to having his name destroyed so he could save Elizabeth.

**Key Ideas:** Relationships/ Loyalty/ Hysteria/ Religion/ Pride/ Guilt/ Fear/

**Function or role within the play:** Main Character in the play – Symbolises a those who were wrongly accused during McCarthyism, not giving in to their attacks. Shows that no amount of power you have can stop peril when mass accused.

**Key Quotes/ stage directions:** "(angered – at himself as well) You'll speak nothin' of Elizabeth!"

- "I'll plead my honesty no more, Elizabeth...No more! I should have roared you down when first you told me your suspicion.
- "Oh, Elizabeth, your justice would freeze beer!"
- "Spare me! You forget nothin' and forgive nothin'.
- "Why, I – I would free my wife, sir"
- "My wife pregnant!"
- "(trembling, his life collapsing about him): I have known her, sir. I have known her."
- "I have made a bell of my honour! I have rung the doom of my good name – you will believe me, Mr Danforth! My wife is innocent, except she knew a whore when she saw one!"
- "In her life sir, she have never lied"

- "Elizabeth, tell the truth!"
- "I say – God is dead!"
- "(laughs insanely, then): A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours, Danforth!...we will burn together!"
- "You are pulling Heaven down and raising up a whore!"
- '(His wrists are chained. He is another man, bearded, filthy, his eyes misty as though webs had overgrown them. He halts inside the doorway, his eye caught by the sight of Elizabeth. The emotion flowing between them prevents anyone from speaking for an instant).'
- "(with great force of will, but not quite looking at her): I have been thinking I would confess to them, Elizabeth."
- "(for the first time he turns directly to her.) I would have your forgiveness, Elizabeth."
- '(He moves as an animal, and a fury is riding in him, a tantalized search)'
- "Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!"

### Notes

#### Elizabeth Proctor

Proctor's wife Elizabeth is first introduced in Act 2 of 'The Crucible'.

Elizabeth and John's relationship is shown to be strained in Act 2 and this alters her behaviour and emotion. Elizabeth is a CHARACTER who arcs over time and changes from a stoic woman to one of great passion and strength when, in the final scenes, she counsels John with humble wisdom and shows an understanding for his desires to pay penance and cleanse his sins.

Elizabeth closes the play with the words "He have his goodness now" demonstrating her love for John, by placing his need above her own wish to have him live.

Importantly, Elizabeth is Abigail Williams' opposite. She is timid and unsure until her one desire (John) is taken away from her. Only then does she realise her own wants and needs.

**Key Words to describe:** Loyal, gentle, devout, reserved, restrained, careful, calm, solemn, humble, virtuous, honest, moral, dependable, motherly, determined, good and stoic. Later on, as the play reaches its conclusion, we see Elizabeth become passionate and selfless.

**Catalytic moments and Key actions:**

- Kicks Abigail out of the house when she suspects John of adultery
- Encourages John to reveal Abigail's deceitful accusations
- Gets arrested for witchcraft
- Pregnancy is revealed (can't be hung)
- Lies in-front of the court to save Proctor
- Helps Proctor forgive himself in the end

**Key Ideas:** Relationships/ Loyalty/ Religion/ Truth/ Conscience/ Morality/ Religion/ Identity/

**Function and role within the play:**

- Proctor's rock – he turns to her to see what he should do.
- Honesty – keeps the plot grounded.
- Hope – revelation of pregnancy.

**Key quotes/ Stage directions:**

- *'(Elizabeth is head softly singing to the children)'*
- *'(with a smile to keep her dignity)'*
- 'Abigail brings the other girls into court, and where she walks the crowd will part like the sea for Israel.'
- 'You cannot keep it, John.'
- 'I do not judge you.'
- 'Why-! The girl is murder! She must be ripped out of the world!'
- 'He have his goodness now, god forbid I take it from him'
- 'Adultery, John'
- 'I am not your judge, I cannot be'
- *'(now pouring out her heart)'*

**Abigail Williams**

Abigail Williams is Reverend Parris' orphaned 17 year old niece. As a child, she witnessed her parent's murder at the hands of the native Indians and so Parris has reluctantly taken her in. Abigail is without parental guidance and is somewhat of an outcast; she attempts to

be respectful to Parris but ultimately becomes confrontational. She merely tolerates the other girls and threatens them with violence in order to gain control. Abigail previously worked as the Proctor's servant, until Elizabeth put her out after her affair with John Proctor.

John Proctor is Abigail's desire. He symbolises her need for attention and the desire to be loved. She is obsessive about him and casts a spell to make Proctor love her, when dancing with the other girls and Tituba.

Tituba's powerful Christian confession and 'return to god' is the catalyst for Abigail – a chance for control, power and respect. Thus showing that **Abigail is the effect of oppression within the puritan society** and she shows that eventually something has to give.

Abigail has never known love and in some ways this allows the audience to feel somewhat sympathetic towards her desire for Proctor's love. But Miller himself doesn't seem to care for Abigail, stating early on in the stage directions: "Endless capacity for dissembling" and writes her as someone constantly trying to manipulate others (Parris, girls, Proctor and court).

Importantly, Abigail is the complete opposite to Elizabeth Proctor's character.

