

## "The Crucible"

Choose a play in which the dramatist explores conflict between two opposing forces. Show how the dramatist makes you aware of the conflict and discuss the extent to which you find the resolution of the conflict satisfying.

"The Crucible" by Arthur Miller is set during the times of the infamous Salem witch trials. The play shows how a small Christian community is overcome with fear and resentment when accusations of witchcraft arise. Soon a battle between two completely different forces, honesty and falsification up rises.

The play opens with a group of girls being caught whilst sporting in the forest. Suspicious eyes turn towards the girls and they attempt to shift the blame. Abigail Williams is the eldest and the leader of the girls. After an affair with the protagonist John Proctor, Abigail tries to place an incantation on Proctor's wife Elizabeth. During Abigail's attempts to shift the blame she draws a significant amount of the innocent population of Salem into her games. Due to the accusations the ones caught in this shambles have no option but to give up their soul and name accomplices of the devil. However, Proctor fights against this to save his own soul and those close to him.

From the off it is clear corruption has a hold on the Salem community and as the play progresses its grasp tightens. The people of Salem follow their given laws at first glance. However underneath lies the hidden truth, the society is "rotten". This can be shown by the girls being caught in the forest:

"Now look you. All of you. We danced"

This conveys that the people of Salem do not follow the laws completely but rebel in secret as dancing and going into the forest is seen as the devils work. This also shows Abigail giving orders to the other girls. These actions conflict with their laws and in addition to this many of the citizens are selfish including those who themselves should be setting an example. One of whom is Reverend Parris who cares less about his own daughter's condition and more about his reputation and position within the community:

"There is a faction that is sworn to  
drive me from my pulpit."

From this he seems to be well aware that there are those who wish him to leave Salem or do not support him fully, and would call the cause of his daughter's condition "unnatural," blaming Parris to have him removed from the church. Spite and lust emerge from Salem as key features to their society. Thomas Putnam is an example of this as he preferred his brother to have become the reverend over Parris. Putnam also appears to be jealous of Parris purely down to his highly regarded position in the

town; however he does approve of a rumour of witchcraft being linked to the Parris household.

Corruption is an incredibly powerful force and is personified through the antagonist Abigail Williams. It is Abigail who begins this epidemic of corruption spreading it to the girls at first and soon it takes its toll on most of Salem's inhabitants. Abigail utilises this to her advantage to try and lure Proctor back into the affair they once had, but Proctor resists. This can be shown by:

"I know how you clutched my back behind  
your house and sweated like a stallion  
whenever I come near! Or did  
I dream that? It's she who put me  
out, you cannot pretend it were you. I  
saw your face when she put me out,  
and you loved me then and you love me now"

This gives the reader a basic idea of what went on during their relationship and she uses this to try and persuade him but it is a failed attempt, this can be conveyed with:

"Abby, I may think of you softly from time  
to time. But I will cut off my hand  
before I reach for you again.  
Wipe it out of mind. We never touched, Abby"

Through this the reader can see Proctor has little affection for Abigail, thus not being drawn in to her seductive ways. As Proctor resists Abigail she twists this to her advantage and frames his wife-Goody Proctor-of placing needles into a dolls stomach to curse her and therefore this leads to Goody Proctor being arrested, strengthening the corruption within Abigail.

John Proctor is seen by the citizens of Salem as a strong, honest and blunt-spoken man, a man who you can rely upon for an honest and pure answer. He can also be seen as the nemesis of Abigail, as he prefers to uphold justice and integrity. However, Abigail constantly lies throughout the play to support her ways and to gain the support of others who are also corrupt. The beginnings of this can be seen in Act one when Abigail says:

"Let either of you breathe a word,  
or the edge of a word, about  
the other things, and I will come  
at you in the black of some terrible  
night and I will bring a pointy  
reckoning that will shudder you."

