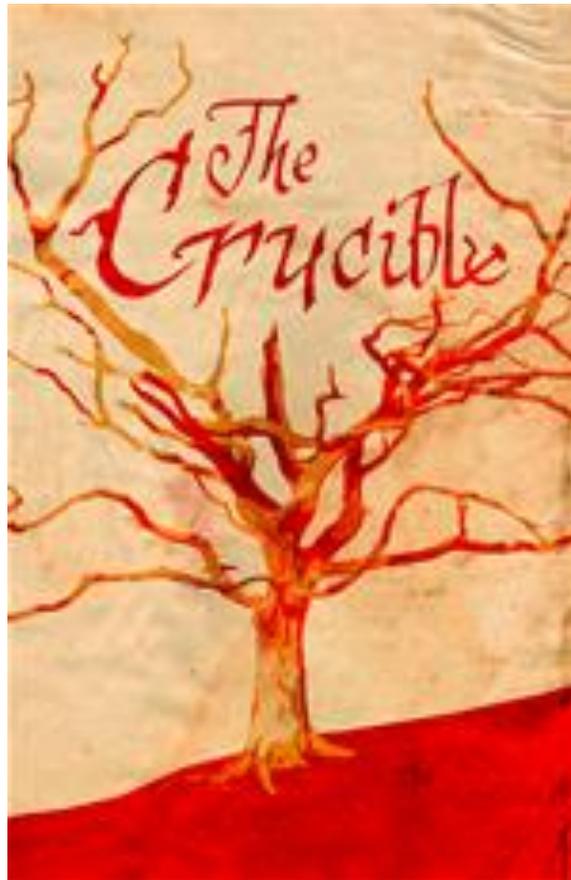


The Crucible

by Arthur Miller

School Study Guide



Otterbein University Department of
Theatre and Dance
October 20-22 & 27-29

***The Crucible* Fast Facts**

- *The Crucible* was written in 1953. The play went on to win the 1953 Tony Award for “Best Play”.
- The play was first performed at the Martin Beck Theatre on Broadway on January 22, 1953.
- Arthur Miller originally titled the show “Those Familiar Spirits”
- Many of the characters were real people during the 1692 Salem Witch Trials.
- Salem, Massachusetts became a tourist attraction only after Miller wrote *The Crucible*.
- While *The Crucible* is now considered as an American classic, when it first premiered critics and Miller himself hated it.

Revivals and adaptations

1996 Movie starred Daniel Day-Lewis (*Lincoln, There Will Be Blood*) as John Proctor and Winona Ryder (*Stranger Things, Heathers*) as Abigail Williams

2002 Broadway Revival starred Liam Neeson (*Taken, Schindler's List*) as John Proctor and Laura Linney (*Love Actually, The Big C*) as Elizabeth Proctor

2016 Broadway Revival starred Saoirse Ronan (*Brooklyn, The Lovely Bones, Atonement*) as Abigail Proctor

What does *The Crucible* even mean?

The word “Crucible” has two main definitions that can be tied to this play

1. A container in which metals or other substances are subjected to very high temperatures.
2. A place of severe tests or trials.

How do both definitions fit this play?

Hint: The first definition applies to a character in the play who might be considered “the container”.

Biography of Arthur Miller

(Biography provided by Dramatists Play Service website)