**Key Words to describe:** frightening, mean, controlling, defiant, strong, determined, manipulative, jealous, deceitful, devious, sly, whore, powerful, motivated, lustful, attention-seeking.

**Catalytic moments and Key actions:**

- Proctors' servant before Elizabeth fired her for having an affair with John
- Dances with Tituba and the other girls (seen by Parris)
- False accusations against other women after Tituba's 'confession'
- Accuses Elizabeth Proctor of witchcraft and attempting to kill her
- Deceives the court about Mary Warren and stops her deposition being taken seriously
- Tries to accuse Hale's wife of witchcraft
- Steals Parris' money and runs away with Mercy
- Later found to be a prostitute

**Key Ideas:** Hysteria/ Morality/ Metaphor/ Femme Fatale/ Deceit/ Injustice/ Theology and its weaknesses/ Power/ Control/ Desire/ Fear/

**Function and role within the play:**

- Catalyst for the trials and accusations
- Represents the hysteria and false accusation at the time of Salem and McCarthyism (allegory)
- Symbolic of man's weakness and sin

**Key quotes/ Stage directions:**

- "Uncle the rumour of witchcraft is all about; I think you'd best go down and deny it yourself".
- "There be no blush about my name"
- "It's a bitter woman, a lying, snivelling, woman and I will not work for such a woman!"
- "I will not black my face for any of them!"

- "(in a temper) My name is good about the village!"
- "she took fright is all"
- "Give me a word John, a soft word"
- "I never knew the lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and the covenanted men!"
- "She made me do it!"
- 'Abigail rises, staring as though inspired, and cries out "I want to open myself... I want the light of God..."
- "(in an open threat): Let you beware, Mr Danforth. Think you be so mighty that the power of Hell may not turn your wits?"
- "(Looking about in the air, clasping her arms about her as though cold): I –I know not. A wind, a cold wind, has come (her eyes fall on Mary Warren)"
- "(Crying to Heaven) Oh, heavenly father, take away this shadow
- "Why -? (She gulps) why do you come yellow bird?"

Abigail Williams isn't seen in Act 4 at all. She is not on stage after Proctor's taken to jail.

### Notes

**Reverend Hale**

Reverend Hale comes to Salem after receiving Reverend Parris' request. He's from a neighbouring town (Beverly) and is known to be an expert on witchcraft. Hale's arrival is both good and bad; it is good because he may see through the false accusations to the truth, but it is bad because he may see it as merely an opportunity to strengthen his name and have his knowledge and expertise in deciphering signs of witchcraft acknowledged. Unfortunately, the villagers simply see his arrival as confirmation of the devil being in Salem and their worst fears.

Hale initially extracts Tituba's 'confession' which is his ambition (and really she's given little choice, being presented with torture and death). This action is the catalyst to the story as from here the false accusations begin and Judge Danforth is summoned to conduct the witch trials.

As the play progresses, Hale's character changes; he becomes disillusioned by the process and tries to help Proctor and other prisoners to save their lives with false confessions. This is proof of the injustice and failure of the theocracy in which they live. The executions are clearly immoral and corrupt.

In the final scene, Hale shouts to Elizabeth and pleads with her to save John Proctor. This shows Hale's ignorance to the wider significance of Proctor's decision to hang for his sins.

**Key Words to describe:** Convincing, Influential, Religious, Reasonable, Honest, Adaptable, Stern

**Catalytic moments:** Extract's Tituba's false confession/ When he visits the Proctors and sees there may be a falseness about the confessions/ When he is consumed by lies in court/ When he changes his mind and tries to convince Elizabeth to save Proctor

**Function and role within the play:** he symbolises the weaknesses within a theocracy. He represents the reasonable nature that Miller wants the audience to see, and apply to the social context in which it was written (1950s America); Hale represents a logical thinking that society should apply in situations so serious.

**Key Ideas:** Theocracy/ Religion/ Faith/ Logic/ Morality/ Truth/ Power/ Fear/

**Key Quotes and stage directions:**

- "(setting down his books): ...They are weighted with authority"
- "Now mark me, if the Devil is in her you will witness some frightful wonders in this room"
- "Glory to God! It is broken, they are free!
- "I have seen too many frightful proofs in court — the Devil is alive in Salem, and we dare not quail to follow wherever the accusing finger points!" (Act 2)
- "If Rebecca Nurse be tainted, then there is nothing left to stop the whole green world from burning!" (Act 2)
- "Man remember until an hour before the Devil fell, God thought him beautiful in Heaven" (Act 3)
- "It is mistaken law that leads you to sacrifice. Life, woman, life is God's most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it. . . .it may well be God damns a liar less than he that throws his life away for pride." (Act 4)
- "Let you not mistake your duty as I mistook my own. I came into this village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died; and where I turned the eye of my great faith, blood flowed up." (Act 4)

**Reverend Parris**

Parris is not native to Salem; before this he was a merchant who bought Tituba as a slave on his travels. He is the 3<sup>rd</sup> reverend since the town settled there. He is a widow with a daughter, Betty.

Parris is not well thought of by all those in the town and early comments are made about his salary and the confidence the village has in him. He has enemies within the village and the witchcraft scandal could ruin him – as it begins in his house. He therefore bends to suit whomever has the power and influence.