Here the reader can see the hold Abigail has over the other girls. She knows she can manipulate them and she uses this to her advantage. It also shows that she is a liar, and wants the other girls to lie too. She needs them to do this so they stay out of trouble but most importantly to

make sure she does not get in to trouble. Abigail knows that if the truth was exposed her reputation would be tarnished. This is what defines the difference between Abigail and Proctor. Proctor is not afraid to tarnish his reputation as long as he is true to himself. In act one while Proctor is in Parris' house he says:

"I mean it solemnly, Rebecca; I like  
not the smell of this 'authority'"

This tells the reader that he does not like who is in authority and he is currently against the church due to the recent events as the reverends' daughter and niece are involved, this also demonstrates how Proctor believes Parris is greedy and selfish. Furthermore, in act two the reader can see how Proctor goes on about what is driving the population of Salem:

"I'll tell you what's walking Salem –  
vengeance is walking Salem. We  
are what we always were in Salem, but  
now the little crazy children are jangling  
the keys to the kingdom, and common  
vengeance writes the law! This warrant's  
vengeance! I'll not give my wife to vengeance!"

Here repetition of vengeance is used. This also shows that Proctor is standing up against the authorities. He is undermining the authorities because he thinks the children are in control of Salem. Also in act two Proctor decides to stand by his wife by asking Elizabeth to tell the court what she knows:

"We will slide together into our pit;  
you will tell the court what you know."

Proctor is willing to tell the law what he and Abigail have done to save his wife. Thus it shows he is loyal to his wife. Then in act three Proctor's integrity is furthered when he does finally admit to his adultery with Abigail:

"I have known her sir. I have known her."

This for Proctor is the breaking point where his integrity is beginning to be seen by others as his shameful secret is revealed to the court. Again in act three the integrity of Proctor is shown when he makes clear he knows his reputation is on the line:

"I have made a bell of my honour!  
I have rung the doom of my good name."

Proctor knows that his good name is at stake and that people may not look at him in the same way and his position in the community will be drastically lower. However, Proctor does not seem to care about that as long as his wife is set free.

As Proctor himself is arrested and is asked to sign the confession, Hale begins to doubt all those times he signed a life to the rope and begins to stand by Proctor. The judges are well aware they are doing wrong but carry on to keep their reputation untarnished and to not look a fool in front of the community. Proctor is forced to make a decision to sign the confession and live in shame or keep his pride and honesty, but at a cost of sacrificing his life. This can be shown by the comment Danforth says:

"which way do you go, Mister?"

This conveys that Danforth is giving Proctor the choice of being hung or signing the confession. Proctor at first decides to sign the confession so he may watch them grow up but at the cost of living in shame. This may be shown by:

"I have three children – how may I  
teach them to walk like men in the  
world, and I sold my friends?"

This shows Proctor wants to remain a good man however; he does not want to lie any further. This also shows he would like to live and be with his family but does not wish to live with the guilt. After conferring with his wife Proctor decides to sign the confession but he does not give it to the judges. This may be shown by:

"no, no, I have signed it. You have seen  
me. It is done! You have no need for this."

This shows the reader that after signing the confession Proctor argues that there is no need for it to be pinned up on the door of the church. However, the judges want it pinned up to show that even the strongest of the accused can be broken. Proctor then changes his mind and tears up the confession as he will not lose his integrity:

"for now I do just see some shred of  
goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to  
weave a banner with, but white enough  
to keep it from such dogs."

Proctor has made his final decision and signs his life to the rope. He then asks for his wife's forgiveness. Goody Proctor is then asked to try and persuade him to re-sign the confession but she replies with:

"He have his goodness now. God  
forbid I take it from him!"

This conveys that Goody Proctor has finally forgiven him for the sins he has committed. Also she denies to persuade him.

In conclusion Proctor managed to retain his integrity after the battle to save his wife and the battle to prove Abigail is not as innocent as everyone

seems to think. During the play the integrity of Proctor becomes more apparent as it progresses. To begin with, the reader finds out that Proctor is a calm and collected man but finds his true private life becomes clear. He stands up to the corrupt in Salem as they drag him into their downward spiral, but in the end has to sacrifice himself to keep his name from being blackened. The play's main message is that one cannot betray another without suffering the consequences.