Arthur Miller (1915-2005) was born in New York City and studied at the University of Michigan. His plays include *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1944), *All My Sons* (1947), *Death of A Salesman* (1949), *The Crucible* (1953), *A View From the Bridge* and *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955), *After the Fall* (1964), *Incident in Vichy* (1964), *The Price* (1968), *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972), *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), *The American Clock* (1980), and *Playing for Time* (1980). Later plays include *The Ride Down Mt. Morgan* (1991), *The Last Yankee* (1993), *Broken Glass* (1994), *Mr. Peters' Connections* (1998), *Resurrection Blues* (2002), and *Finishing the Picture* (2004). Other works include "Focus," a novel (1945), "The Misfits," a screenplay (1960), and the texts for "In Russia" (1969), "In the Country" (1977), and "Chinese Encounters" (1979), three books in collaboration with his wife, photographer Inge Morath. Memoirs include "Salesman in Beijing" (1984) and "Timebends," an autobiography (1988). Short fiction includes the collection "I Don't Need You Anymore" (1967), the novella "Homely Girl, a Life" (1995) and "Presence: Stories" (2007). He was awarded the Avery Hopwood Award for Playwriting at University of Michigan in 1936. He twice won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award, received two Emmy awards and three Tony Awards for his plays, as well as a Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement. He also won an Obie award, a BBC Best Play Award, the George Foster Peabody Award, a Gold Medal for Drama from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Literary Lion Award from the New York Public Library, the John F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Aljur Meadows Award. He was named Jefferson Lecturer for the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2001. He was awarded the 2002 Prince of Asturias Award for Letters and the 2003 Jerusalem Prize. He received honorary degrees from Oxford University and Harvard University and was awarded the Prix Moliere of the French theatre, the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Pulitzer Prize.

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

We begin in the village of Salem, Massachusetts to Reverend Samuel Parris kneeling beside his daughter's bed. Betty has become ill and unresponsive and a rumor has begun to spread that she is a victim of witchcraft. Reverend John Hale comes to the Parris home to investigate these rumors. Parris explains that he found his daughter, Abigail Williams (his niece) and several other girls dancing in the woods with a servant named Tituba. He witnessed Tituba spouting unintelligible words while the other girls ran around naked. Abigail denies these claims and says that Betty fainted because her father had found them. Parris then asks Abigail if she believes she has a good soul and reputation, as her previous employer, Elizabeth Proctor, has fired her because Abigail is "soiled." Abigail refutes and says that Elizabeth hates her and has her fired because she won't be Elizabeth's slave.

Thomas Putnam and his wife enter the Parris home reporting that their daughter, Ruth, is having the same fits that Betty is experiencing. Mrs. Putnam had seven children that all died within a day of being born and is convinced that witchcraft murdered her children. Desperate to prove this claim, she sent Ruth to Tituba for help. Parris again accuses Abigail of witchcraft and Putnam believes that Parris should publicly announce what he witnessed. Parris agrees to meet with the growing crowd outside but will not bring up the witchcraft until he hears more from Rev. Hale. Mercy Lewis then enters saying that Ruth has become better.

As the room clears, Abigail pulls Mercy aside to explain what is happening. The Proctor's servant Mary Warren also enters and is extremely nervous. Mary tells Abigail that she fears they will be accused of witchcraft. Betty then awakens and cries for her mother, who is dead. Abigail quiets the girls and says that she told Parris everything that happened. Betty cries that Abigail didn't mention them drinking blood as part of a charm to kill Elizabeth Proctor. Abigail tells the girls to say they only danced and that Tituba had tried to conjure the Putnam's dead children. She threatens to kill anyone who says more.

John Proctor enters and reminds Mary that he forbade her from leaving the house and threatens to whip her. Mary and Mercy leave Abigail and Proctor. Proctor is uneasy because he has had an affair with Abigail and his wife discovered them, (hence the real reason Abigail was fired.) Abigail says that she still waits for Proctor at night and that she has seen him looking at her window. While Proctor seems to still have feelings for Abigail, he insists that the affair is over.

The crowd outside begins singing a psalm and which includes the phrase "...in Jesus's name." As the words are sung, Betty wakes and becomes hysterical. Parris, Mercy, and the Putnams rush in and Mrs. Putnam says that Betty is bewitched as she can't hear the Lord's name without pain. Rebecca Nurse and Giles Corey enter. Rebecca stands over Betty and begins to soothe her. Rebecca claims that Betty and Ruth are just having fits from being overstimulated.