Parris instigates the witchcraft hysteria, sending for Hale and stirring up a panic when Tituba is questioned. Parris knows the truth that Abigail is lying about the dancing and the witchcraft, but perpetuates the deception because it is in his own self-interest. He later changes tact and at the end of the play we see Parris praying with Hale for the prisoners to give false confessions and save themselves, after a threat was put on his life and Abigail ran away with his money.

**Key Words to describe:** materialistic, paranoid, weak, suspicious, demagogue, selfish

**Catalytic moments:** Sees the girls dancing in the woods/ Sends for Hale's expertise/ Aids Tituba's false confession/ perpetuates the deception Abigail and the girls create/ attempts to sway prisoners in to false confessions – especially pleading with Elizabeth for her to save Proctor

**Function and role within the play:** demonstrates the weakness with theocracy and religion. How the power of fear can influence action

**Key Ideas:** Greed/ religion/ power/ fear/ injustice/ lies/

**Key Quotes and stage directions:**

- 'In history he cut a villainous path, and there is little good to be said for him'
- 'though we cannot hear his words, a sense of confusion hangs about him.'
- "(his eyes going wide): No – no. There be no unnatural cause here."
- "That my daughter and niece I discovered dancing like heathen in the forest?"
- "There is a faction that is sworn to drive me from my pulpit."
- "my own household is discovered to be the very centre of some obscene practice. Abominations are done in the forest –"
- "Your name in the town – it is entirely white, is it not?"
- "I pray you, leap not to witchcraft... We cannot leap to witchcraft. They will howl me out of Salem for such corruption in my house"
- "There is either obedience or the church will burn like hell is burning!"
- "You will confess yourself or I will take you out and whip you to your death, Tituba!"
- "They've come to overthrow the court, sir!"
- "All innocent and Christian people are happy for the courts in Salem! These people are gloomy for it"
- "Excellency, I would postpone these hangin's for a while"
- "Go to him! (He rushes out the door, as though to hold back his fate) Proctor! Proctor!"

**Judge Danforth**



Judge Danforth presides over the Salem witch trials. He is a stern yet practical man more interested in preserving the dignity and stature of the court than in executing justice or behaving with any sense of fairness. He is called in once Hale and Parris extract the false confession from Tituba and then Abigail, followed by the other girls.

Danforth is described as “a grave man in his sixties, some humour and sophistication that does not, however, interfere with an exact loyalty to his position and his cause”. He ignores clear evidence that the accusations are false and discards the truth.

When visiting Proctor in the final scenes, he refuses to pardon those remaining because he would lose reputation and respect, as his decision might cast doubt on the autonomy of the court. To Danforth the law of the church is black and white.

**Key Words to describe:** controlling, cold-hearted, inherent gullibility, self-righteous, arrogant, prejudiced, uncaring,

**Catalytic moments:**

- Danforth in many ways reflects the problems with religion and how faith in this period is ultimately flawed.
- Danforth is convinced of his own importance; he is so convinced he is right that he doesn't like being questioned (Identity).
- Danforth believes that what he is doing is right and anyone who challenges him must have something to hide, be against the court and therefore against God (intolerance).
- He is afraid of being seen as weak (Fear) and refuses to stop the hangings even though he's realising there false accusations.

**Function and role within the play:**

- He constantly reminds the audience of the impending sense of harm that religion can cause.
- Danforth is the anthropomorphic representation of the failings and false pretences of religion and keeps the clock of hysteria constantly ticking over with a tangible and terrifying beat.

**Key Ideas:** identity/ religion/ injustice/ fear/ intolerance/ hysteria/ allegory/ theocracy

**Key Quotes and stage directions:**

- “Do you know who I am, Mr Nurse?”
- And do you know that near to four hundred are in the jails from Marblehead to Lynn, and upon my signature?”
- “And seventy-two condemned to hang by that signature?”
- “the voice of heaven is speaking through children”
- “And the other girls?... they are also pretending?”
- “I judge nothing... I have seen marvels in this court.”
- ‘(– it is the reflection of himself he resents)’
- “The pure of heart need no lawyers”
- “there is fear in the country because there is a moving plot to topple Christ in the country!”
- “But witchcraft is ipso facto, on its face and by its nature, an invisible crime, is it not?”
- "You deny every scrap and little of this?"
- “I should hang ten thousand that dared to rise against the law”

**Francis & Rebecca Nurse**

This elderly couple is morally good, and whose actions are mainly off stage and revealed through 'reported speech'. They are seen as gentle, kind, wise and highly respected. They have had many children and many grandchildren.

Rebecca is a "woman of experience" and she recognises Betty Parris' mischief when she says "I think she'll wake when she tires of it".

Hysteria is at its peak when Rebecca Nurse is accused of witchcraft and this is a catalytic moment.

Rebecca's presence at Proctor's confession convinces him of what he must do. She signifies truth, morality and the logic of what his morals implore him to do.

**The Putnams**

They are wealthy land owners who are odds with other villagers over land disputes. The Putnams capitalize from the accusations of witchcraft by buying up the land of those imprisoned and hung, for cheaper prices. This means that they gain power and influence through the town.

Giles Corey notices the Putnam's scheming – but won't reveal his sources to the court (he is killed for this).

