

The Crucible - Arthur Miller

Arthur Miller: A Life

- Born on October 17, 1915
- Attended the University of Michigan from 1934-1938
- Graduated with a degree in journalism
- Wrote and produced five plays during college career
- Married three times
- Two daughters, one son

Miller and HUAC

- Investigated for possible associations with the Communist party from 1953 to 1955.
- In 1956, he was called to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC).
- Only attended meetings looking to advocate social justice and equality.
- When brought before the committee, he refused to name any other attendees.
- Found guilty of contempt, but later released.

The Red Scare

- A time of paranoia and hysteria over communism.
- Many government officials were involved or accused.
- Many writers, actors, and directors lost their jobs.
- Many named names to save their own careers.

The Salem Witch Trials

- In 1692, twenty were executed; 150 were jailed.
 - 2 dogs executed as suspected accomplices.
 - 19 people hanged.
 - 5 people died in jail waiting sentence.
 - 1 person tortured to death by stones.
 - 47 people confessed to witchcraft.
- The Puritan culture attributed its hardships to the Devil.

The Salem Witch Trials

- Several girls in the town began to have seizures and lapses of unconsciousness after seeking Tituba, a slave from Barbados, for fortunetelling.
- Tituba and two elderly women were accused at first; by the end, many of the community's most prominent citizens were accused.
- In 1706, Ann Putnam signs a letter of apology.
- Samuel Sewall was the only judge to apologize for actions.

Possible Causes

- Hallucinations from spoiled food
- Boredom
- Strict society
- Land dispute

Connections-Witch Trials to Red Scare

- Miller wrote *The Crucible* as an allegory for the Red Scare in the 1950's.
- He felt there was a "witch hunt" within the government and beyond.
- Like the witch trials, it was easier to admit guilt than maintain innocence.
- The play is widely performed when social unrest is present in a culture.

20th Century Witch Hunts

- The Holocaust
- Japanese-American Internment Camps
- African Americans
- Native Americans
- Arab/Middle Eastern Decent
- Homosexuality
- AIDS

The Crucible

- Setting
 - The play takes place in a small town in seventeenth century Massachusetts, during the Salem Witch Trials.
- Key Issues
 - Fear and self-interest – Shows what happens when emotions control your logic and thinking.
 - Puritan Ethics – The church and the Bible were very important in their daily life. They were afraid of modern things, and they truly believed in evil corrupting people.
 - Integrity – Being honest with yourself and the people around you. Without integrity, things can get out of hand.

The Crucible - Characters

- John Proctor – Protagonist of the play; He is well-known and respected in the town. He has an affair with Abigail Williams.
- Elizabeth Proctor – John Proctor's wife; She discovers that John is having an affair, but forgives him. She is incapable of lying.
- Abigail Williams – She is the niece of Reverend Parris. She is a very emotionally strong person. She has a way of intimidating people into doing what she wants them to do.
- Reverend Parris – He is the local minister. He discovers the girls dancing in the forest. He is mainly responsible for the trials.
- Reverend John Hale – He is the minister who is called in to investigate the witch trials. At first he believes them, but later he returns to try and stop the trials.

The Crucible - Themes

- Pride
- Revenge
- Fear
- Conflict of Authority
- Puritan Ethics
- Self Interest
- Honesty

The Crucible – Lesson/Morals/Applications

- Honesty – Elizabeth cannot tell a lie says John Proctor, but she does lie to protect John. In some cases you have to lie, and Hale agrees with this. He says, “God condemns a liar less than he that throws his life away for pride.”

■The McCarthy trials – Senator Joseph McCarthy accused many American leaders of being Communists. This led to many accusations, and people believed him because they were fearful of Communism.

Closing Thoughts

- Be aware of false accusations
- Rumors do harm
- Integrity is key
- Not all things are as they seem