Proctor asks Parris if he has consulted the authorities or called a town meeting before asking Rev. Hale to come. Putnam demands that Hale search for signs of witchcraft, but Proctor says that he can't command that because Salem doesn't grant votes simply due to wealth. Putnam then retorts that Proctor shouldn't worry about the town's government as he doesn't attend

church regularly. Proctor admits that he doesn't like Parris' way of faith and doesn't believe in his authority.

Rev. Hale returns and asks Proctor and Giles if they also have children who are suffering and Proctor leaves. Giles asks Hale what reading strange books could mean as his wife Martha is often found reading. He states that he can't pray until she closes her books. Hale says they can talk later and Giles says he doesn't mean to say Martha is a witch. Hale turns to Abigail to talk about the night in the woods and she maintains her story. Parris mentions that he saw a kettle with something moving inside and Abigail states that it was merely soup that a frog had accidentally jumped into. She then says that while she didn't call the devil or drink what was in the kettle, Tituba did. Tituba comes to the room and Abigail cries that Tituba made her drink blood. Tituba retorts that Abigail begged her to perform a charm. Hale asks Tituba if she has seen anyone with the Devil in Salem. Tituba says that she saw people with the Devil and that the Devil has told her to kill Parris many times in exchange to grant her freedom to go back to her home in Barbados. She then says she saw Sarah Good and Goody Osborn with the Devil while Abigail adds Bridget Bishop's name to the list. Betty once again wakes up and begins chanting even more names of people she has seen with the Devil.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

We enter at the Proctor's home where John and Elizabeth are eating dinner. Mary Warren has gone to the trials even though she has been told not to. Fourteen people are now in jail and if they do not confess, they will be hanged. Proctor tells Elizabeth that he knows that Abigail has something to do with witchcraft and Elizabeth wants him to testify against Abigail. He cannot, as Abigail told him about the witchcraft while they were alone. This angers Elizabeth. Mary then returns home from the trials and gives Elizabeth a doll she sewed that day. She tells John and Elizabeth that thirty-nine people have now been accused. John and Elizabeth argue that Mary shouldn't attend the trials anymore but Mary says that she saved Elizabeth's life today when her name was mentioned with the accused.

Hale enters as he is now tasked with talking to all of the accused. He questions the Proctors about their Christian character since they don't attend church regularly and their youngest son is not baptized. Proctor is then asked to recite the Ten Commandments, but forgets "adultery." Proctor then tells Hale that Abigail said witchcraft had nothing to do with Betty's sickness. Hale mentions that many have already confessed, but Proctor reminds him that they would be hanged if they didn't. Giles and Francis rush in and cry that both of their wives have been arrested.

Ezekiel Cheever and John Willard arrive to arrest Elizabeth. Hale is shocked because Elizabeth had not been charged with anything. Cheever asks if Elizabeth owns any dolls and she says she hasn't had one since she was young. Cheever sees the doll that Mary Warren made and finds a needle inside. He tells them that Abigail had a fit and Parris found a needle in her abdomen. Abigail accused Elizabeth. Even though Mary says she made the doll, Elizabeth is still arrested. Proctor, enraged, rips up the warrant for her arrest and demands that Mary testify for Elizabeth. Mary says that Abigail will kill her if she does and Proctor will be charged with adultery. While Proctor is stunned that she knows of the affair, he presses her to testify anyway and Mary continues to cry that she cannot.

ACT TWO, SCENES 1 & 2

We enter to a court that is now in session. Proctor and Mary enter. Mary testifies that she and the other girls were just pretending that night in the woods. Judge Danforth is shocked at this claim and asks Proctor if he has told the village. Parris says that Proctor is trying to overthrow the court but Proctor assures him that he is only trying to save Elizabeth. Danforth and Hathorne tell Proctor he shouldn't worry about an immediate accusation because Elizabeth has said she is pregnant. Danforth then asks if Proctor will drop his condemnation but he firmly says no. He gives Danforth a deposition saying that Elizabeth, Martha, and Rebecca are good and should be released.