They are bitter people who encourage the witchcraft hysteria, Thomas says: "a murdering witch among us". Mrs. Putnam is a twisted soul, a death-ridden woman. He only has one surviving child and turns on Rebecca Nurse, showing she's bitter and malicious. She also states "there are wheels within wheels in this village, and fires within fires" which is metaphorical of the political games within the trials, and that every comment/ action has a hidden motivation or reason; all is not as it seems.

In his research, Miller observed that many people who Ruth Putnam accused owned lots of land.

**Giles Corey**

Giles Corey, although a minor character, is one of the heroes in the novel. He is deeply brave and innocent. He holds true to his name, his morals and his family – sacrificing his life to protect what is theirs. Giles accuses Putnam of underhand tactics and refuses to reveal his sources, declaring "I stand mute". He's described as being "knotted with muscle" and he doesn't give any credit to public opinions. He bothered very little about church.

In the end, for standing mute, he is pressed to death with stones. By admitting and revealing nothing, only repeating "more weight", Giles ensures his land is passed to his sons and not eligible to be bought and sold, thus demonstrating his intelligence and his knowledge of the law – rather than blind belief in religion.

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Characters are our vehicle in exploring 1692 Salem and 1950s McCarthyist America. The main plot centres on a love triangle, while the sub plots explore greed, corruption and political agendas (Parris, Putnam, Corey). The play and its characters give Miller's comparison of Salem society with that of the McCarthy era (**Allegory**). They are a lesson to us, explaining that we should always be true to our moral compass (**Parable**).

## Context & Performance

Miller published 'The Crucible' in **1953**.

The timing is significant as during the 1950s, America were recovering from WWII and due to conflicting ideologies, the USA was at war with USSR; this was known as 'The Cold War'. Americans were fearful that Russia would take over and impose their communist way of life on them.

At the time, **Joseph McCarthy** became responsible for the anti-communist feeling within the country and he claimed to have a 'list' of communists within the state department. Although the list was never seen, this sparked media frenzy, public panic and in the end the formation of the **HUAC** (The House Committee on Un-American Activities), which gave him the power and responsibility to 'rid America of communism'.

The HUAC (led by McCarthy) interviewed all citizens who were deemed or accused to be involved in communist or anti-American activities. Those who were accused often lost their jobs, homes and families. **McCarthyism** furthered the panic and hysteria within the country and eventually society became paranoid, making false accusations to avoid being tainted themselves. People in society conformed to avoid any chance of accusations, which were based on rumour and not evidence. Arthur Miller himself was accused, after writing the play 'The Crucible'.

America's McCarthyism **parallels Salem**, Massachusetts in **1692** when the village was tormented by the hysteria fuelled witch trials. At this time, Salem was a strictly puritan society where residents lived a religious life and were constantly afraid that they would not be saved by God. However, the witch trials of Salem eventually fizzled out after residents became disenchanted by the number of accusations and deaths (19 hanged, 1 pressed and many imprisoned).

### Genre

The play:

- *Allegory* – symbolic for the comparison of 1950s McCarthyism and 1692's witch trials
- *Tragedy* – false accusations, constant anxiety and the personal tragedies of John and Elizabeth Proctor
- *Cathartic* – Miller intends to help his audience to get through and overcome times of deep emotion, paranoia and hysteria (in this case, McCarthyism)
- *Realistic 'Cup n' Saucer' drama* – Miller's stage directions and dialogue ensure the characters behave as though real, and in real life situations

## Setting

'The Crucible' is set in Salem, Massachusetts in the late C17th. This was a time when early English settlers arrived in America and were attempting to create their communities in a foreign land. The setting is uncomfortable, with an unfriendly atmosphere.

Put it in context:

- Self-made wooden houses
- North Atlantic winds attacking your home and piercing the man-made structures you live in
- You have a firm belief that God has your destiny planned and he alone can 'save you'
- But you know that most of the seeds you plant won't grow in the climate and conditions
- Winter is fast approaching and there is not enough food for all of you to avoid starvation
- You constantly worry that the natives you've stolen your land from will attack you and your family
- You worry that God won't choose you to be saved and he tests your faith with all of the harshness of life. You constantly read the bible with some question and hesitation, but you daren't sin and must remain 'pure'

Miller himself describes the settings as being unfriendly, through his stage directions: '*narrow window*', '*roof rafters are exposed*', '*crowded parlour*', '*low, dark and rather long room*', '*the room is solemn, ever forbidding*' and '*A cell...a high barred window...a great heavy door*'. The setting represents the simplicity and beliefs of the people in Salem society.

Through the setting and context of his play, Miller presents Salem as a **Theocracy** in which a God or a deity is recognized as the supreme civil ruler, and so God's laws are being interpreted by the ecclesiastical authorities – in this instance, the reverend holds power and the land owners try to sway it.



## Style

The style means the way in which something is written. What literary devices and language choices does the writer use?

Miller uses a combination of structure; prose inserts; dialogue/ direct speech and 'reported speech' to create a realistic story of fear and corruption, where gossip fuels hysteria, paranoia and control.

