

The Crucible
by
Arthur Miller

Thesis Statement:

The purpose is to educate and display to the reader the hysteria and injustice that can come from a group of people that thinks it's doing the "right" thing for society in relation to The Crucible by Arthur Miller.

I. Introduction:

The play is based on the real life witch hunts that occurred in the late 1600's in Salem, Massachusetts. It shows the people's fear of what they felt was the Devil's work and shows how a small group of powerful people wrongly accused and killed many people out of this fear and ignorance. Also important to the play is how Arthur Miller depicts how one selfish, evil person like Abigail Williams can bring others down and make others follow her to commit evil acts. These evil acts affect even the most honest people in the town like John and Elizabeth Proctor, and Rebecca Nurse who cannot fight the accusations made against them by those following Abigail. Those following Abigail are considered to be holy men that are full of honesty and justice, but the play shows that even those who are thought to be respectable and right, like people of government or community leaders can bring death to innocent people if they are driven by something wrong.

II. Plot:

The plot begins with the inciting incident where Rev. Parris finds his niece Abigail Williams and his daughter Betty along with his slave Tituba doing some dance in the forest. Right when he finds them, Betty becomes sick and won't talk or open her eyes, about this time other people's daughters become sick too. Rumors spread that witch craft is involved in Betty's illness and the development of the plot begins. Important to the major development of the plot is the fact that in the forest, Abigail and the others were just playing like witches. But they were following Abigail because she wanted to try to put a curse on a lady named Elizabeth Proctor. Abigail was in love with Mrs. Proctor's husband, John Proctor, and she wanted to some how get rid of Elizabeth. The problem was that as the rumors spread about the devil Abigail went along with it and blamed the slave woman Tituba for forcing her to join the devil. The rising action begins when Tituba out of fear of death starts naming people that she says were with the devil when the devil came to her. This is all a lie though because once Abigail blamed Tituba she did not want to turn the story around and admit that she was lying in the first place because one, she was afraid of the consequences of such a strong lie, and two, because she saw it as an opportunity to get rid of Elizabeth Proctor.

The people of the town made everything worse when they tried hard to find out who was teaming up with the devil. It was easier for them to blame the devil for their problems of society than fix the problems of their own strict way of life. So the girls involved with Abigail, like Mercy Lewis and Mary Warren named many people of the town as witches. These people were put and jail and would be hanged if they did not confess to the crime of devil worship or witch craft. Another part of the developing plot is that John Proctor knows Abigail and her friends are lying, but he is afraid to say any thing because eight months before he had and

affair with Abigail and did not want to be seen by the town as a lecher, which means wife cheater. So, Mr. Proctor has to fight with himself to come out and tell the truth or his wife might die because of Abigail saying she was a witch.

The climax of the play is in the court room when John Proctor and Mary Warren finally say that Abigail is lying and nobody was doing witch craft. But Abigail is a good actor and liar and actually turns it around on Mr. Proctor and says he tries to get every one to worship the devil. The court finds him guilty of devil worship and wants to hang him if he does not confess. The falling action of the play comes when Rev. Parris comes to court three months later and says that Abigail has stolen all his money and has left town and he feels guilty for the people who were accused by her and hung because of it. The court does not want to admit they were wrong though because they feel the people will rebel if they now come out and say "sorry, we made a small mistake". So, since they won't let Mr. Proctor go, they want him to confess to save his life, here another mini climax occurs because he does not want to sign a big lie. Since Mr. Proctor felt guilty about what he did in his past with Abigail he decides that now he will save his name with his pride and refuses to sign the confession. So the resolution comes with John Proctor's hanging, but it does not seem like any thing was resolved, just that the people who accused the innocent people feel very guilty with what they did.

III. Characterization:

I think the best character development is the one of John Proctor, a farmer that lived in the town. He represents a person who is not perfect but tries hard to be responsible for his family and himself. He is a strong person who is not afraid to go against society because of what he feels. Since he disagreed with the Rev. Parris' sermons he didn't go to mass and at first did not get involved with the witch hunts. This shows that he was his own person. The problem is that this caused him to be the main one to fight the court because he was not friendly with the people who made up the court. His motivation in the play is the search for the truth. He values his wife's love and the concerns of his children so he wants to be a good man and to him the truth is very important in being a good man. His conflict though is his past affair with Abigail and because of this he is hesitant to fight the witch hunters and expose Abigail as a liar. But, he wants to be honest and save his wife. So he has to be truthful and expose himself to the judgement of the town's people in order to save his wife and the other innocent people who are accused.

Mr. Proctor's friends are only his wife and later Rev. Hale, who at first accused many people with Abigail but then saw how she was a liar and tried to save John Proctor. The growth of John Proctor is from some one who tries to find out who he is in the begging of the play to a person that dies for what he believes in a society that wrongly accuses him. In the end he had what he wanted most, integrity. He faced judgement but died in the end with the respect of his wife and those who originally accused him.

IV. Point of View:

John Proctor's view supports my thesis statement very well because throughout the story he knew all along that the witch hunt was based on a huge lie from Abigail Williams. So he saw the hysteria and the injustice that was developing the entire time. He felt that the people of the court, Rev. Parris, Rev. Hale, Judge Hawthorne, and Governor Danforth were killing people in the name of God simply because of their fear of evil. They jumped to believe that Abigail was right and that the devil was responsible for all the wrong in the town. And, even though John Proctor knew all this and he was innocent he still died from the hands of the small group of wrong people who thought they were doing the right thing.

V. Theme:

The insight to life is not to be so quick to follow the majority, they are not always right. We should strive to think for ourselves on an individual basis, we should not judge others because we all have faults, and we should always look out for the hysteria that comes from the combined fears of ignorant people. We should also realize that being an individual has bad effects sometimes and even though we might be right we have to be brave when fighting society because we will not always win.

VI. Conclusion:

I'm glad I read this play. Even though I've been told to think for myself, I never saw such a good example of what happens when you don't. The play also had a lot of suspense, I kept wanting to hear the tapes to see what happened to the characters in the end, it was never boring. I will now be more aware of what happens when people are afraid of something and together try wildly to get rid of what they think the problem is. My older brother said the play "showed the same mentality of the German people during the Holocaust", and when I understood what he meant I say that it is a lot like the part in the movie Beauty and the Beast when the character Gaston makes every body crazy to kill the Beast just because Gaston feels he is evil. The people did not think for them selves and believed some one else and because of that they almost killed the Beast who was actually innocent.