

Puritanism and The Crucible

The Puritans: A Basic Definition (#11)

Puritan Beliefs (#12-14)

Salem Witch Trials (#10-11)

The Crucible Drama/SOL Terms to Know for Later

Drama terms to review and practice now to get ahead of the game.

Drama Term	Definition	Example from The Crucible
Allegory		
Irony		
Monologue		
Soliloquy		
Foil		
Foreshadowing		
Theme		
Aside		
Static Character		
Tragedy		
Mood		
Tone		
Dynamic Character		

Africa's Modern Day Witch Hunt

Grove, Sophie. "Africa's Modern day Witch Hunt." Newsweek: World. 12 Sept. 2011. Web.

It was Pakpema Bleg's own family who first accused her of practicing witchcraft.

Her nephew had accidentally pricked his finger on a needle, and the finger swelled up with infection. Bleg hadn't been there. But the next morning, she says, her brother-in-law arrived outside her house. "Witch!" he allegedly bellowed for all her neighbors to hear. "Witch!" Then, her nephew's older brother began beating her, she says, and soon others in the village joined in.

A soothsayer was asked to conduct the ritual test that determines the guilt or innocence of the accused. Slitting the throat of a fowl over a shrine, he threw the dying bird into the air. If the fowl were to fall on its back, it would indicate her innocence; were it to fall on its front, it would prove that Bleg was a witch.

"I ran," Bleg recalls. "I knew if I didn't, they would kill me."

Bleg fled to Gnani, one of northern Ghana's "witch" camps, where many of the more than 900 accused people tell a similar tale. Like Bleg, they've been tried, Salem style, their fates sealed by testimony offered by neighbors and relatives, their guilt or innocence determined by a priest.

In parts of Africa, belief in witchcraft still prevails. In Ghana, especially on the vast flat savanna of the country's northern region near the border with Togo, it is endemic. Ailments, insanity, misfortune, or death can be blamed on black magic. Witches supposedly do their dark deeds at night, using their supernatural powers, or "juju," sometimes taking the form of animals as they possess souls, inflict illnesses, or curse innocent children. Locals believe witches can glow like fireflies and walk upside down.

In some places, witch hunts are rampant. "Sometimes they beat the person to the extent of lynching—it's barbaric," says Abass Yakubu, who runs the government's Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice in the regional capital of Yendi. "The accused cannot take the risk of staying on in their homes. They will never lose the stigma." In one village, persecution of suspected witches is particularly bad, he adds. "There, even a strange stare can elicit a charge of witchcraft."

Since such accusations can quickly translate into violence, many victims flee as soon as the charges are leveled. Every week, someone flees a violent mob and seeks refuge at Gnani, the largest of five camps in the region, according to Yakubu. The camp, which also houses family members and advocates of the accused, has become a community of exiles or inmates of sorts. Banished from their communities, the accused are left to fend for themselves. Most of them are women; some arrive by bus or car, or are dropped off by family members, keen to remove them from village vitriol; others have walked long miles on foot with cooking pots on their heads. "There are many women in the camps who have had terrible violence inflicted on them, using stones and machetes," says Spalidu Mahamah, a project officer for the Southern Sector Youth and Women's Empowerment Network, an NGO that works with residents in the camps. (Mahamah's father is also the chief of the village.) "They've had to run in order to save themselves. Sometimes they have broken arms, broken legs, and punctured eyes."

The camp, though, is no secular, state-run refuge. Rather, its origins are drawn from the same superstitions that fuel the persecutions. A soothsayer runs the camp, presiding over residents from a shrine perched on a dusty incline. The campground itself is thought to be purified land, a place where witches lose their powers. Every new arrival must pay the priest, Nwini Binamba, up to 60 Ghanaian cedi, about €29, and go through (another) hen-slaughtering ritual to find out whether she is guilty as charged. Finally, she will drink a secret concoction prepared with the blood of the dead fowl to disable

Act 2 Reflection Questions

How does Mary Warren save Goody Proctor's life in town? What did Abigail reveal to John in private, and what was the problem with this confession as it relates to the witch trials? Thinking about this "evidence" used in Act II, how has the modern court system changed? Do people still go to jail based on shaky evidence?

Describe Hale's character. Why does he want to come to Salem? What does he make John Proctor recite in the comfort of his own home? What ironic thing can't John remember? How does Hale perceive this error? Do you think Hale's perception of the situation is fair?

Why I Wrote *The Crucible*: An artist's answer to politics

Annotate the following article by Arthur Miller in *The New Yorker*, 1996.