The play is organised/ **structured** in to 4 Acts, each with its own setting and intention:

1	The Accusations (Parris' home, village)	To shock the audience
2	The Proctors (Proctor home)	To provide human tragedy and relationship
3	The Trials (The court in the village)	To give an analysis of the role of justice in the village, and the sense of disbelief and pity which comes to a dramatic climax
4	The Executions (Jail cell)	

Miller uses **prose inserts** to give a commentary on his characters' history and this is further conveyed through the detailed **stage directions**. This detail is important as he expects it to be read as well as seen, and he must make sure that in a time of fear and paranoia, the play is about Salem 1692 and not America 1953.

Miller also adapts the device of **Chorus** from the *Greek tragedies*. A 'chorus' is a group of people who are commenting on the actions, decisions and beliefs within the play. Miller uses the collective girls (chanting, accusations and supposed visions) as a chorus to deliver Miller's view on 1950s America.

## Tone

The **tone** is the mood and atmosphere created within a text. In 'The Crucible' the tone changes as each character enters and exits, and in each new Act or scene has a different tone, created through imagery, stage directions and dialogue.

Act 1	Tone: blame, accusatory, aggression and at the end – conflict.	Atmosphere: revelation and sense of relief (the return to God and explanations for their misfortunes). At the end there is a sense of hysteria and ecstasy on stage, whilst the audience feels uneasy.
Act 2	Tone: solemnly, discontentment when we meet Elizabeth. But dignified as the scene ends and Elizabeth accepts fate.	Atmosphere: suspicious, fraught, tense, uncomfortable, fiery
Act 3 & 4	Tone: immoral, hypocritical, inspired	Atmosphere: it becomes more intense and oppressive as Salem's hypocrisy and duplicity is revealed

### Language

Miller captures a realistic 17th century east coast America, with colloquial and realistic lexis such as 'Goody' and language of the court, e.g. 'clerk of the court', 'Marshal', 'warrant', 'charged' and 'confession'.

Miller also creates a realism through the use of **direct speech** (one to one) and **reported speech** (gossip), to reflect the 17th century era and make the audience more inclined to believe the story as it is presented. The gossip reveals much of what happens in the village and is a dramatic device which creates the effect of progressing the plot and revealing character.

**Metaphor** (something representing additional ideas and events) reveals attitudes in Salem, character's views and character traits. For example, Parris declares early on "*these stiff neck people*" which reveals that he sees the village as being strict and unforgiving.

The play is also a **Parable**; it is a moral tale about what will happen when gossip and hysteria are allowed to run riot and all logic is lost.

We also see Miller use **Dramatic Irony** to as a literary device to create the dramatic effect of character revelation, plot progression, mood and atmosphere. For example, in Act 1 Abigail Williams reveals to Proctor that Betty "took fright is all". This reveals to the audience that the claims of witchcraft are false and this makes the events that unfold all the more dramatic and tragic to behold. It intensifies the fear and corruption.

### Notes

## Quotations & Analysis

### Act 1

We see an all-encompassing fear reside over Salem as an atmosphere of witchery grows and many characters, including Parris, begin to despair for their reputations and sense of power/control. Some key quotes:

- **Parris: "What did you do with her in the forest?" Abigail: "We never conjured spirits"** – here Abby claims that it has all been 'sport' and the witchcraft is not real
- **Mary: "What'll we do? The village is out! They'll be callin' us witches Abby!" Mercy: "She means to tell" Mary: We've got to tell!"**  
- Mercy reveals her fear that the village will find out and their reputations will be damaged
- **Abigail: "Now look you. All of you. We danced. And Tituba conjured Ruth Putnam's dead sisters. And that is all. And mark this. Let either you breathe a word, or the edge of a word, about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it."**  
- Abigail's fear that the truth would damage her chances with Proctor and blurb her name make her wild and aggressive. She manipulates the other girls with threats of violence. This strengthens her position in the group, as reputations are vital in securing jobs and husbands. The violence is made possible when she goes on to reveal her parents death, evoking sympathy and foreshadowing the deaths to come.
- **Proctor: "Abby that's a wild thing to say" Abigail: "A wild thing may say wild things"**  
- Abigail is likened to an animal, showing passion and sexual heat/desire
- **Abigail: "I never knew these lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men!"**  
- The town itself is hypocritical, judgmental and false.
- **Abigail: "I have a sense for heat, John, and yours has drawn me to my window, and I have seen you looking up, burning in your loneliness. Do you tell me you never looked up at my window? Proctor: "I may have looked up".**  
- The windows show Abigail and Proctor without frames, enclosed by the society around them. But as they look at each other through the same window – the boundaries of the town and society dissolve, leaving just their desire. Proctor's guilt doesn't let the frames disappear.
- **Proctor: "I'll cut off my hand before I reach for you again"**  
- He will never sin/ stray again.

### Act 2

This takes place in Proctor's house and the feeling of being trapped continues. There is great tension. Some key quotes:

- **Proctor: "You forget nothin' and forgive nothin"**  
- reveals character and relationship
- **Proctor: "Learn charity woman"**  
- ironic as Elizabeth is the most moral and true character within the play. This reveals that John is projecting his own guilt on to Elizabeth.
- **Proctor: "...an everlasting funeral marches round your heart."**  
- symbolic/ metaphoric for the darkness within the play and the damage within their relationship

- **Proctor: “..but I wilted, and, like a Christian, I confessed. Confessed!”**  
- The confession is expected but Proctor sees it as a weakness, admitting that he has lost face.
- **Proctor: “and judge me not”**  
- Proctor is fearful of God’s judgment, and the fear that the moral Elizabeth will see through him
- **Elizabeth: “I do not judge you. The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you. I never thought you but a good man, John – (with a smile) – only somewhat bewildered.”**  
- Elizabeth reveals her own nature and that there is still a sense of caring between them. She reveals the truth – that John judges himself and merely projects his guilt upon Elizabeth.
- **Proctor: (hesitating and with deep hatred of himself) “Her saintliness is done with”... Proctor: “My wife will never die for me”.**  
- John’s guilt drives him to become a religious crusader, and to stop Abby and her accusations.