Danforth sends for Abigail and the girls. Abigail denies the testimony that Mary gave. Mary insists that they were all pretending. Hathorne asks Mary to pretend to faint as she did earlier but she cannot as she doesn't "have the sense of it." She claims that she only pretended to see spirits. Danforth presses Abigail to tell the truth and Abigail and the other girls begin to shiver. They accuse Mary of bewitching them with cold winds.

Proctor calls Abigail a whore and confesses their affair. He tells the court that Abigail wants Elizabeth to hang so she can take her place in his home. Danforth calls for Elizabeth, to whom Proctor has begged to be unfailingly honest. Danforth has Proctor and Abigail turn their backs to Elizabeth and asks her why she fired Abigail. After trying to look to Proctor for a clue, she claims that she thought Proctor fancied Abigail so she fired her without just cause. Elizabeth is taken back to the jail as Proctor cries out that he has already confessed, but it is too late to change Elizabeth's story.

Abigail and the other girls begin screaming that Mary is sending her spirit towards them. Mary pleads with them to stop, but they begin repeating her words. Mary then seems to become hysterical and starts screaming herself. Proctor tries to reach for her but she cries that he is the Devil's Man. Danforth arrests Proctor and Hale quits the court.

ACT TWO, SCENE 3

Danforth and Hathorne visit the jail and see Parris. They demand to know why Rev. Hale has returned. Parris says that Hale has been talking to the people who have not confessed and is begging them to save themselves. Parris then informs them that Abigail and Mercy have not been seen since the trials. Hale enters and begs that the remaining seven prisoners be pardoned. Danforth says he cannot because any delays or pardons would cast doubt on the decisions made. Many people in town were in jail and Salem became neglected and hostile. Cows were roaming the streets freely, children were wandering around with parents, and homes and businesses that were left behind began looking dreary.

Danforth speaks to Elizabeth to encourage her to get Proctor to confess. She and Proctor are reunited to speak alone. Elizabeth tells Proctor that almost one hundred people have confessed and that Giles was pressed to death by stones. Proctor asks if he should confess, as he has held out due to spite. He wants the persecutors to feel guilty when they know they are hanging an innocent man. Proctor decides that he will confess and Cheever, Danforth, and Hathorne begins to write down his confession.

The men bring out Rebecca to see the confession in hopes that she will follow in example. After his confession, Danforth asks if he ever saw Rebecca with the Devil. Proctor says no and that he will only confess to his own sins. After reluctantly signing his confession, Proctor grabs it and renounces it. Danforth calls for Willard and he leads the seven condemned to the gallows. Proctor, Rebecca, and the others are then hanged.

History behind *The Crucible*

The Salem Witch Trials

1692-1693 in Colonial Massachusetts

200 people were accused of witchcraft, 20 were executed

1689	English rulers William and Mary began a war in the new colonies. This war sent many refugees from the colonies to Essex County and Salem Village. The reverend of Salem Village, Samuel Parris, was disliked throughout town for being greedy. Fights began to break out between townsfolk and the refugees and the fighting was viewed as the work of the Devil.
January 1692	Reverend Parris' daughter Elizabeth (9), niece Abigail Williams (11), and local girl Ann Putnam (11) began having strange fits. They would throw items across their rooms, scream and chant strange things, and contort their bodies in odd ways. Doctors suspected the supernatural.
February 1692	The three young girls were pressured by the town's magistrates, John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin, to name who had inflicted these fits on them. The girls eventually named three women; Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne.
March 1692	Interrogations of the three women began. While both Sarahs claimed innocence, Tituba said the devil had come to her and made her do his bidding. All three women were put in jail. After these interrogations, paranoia began to spread around town. Hysteria began to grow, especially after a loyal church member, Martha Corey, was accused.
April 1692	Thomas Danforth was brought in to begin questioning of the newly accused. He questioned many Massachusetts towns, including Salem Village.
May 27 th – June 10 th 1692	In May, the trial of Bridget Bishop began. Despite claiming to be innocent, she became the first person to be hanged on Gallows Hill on June 10.
July-September 1692	During these months, 18 more people were tried and hanged.
October 1692	The governor during this time, Governor Phipps, began prohibiting arrests of accused witches, as his wife was being questioned. Between this time and May 1693, Phipps released many accused parties and pardoned everyone who was in jail for witchcraft.