As I watched *The Crucible* taking shape as a movie over much of the past year, the sheer depth of time that it represents for me kept returning to mind. As those powerful actors blossomed on the screen, and the children and the horses, and the crowds and the wagons, I thought again about how I came to cook all this up nearly fifty years ago, in an America almost nobody I know seems to remember clearly....

I remember those years—they formed *The Crucible*'s skeleton—but I have lost the dead weight of the fear I had then. Fear doesn't travel well; just as it can warp judgment, its absence can diminish memory's truth. What terrifies one generation is likely to bring only a puzzled smile to the next....

[Senator] McCarthy's power to stir fears of creeping Communism was not entirely based on illusion, of course.... From being our wartime ally, the Soviet Union rapidly became an expanding empire. In 1949, Mao Zedong took power in China. Western Europe also seemed ready to become Red, especially Italy, where the Communist Party was the largest outside Russia, and was growing.... McCarthy—brash and ill-mannered but to many authentic and true—boiled it all down to what anyone could understand: We had "lost China" and would soon lose Europe as well, because the State Department—staffed, of course, under Democratic presidents—was full of treasonous pro-Soviet intellectuals. It was as simple as that....

The Crucible was an act of desperation.... By 1950 when I began to think of writing about the hunt for Reds in America, I was motivated in some great part by the paralysis that had set in among many liberals who, despite their discomfort with the inquisitors' violations of civil rights, were fearful, and with good reason, of being identified as covert Communists if they should protest too strongly....

I visited Salem for the first time on a dismal spring day in 1952.... In the gloomy courthouse there I read the transcripts of the witchcraft trials of 1692, as taken down in a primitive shorthand by ministers who were spelling each other. But there was one entry in Upham^o in which the thousands of pieces I had come across were jogged into place. It was from a report written by the Reverend Samuel Parris, who was one of the chief instigators of the witch-hunt. "During the examination of Elizabeth Proctor, Abigail Williams, and Ann Putnam"—the two were "afflicted" teen-age accusers, and Abigail was Parris's niece—"both made offer to strike at said Proctor; but when Abigail's hand came near, it opened, whereas it was made up, into a fist before, and came down exceeding lightly as it drew near to said Proctor, and at length, with open and extended fingers, touched Proctor's hood very lightly. Immediately Abigail cried out her fingers, her fingers, her fingers burned...."

In this remarkably observed gesture of a troubled young girl, I believed, a play became possible. Elizabeth Proctor had been the orphaned Abigail's mistress, and they had lived together in the same small house until Elizabeth fired the girl. By this time, I was sure, John Proctor had bedded Abigail, who had to be dismissed most likely to appease Elizabeth. There was bad blood between the two women now. That Abigail started, in effect, to condemn Elizabeth to death with her touch, then stopped her hand, then went through with it, was quite suddenly the human center of all this turmoil.

All this I understood. I had not approached the witchcraft out of nowhere or from purely social and political considerations. My own marriage of twelve years was teetering and I knew more than I wished to know about where the blame lay. That John Proctor the sinner might overturn his paralyzing personal guilt and become the most forthright voice against the madness around him was a reassurance to me, and, I suppose, an inspiration: It demonstrated that a clear moral outcry could still spring even from an ambiguously unblemished soul. Moving crabwise across the profusion of evidence, I sensed that I had at last found something of myself in it, and a play began to accumulate around this man.

Act 3 Reflection Questions

What is troubling about Danforth's comments about the innocent and guilty in Salem? How can Danforth's comments be considered a paradox? What does Hale urge John to do, probably as a result of these comments? How might Hale's changing character and advice here be used as a criticism of the Red Scare America?

What does John Proctor do to discredit Abigail for good? What is the expected consequence of this in a conservative Puritan society? Does reputation and good standing within a community still function this way in modern society?

Ruth Putnam's Apology (Ann Putnam Jr.)

Source: <http://people.ucls.uchicago.edu/~snekros/Daily%20Pilgrim/TiffanyS.html>

After the witch trials ended, some of the Circle girls still accused people of witchcraft. They may have done this to have an excuse for not doing chores, or for the attention. This time, no one listened to their complaints. Ann Putnam led a hard life after the Salem Witch Trials. She went from being of person of privilege to providing service and care to others. Her parents died in 1699 within two weeks of each other, leaving Ann to raise nine younger siblings alone.