### Act 3

A vital moment; we meet Judge Danforth for the first time, and in a “solemn” setting. There is a wealth of emotion within this act and great oppression. Some key quotes:

- **Giles: “Thomas Putnam is reaching for land!”... “Why, I – I cannot give you his name.”**  
- dramatic device to reveal the theme of greed and corruption. Hypocrisy is evident.
- **Proctor: “I have known her, Sir. I have known her.”**  
- Proctor’s confession in a bid to stop the hysteria rising out of false accusations. It costs him a great deal and symbolises his loyalty to Elizabeth.
- **Danforth: “You deny every scrap and tittle of this?”**  
- Danforth’s shock and fear at Abigail’s sin is clear. He cannot afford for Abby to be proven as a whore, when he has executed so many based on her word.
- **Proctor: “..my wife cannot lie. I have paid much to learn it, sir.”**  
- dramatic device to reveal character and motivations. Proctor has deep respect and faith in his wife to be true. He underestimates her love for him; enough to lie.
- **Danforth: “Did he indeed turn from you?”**  
- Danforth seeks clarification from Elizabeth with this interrogative utterance. He intends to push Elizabeth to declare the truth, outland, where no mistake can be made.
- **Elizabeth: (faintly) “No, sir.”**  
- great loyalty and love is demonstrated here as Elizabeth crosses her own sense of morality to protect her husband. It costs her her life, and soon Proctor’s too.
- **Hale: “Excellency, it is a natural lie to tell”**  
- Hale’s mistrust and disillusionment with the court becomes evident. He is disgusted by the lack of logical thinking and the belief of one ‘girl’.
- **Abigail: “Why do you come, yellow bird?”**  
- Abigail’s flouting of the maxim of quality here provokes a new hysteria within the court and fear is presented in a new, dramatic way. Mary is forced to back down and Abigail’s reputation is saved once again.
- **Mary: “You’re the devil’s man!”**  
- with no choice left but to shift the blame, Mary turns her attention to Proctor and uses him as a scapegoat, accusing him of being the devil’s man and instigating the witchcraft. This is not what Abigail planned for originally and her own meddling hysteria has gone awry.
- **Proctor: “I say – I say – God is dead!”**  
- Proctor’s faith is tested. His disbelief in the lack of logical thinking; disgust at the lies told and blindness of the court, and his own guilt crush him.



## Act 4

The climax of the play, set in a 'dark' place and the jails of Salem. The tone is solemn, grave and, for a brief instance, passionate. Some key quotes:

- **Parris: “..but the rumour here speaks rebellion in Andover”**  
- The hypocrisy of the church and courts is being revealed. The lack of logic and investigation is not being tolerated and rebellion threatens in Salem. The fear loses its edge as the deaths become so frequent they are meaningless.
- **Hale: “You must pardon them. They will not budge”**  
- Hale’s character arc is complete. He is willing to lie and spin truths to save their lives as he sees the ridiculous hypocrisy within the theocracy.
- **Danforth: “Them that will not confess will hang [...] While I speak God’s law, I will not crack its voice with whimpering. If your retaliation is fear, know this – I should hang ten thousand that dared to rise against the law, and an ocean of salt tears could not melt the resolution of the statues [...] bound by heaven to do.”**  
- Danforth remains, as ever, faithful to the court and the power he channels through it. He is immune to the deaths he is ordering and will not risk losing face.
- **Proctor: “My honesty is broke, Elizabeth; I am no good man. Nothing’s spoiled by giving them this lie that were not rotten long before”.**  
- John believes that because he has sinned, God has already decided not to save him and so another sin (to lie) will make no difference now. This demonstrates the broken character he has become and the desperation he has to be with his family.
- **Elizabeth: “I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery.**
- **[...] It were a cold house I kept.”**  
- Elizabeth’s love and forgiveness becomes clear as she lays the blame for John’s sins at her own feet.
- **Proctor: (with a cry of his whole soul): “Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! [...] I have given my soul; leave me my name!”**  
- John declares he is unworthy and that his name is his only ‘good’ thing left of himself. This is what forces him to deny the confession and be hung. Miller finally shows us that Proctor is a sinner, he has betrayed his wife and that he now wishes to pay for his sins.
- **Elizabeth: (supporting herself against collapse, grips the bars of the window, and with a cry): He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!”**  
- Elizabeth reveals her true love for Proctor in allowing him to save his soul. Her passionate desire and love for her husband is sacrificed so that he can die a ‘good man’ in the eyes of God and is freed from his guilt and responsibilities.

The irony is that had Proctor lived his and Elizabeth’s relationship would have been renewed. This is the real tragedy of the play. Proctor is a broken man at the end and Elizabeth is his rock.