McCarthyism and The Red Scare

McCarthyism is known as “the practice of making accusations of subversion or treason without proper regard for evidence.” Or “the practice of making unfair allegations or using unfair investigative techniques, especially in order to restrict dissent or political criticism”

McCarthyism was named after a Republican U.S. Senator, Joseph McCarthy, a public face during the Cold War. McCarthy claimed that there were Communists, Soviet spies, and sympathizers of the Communist cause in the United States, especially in the U.S. Government.

McCarthy’s ideas began to cause fear and hysteria. This time period is known as the Second Red Scare (1950-1956) and saw a rise in campaigns and accusations to find these “spies”. The primary targets of these interrogations were government agents, homosexuals, members of the entertainment industry, educators, and union activists

Thousands of Americans were accused and were subjected to aggressive interrogations and questioning by panels, agencies, and committees. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 12,000 people lost their jobs and hundreds were imprisoned during this time.

Blacklists

In the entertainment industry, around 300 actors, writers, and directors were considered unemployable after being accused of being associated with the Communist Party. This list became an unofficial “Blacklist”

People you may know who were accused:

Lucille Ball, Leonard Bernstein, Bertolt Brecht, Charlie Chaplin, W.E.B Du Bois, Allen Ginsberg, Langston Hughes, Gypsy Rose Lee, Arthur Miller, Dalton Trumbo, Orson Welles

How Arthur Miller connects to McCarthyism/Red Scare

During this period of the Second Red Scare, many of Arthur Miller’s co-workers and friends were being questioned and tried. Miller himself was called in for questioning and asked to name others that he knew were suspected Communists. In front of the House Committee of Un-American Activities, he denied an answer and was tried for contempt of court.

Miller wrote “The Crucible” after watching this mass hysteria take place, and realizing how similar it was to the Salem Witch trials. The play focused on the fact that once accused, a person had little chance of exoneration, given the irrational and circular reasoning of both the courts and the public.

“I thought of it first when I was at Michigan. I read a lot about the Salem witch trials at that time. Then when the McCarthy era came along, I remembered these stories and I used to tell them to people when it started. I had no idea that it was going to go as far as it went. I used to say, you know, McCarthy is actually saying certain lines that I recall the witch-hunters saying in Salem. So I started to go back, not with the idea of writing a play, but to refresh my own mind because it was getting eerie. For example, his holding up his hand with cards in it, saying, “I have in my hand the names of so-and-so.” Well, this was a standard tactic of seventeenth-century prosecutors ... It was a way of inflicting guilt on everybody, and many people responded

genuinely out of guilt; some would come and tell him some fantasy, or something that they had done or thought that was evil in their minds. Many times completely naive testimony resulted in somebody being hanged.” – Arthur Miller

(from an interview with the Paris Review in 1966)

Colonial Puritanism	The Real Abigail Williams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Came to America in 1630s • Devoted life to God with very simple lifestyles • God has already determined who would go to heaven • Christians who wanted the Church of England to purify anything that was not found in scriptures • Puritanism began being absorbed by other religious groups in the 20th century 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in 1680 and died c. 1697 • She did live with her uncle Samuel Parris and cousin Betty • Was 11 years old when she first accused others of witchcraft • Claimed to have fits and was examined to determine if the fits were medical or if she was bewitched • Gave her last testimony on June 3rd, 1692 • Disappeared after the trials and very little is known about her life after

Themes

INTOLERANCE:

The Crucible is set in a theocratic society (priests rule in the name of God). Moral and state laws became intertwined. Any sin that one committed would become a public matter and there is no deviation from social “norms”. In this time, you either belonged to God or you belonged to the Devil.