Later in her life, Ann Putnam wanted to join the church. A requirement before joining the church was to confess all of one's sins. Due to this requirement, Ann wrote an apology for her participation in the Salem Witch Trials. This is what she wrote:

"I desire to be humbled before God for that sad and humbling providence that befell my father's family in the year about '92; that I, then being in my childhood, should, by such a providence of God, be made an instrument for the accusing of several persons of a grievous crime, whereby their lives were taken away from them, whom now I have just grounds and good reason to believe they were innocent persons; and that it was a great delusion of Satan that deceived me in that sad time, whereby I justly fear I have been instrumental, with others, though ignorantly and unwittingly, to bring upon myself and this land the guilt of innocent blood; though what was said or done by me against any person I can truly and uprightly say, before God and man, I did it not out of any anger, malice, or ill-will to any person, for I had no such thing against one of them; but what I did was ignorantly, being deluded by Satan. And particularly, as I was a chief instrument of accusing of Goodwife Nurse and her two sisters, I desire to lie in the dust, and to be humbled for it, in that I was a cause, with others, of so sad a calamity to them and their families; for which cause I desire to lie in the dust, and earnestly beg forgiveness of God, and from all those unto whom I have given just cause of sorrow and offence, whose relations were taken away or accused."

Pastor J. Green read this apology out loud in the church on August 25, 1706. After her apology was read, Ann was accepted as a member of the church. Ann Putnam died at age 37 in 1716 from unknown causes. At the end of her life, loneliness was her constant companion. She never married and was buried in an unmarked grave next to her parents. Some call her a victim, some call her a predator, now that the facts have been stated, it's up to the reader to decide.

Act 4 Reflection Questions

Describe Hale's character now in this final act and compare to Danforth. What is the conflict with Danforth? Does modern society appreciate changing one's mind about an issue, or is that just something that happens to characters in stories?

What is the result of John Proctor's conversation with his wife? How does he ultimately go back on this action at the end? Why? Do you think this is motivated by personal or spiritual reasons?

Arthur Miller Testifies

Annotate the following article by Andrew Glass, 2013.

On June 21st, 1956, playwright Arthur Miller testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities about his political leanings but refused to name others who had joined him in his pro-Communist undertakings.

The committee had subpoenaed Miller after he sought to renew his passport. Miller had planned to go to London with movie star Marilyn Monroe, whom he married four days after appearing before the panel. The newlyweds were then to travel to Brussels, Belgium, for the opening of Miller's new play, "The Crucible," which dissected the 1692 witch hunt trials in Salem, Mass.

These plans were interrupted, however, and once in Washington to serve his subpoena, Miller conferred with his lawyer who, famously, passed on an offer from Francis Walter, chairman of the committee, to waive the hearing if Monroe would pose for a photograph with him. As Miller later remarked, 'That's how dangerous he really thought I was. When I heard this, I said no. He then got back on his horse and acted as though I really was a danger to the country. They were headline hunters, that's all.' Monroe's opinion of the committee was unequivocal: 'The bastards, I won't let them do it to him. He's got to tell them to go f--- themselves, only he can do it in better language.'

Francis Walter promised Miller that he wouldn't be asked to name names but broke his word. With Monroe by his side, Miller told Walter: "I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him."

Miller readily conceded the committee's right to inquire into his own political activities. However, unlike most other uncooperative witnesses, he did not invoke the Fifth Amendment's protection against self-incrimination but rather cited the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech and, by implication, the right to remain silent.

Asked why the Communist Party had produced one of his plays, he said, "I take no more responsibility for who plays my plays than General Motors can take for who rides in their Chevrolets." Asked about his brief flirtation with Communism, he said, "I have had to go to hell to meet the devil," after which one wag quipped that he must have gone there as a tourist.

In 1957, Miller was found guilty of contempt of Congress, denied a passport and sentenced to a \$500 fine or 30 days in jail. But the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals overturned his conviction, ruling that Walter had misled him.

Miller and Monroe were divorced in 1961. Miller died in 2005 at age 89.

Witch Hunt Propaganda Poster

As McCarthy did with communism, develop a propaganda "poster" that seeks to get others in town to name suspected witches out of fear of the devil.

A large, empty rectangular area defined by a dashed black border, intended for the student to draw their propaganda poster.

The Crucible Essay Organizer

Prompt: Arthur Miller uses the Salem Witch Trials to critique the effects of The Red Scare in America. What is Arthur Miller trying to communicate about society by writing *The Crucible*? Write a persuasive essay and prove your interpretation of Arthur Miller's universal theme for one of the major topics of the play (power, fear, justice, honor). Be sure to support your argument with direct quotations from *The Crucible*, "Why I Wrote the Crucible," and "Arthur Miller Testifies."

Background

Current Situation

Shift

Significance

Claim

Topic Sentence #1

Evidence #1

Analysis #1

Evidence #2

Analysis #2 & Transition

Topic Sentence #2

Evidence #1

Analysis #1

Evidence #2

Analysis #2 & Transition

Acknowledge the Opposing Argument

Restate the Claim in a new way

Leave reader with big idea to think about