## Themes & Key ideas

**Intolerance/ accusation/ shame/ injustice/ misinterpretation/ hysteria/ fear/ revenge/ jealousy/ morality/ allegory/ parable/ suspicion/ religion/ relationships/ power/ loyalty/ faith/ identity/ guilt/ greed/ corruption and many more...**

*The following 'snapshots' have been compiled by Year 13 students...*

### **Fear**

The theme of fear is closely linked to that of hysteria. Fear fuels the events that unfold within 'The Crucible' as it is what motivates the characters. Fear first blossoms when Tituba 'confesses' and the girls begin to accuse others, out of fear that Tituba will lay the blame at their feet. The play's conflict is motivated by the fear of accusation and sin. The town fears that the devil is in the village and the people look inward, attempting to hide their sins. It is this paranoid and suspicious society that fuels hysteria. The spiral of fear and hatred reaches its peak when justice is lost and the trials end.

- The Putnams fear the loss of their final child, and a loss of influence.
- Proctor fears his reputation being ruined and losing face within the community. His fear is what allows Abigail to run riot, as his unwillingness to confess his affair allows her name to be 'good' in the village.
- Parris fears his power and influence being lost. At the end of the play, after he is robbed and threatened, he also fears for his life.
- Hale fears that he will be cast out of the church and of God's good will, because he stands up to the court. He also fears that nobody else will recognise the lies behind the accusation, and more innocent lives will be lost.
- Elizabeth fears the loss of John's good name and thus her own reputation within the village. She also fears the extent of Abigail's power when she is taken in Act 2.
- Mary and the girls all fear Abigail and her power over them and the town. They dare not cross her.
- Rebecca Nurse and Giles Corey are immune to fear; they remain strong true until the end. They die in the knowledge that they are good and without sin of the devil or his lies.

The other themes that fear links to are hysteria, power and witchcraft.

### **Morality**

This is a key theme in the Crucible and is portrayed throughout the play and represented through Proctor, Elizabeth, Danforth, Hale and Abigail.

Both Proctor and Elizabeth have strong morals. Evidently, Proctor dies for his name, and Elizabeth lets him. Proctor is a man of pride and Elizabeth is firm in her morals and abides by them in every situation.

Danforth does not allow for any exceptions in the court, which is required in the court system. Even when Abigail tries to leave, he does not let her. Even though he is misled by the girl's lies, he still remains open minded as to who is to blame.

Hale has strong morals at the start, but as the play progresses and he sees Abigail for who she really is – a liar, he changes his morals, and quits the court as a result.

Abigail is a mug. She has a lack of morals and lies to the court compulsively showing little to no compassion to anybody, not worrying about who she hurts or ultimately kills.

Giles Corey and Rebecca Nurse stand true against the injustice taking place and remain truly moral until the end, when their deaths signify the true innocence slaughtered.

Morality links: Pride, justice, love, loyalty.

### **Relationships**

Proctor and Elizabeth's relationship – Loving relationship that has encountered trust issues due to Proctor having an affair with Abigail. Proctor still loves Elizabeth however Elizabeth has lost compassion for him and is cold hearted.

Abigail on the other hand has a lust for him, she shows upfront her affection for him but relationship turns to a hating one and causes his downfall (femme fatale). Her lies and accusations were meant to only uproot Elizabeth, but instead lost John his life.

Mary and Proctor have a formal relationship, she being his servant, is subordinate to him. There is a sense of fear of Proctor from Mary until she is overwhelmed by Abigail and the girls.

Abigail's accusations have power over the girls and they show a loyal relationship towards her, which is showed in their actions when they mimic her. A forced relationship.

### **Injustice**

The idea of Injustice within 'The Crucible' links directly to its historical context and McCarthyism because many innocent people were accused of being against the American government so were blacklisted, which means that they were associated with communism. The Injustice focuses on Elizabeth and Proctor, initially Elizabeth is shown to be a good religious woman but the audience is thrown when she is arrested for witchcraft, the audience knows that this is not just because they know that Abigail's accusation has an ulterior motive to get Proctor for herself. The women are unjustly accused of association with the Devil and this can show Injustice toward women in general as at the time they were seen as being a lower class than the men.

In Salem all the people who are accused are given the opportunity to save their own lives if they confess to witchcraft, this is unjust because all those who stand for their beliefs are killed. This led to hysteria throughout Salem as innocent were being hung which reflects the misguided power of religion, the court and safety in numbers.

### **Witchcraft**

The theme of witchcraft is a central aspect of the play which was intended by Miller to represent the accusations surrounding McCarthyism in the USA 1950's. The essence of the theme is carried through the play by the characters strong sense of puritan religion. This also builds the context surrounding the witch trials in Salem 1692 as they were often narrow minded; believing that the devil was to blame for their troubles. The people in Salem are driven by their fear that God will not save them; hence their belief that there really are witches in the world. This key theme is introduced to the play immediately they jump to the conclusion that Betty is bewitched "The rumour of witchcraft is all about".

### **Power**

Throughout Miller's play 'The Crucible' we can depict several underlying themes which Miller has purposefully imbedded within the story. Amongst these is the theme of power, which not only is displayed through power over characters or lack of power, but also the power of the court and religion itself. Abigail has power over most of the characters in the crucible, even the ones with a higher sense of authority – such as Danforth.