HYSTERIA:

Hysteria can tear our communities apart. As we see in *The Crucible*, logic seems to have flown out the window and neighbors fear neighbors, even if they are outstanding citizens in the village’s eyes. Throughout the play, hysteria is welcomed easily and gives cause to express any repressed feelings or act on long held grudges.

REPUTATION:

A person’s reputation was extremely important in theocratic Salem society. Many characters’ reputations are questioned and destroyed. John Proctor keeps secret about his affair, even though he could be using information Abigail told him to save others in the trials, because he fears his reputation will be ruined. Elizabeth Proctor lies about why she fired Abigail to protect her husband’s reputation as well. During this time, there was extreme fear of guilt by association.

IRONY:

“When a situation is the exact opposite of what you would expect.”

Characters in *The Crucible* believe that they are fighting the Devil’s work when they themselves are actually performing it. The suspected witches are accused and hanged to purify Salem, but the hangings have the opposite effect. As the town goes deeper into hysteria and chaos, the town suffers complete devastation. The attempts to purify end in arrests and executions of some of the most virtuous people in the society.

If you liked *The Crucible*, you may enjoy.....

Movies	TV Shows	Books/Plays	Podcasts
-The Craft - The Village -Trumbo - Pleasantville - Planet of the Apes	-The 4400 -The X Files -The Simpsons: Treehouse of Horror VIII -American Horror Story: Coven	-The Scarlet Letter By Nathaniel Hawthorne -Death of a Salesman By Arthur Miller -The Lottery by Shirley Jackson - Lord of the Flies by William Golding	-Lore -Stuff You Missed in History Class -15 Minute History -1001 Heroes, Legends, Histories, and Mysteries

Terms & Phrases You Should Know:

Crucible - a severe, searching test or trial; a container in which metals or other substances are subjected to high temperatures

“Be hearty soon” - strong and well

Bid - to order or express

Pulpit - a platform in a church from which the sermon is delivered

“There be no blush” - to feel shame or embarrassment

Providence - a manifestation of divine care or direction

Contention - strife in debate, dispute; controversy

Disputation - the act of debating, a verbal controversy

“Clapped in the stocks” - putting ones had in a guillotine or pillory

Sportin’ - to mock

Goody – a title given to a respectable older woman

Incubi and succubi – male and female version of demons with sexual desires

Jabberer - rapid, to talk incoherently

Trafficked – dealing or trading something illegal

Lechery - indulgence of sexual desire

Lewd- obscene or indecent

Pretense - a false show of something, make-believe

“I scorn it” - to reject, refuse, or ignore

Daft - stupid or foolish

“I have broke charity with the woman” - to betray

Effrontery - shameless

Ipsa facto - by the fact itself; by the very nature of the deed

Augur – someone who predicts events by omens

Gulling - to deceive, trick, or cheat

Gibbet - a gallows with a projecting arm at the top from which the bodies of criminals were hung in chains and left suspended after execution

Beguile - to mislead, to influence by trickery or flattery

Questions to think about after the show

Why would Abigail and the other girls lie about seeing the Devil and accuse others of being witches?

Several characters use lies to gain something they want. Why do they lie? What do they gain from this? What do they lose?

Why does John Proctor sign his confession, but then says he does not support his own confession?

How do rivalries and grudges have an effect on the witch trail hysteria?

How do previously powerless characters gain power as the trials continue?

What roles do both Elizabeth Proctor and Abigail Williams play? What do they each represent?

What do they want/what do they need/do their wants and needs change as the play goes on?

What are Reverend Parris' motivations for his actions? Do you think he believes Abigail and the others?

Elizabeth is portrayed as a moral woman devoted to the truth. Why does she lie in court about Abigail being fired?

While Abigail Williams was a real person, she never had an affair. She was also considerably younger when the actual trials took place. Why do you think Arthur Miller chose to add this element of drama?