However due to Abigail's devotion to Proctor we can see that he therefore has a sense of control over her, although this he doesn't purposefully inflict.

Specifically in the scenes in court, we can see the extent of Abigail's power over the girls, where they all follow in Abigail's steps. She uses this to take control of Mary when she attempts to out the truth about Abigail to the court. Due to Danforth's high authority in court and the court's overall power of the community we can see that he is the character which has the overall say on anything in court.

The amount of power tends to decide the fate of the characters – such as Abigail having a high extent of power and therefore is believed throughout much of the play. Not only do the characters have power over each other, but the idea and devotion to Religion and the court has set rules which controls the actions of the characters.

### **Hypocrisy**

Hypocrisy in 'The Crucible' derives primarily from the church and its puritanical values. Theocracy seen in 'The Crucible' demands 'honesty' but hold members of society in a compromising position where they have no other choice but to confess to debauchery even if it is not actually true. Many characters within the play, claim to be good Christians but many are guilty of lying, in many cases to save their own life.

Those in power profess to be upholding the tenets of society and impose exacting standards. However, in reality, they demonstrate superficial values as they recite the Bible throughout and claim to live their lives by the church but fail as there is an absence of compassion, forgiveness and humanity. Characters such as Parris are deemed to be the most hypocritical because he disguises his pride and uses Christian ideals to thinly veil his contempt for Proctor under the crusade of religious morality.

### **Notes**

## Symbols

### Crucible

A crucible is a melting pot for metal. It allows impurities to be extracted under immense heat and pressures. It is symbolic, as it demonstrates that rather than look to the strict rules and problems within society, they look to pin the blame on external factors such as the supernatural/ the devil or communism.

So what is melting? Well, in Miller's eyes society was melting, as the fear of accusation and persecution became real through hysteria.



### Morality

The conflict between a man's raw deeds and the concept of himself; Miller suggests that one's conscience is organic and your sense of morality is governed by the place, culture and time in which you live. Miller uses morality to symbolise the corruption that power and greed can cause. In a time where the reverend is in charge of the morals in town, and the reverend Parris is not moral himself mirrors the actions of Joseph McCarthy and the HUAC.



Furthermore, it presents the idea that a theocracy is potentially an explosive situation which sparks rebellion and hysteria through hypocrisy.

### Light

Morality is also represented by light throughout the play. Light is also used to set the mood / tone of each act.

Act 1: the morning sun streams and a candle still burns. This demonstrates a revelation or change; the 2 lights indicate the need for illumination metaphorically (a learning). There are also religious connotations – the sun/ candles being symbolic for hope/ life and God.



Act 2: almost dark, a fire in the fire place. This demonstrates that there is an enclosed, unwelcoming atmosphere that needs light being injected. However, a fire was still lit and this signifies there is still love within – the warmth is spreading, slowly (as Elizabeth's icy demeanour towards Proctor melts as the play progresses).

Act 3: sunlight pouring through, 2 high windows in the back wall. This implies that in this scene, in the court and church, we can expect justice. We're hopeful for it, in fact; we have faith that it will be given. The sun represents the physical presence of God and we expect Abby to be brought to justice – but this is gradually eroded, as Danforth refuses to accept Proctor and Mary, and Elizabeth lies. The audience realise that – just like the accusations in act 1 – the symbol of light proves false.

Act 4: place is in darkness except for the moonlight seeping through the bars. This creates an eerie and anxious atmosphere. Being night time creates the typical expectation of when

evil is done, and the moonlight is trapped behind bars. However, the 'seeping' indicates that there is still hope that justice will prevail – there is a chance. The bars indicate that the chance of justice will be restricted and foreshadows the tragic ending to come.

Hathorne says 'The sun is still up' and in this moment Miller offers the audience a dash of hope still being left. There may still be some hope, in a different form. As the sun rises, Proctor confesses and we see a chance for a 'happy ending' but hope is dashed as he rips up his confession to absolve his sins.

We see a final symbolic happiness when 'the new sun is pouring in upon her face' and Elizabeth reveals to the audience that although tragic, Proctor is spiritually saved and has forgiven himself; he has paid his penance.

### Birds

Betty is said to have flown "I hear she flies", "starts for the window" which is taken as a sign of witchcraft and the devil. This motivates Parris to send for Hale to come and investigate.

Abigail pretends to see a yellow bird in the court, to represent Mary's spirit. She claims its 'wings spreading' and that it has 'claws'. Abigail implies that she and the girls are prey and need protecting from this danger.



At the end, Proctor is described as 'sits like some great bird' to signify his strength, pride and his desire for freedom. This is also symbolic of Salem's desire to be free from the trials and the injustice within them. The village desires freedom from hypocrisy, sacrifice and a society ruled by a religion.

### Other animals

Cheever notes that "many cows wandering the high road" which could be symbolic, implying that eventually nature will overcome man's conventions and balance will be restored again.

In Act 2, Elizabeth describes her interaction with the rabbit. She tells John the "rabbit walked in ... like she came to visit". This account foreshadows the sacrifices to come:

- John's confession
- Elizabeth's lie
- John's death

