
Guilt And Integrity In The Crucible

A creepily feel of the word “witchcraft” grazes through the ears of the townspeople of Salem, Massachusetts. No one was safe in this time of 1692; henceforth, if you even just said you had seen someone’s spirit, the person you told upon would be sent to hang. Through these times, many chaotic things occurred with the townspeople’s; furthermore, there are a few different themes portrayed for the story. The tails and storyline of these dark times are greatly portrayed in a book written by the greatest dramatist of the times. In *The Crucible*, by Arthur Miller, the themes of Guilt and Integrity are heavily portrayed throughout this story line.

Miller best interprets the theme of Guilt through the character of John Proctor. Abigail Williams finds herself alone with John Proctor, she tries to rekindle the spark that was once there when they had an affair. John Proctor’s guilt rises; furthermore, he wishes to never had anything to do with Abigail and that the past events never occurred. He reminds himself, and Abigail, that he owes everything to his wife, Elizabeth, and only to her. Proctor states “[he] will cut off [his] hand before [he’ll] ever reach for [her] again” (1. 451- 452). John says this to Abigail telling her to leave him alone, and that Abigail needs to let her hopes go of anything with John. John puts his words in this tone so he can make it clear that he will want nothing to do with Abigail. The next time guilt is shown is when John Proctor gets home late one day from doing a day’s work. His wife, Elizabeth, wonders why he came home instead of going into the town.

Elizabeth is not very into the conversation. A sense of separation and tension still clung to her after finding out John had an affair with their old house made, Abigail Williams. John asks her what is wrong, and he tries to remind her he means to please her. It doesn’t really change much, John is then refilled with more guilt from his previous actions. John asks Elizabeth “how would that please you” if “the crop is good [he’ll] buy George Jacob’s heifer. Proctor softly grins and says “I mean to please you, Elizabeth” (2. 28-31). John’s affair caused great tension and separation. Those feelings still cling to them, but John has been trying to make good and be better for his wife and family. Another time guilt is shown is when guilt is overwhelming John Proctor as he confesses to lechery in front of the judge with Abigail Williams and the others in the court-room. He begins to cry out of shame and guilt from what he did, especially for Elizabeth’s sake. John cries “[He] cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is fraud. [he is] not that man. [His] honesty is broke...nothing’s spoiled by giving them this lie that were no rotten long before” Elizabeth tries to comfort him by reassuring that “yet you’ve not confessed till now. That speak goodness in you.” John then pleads he “would have your forgiveness, Elizabeth” (4. 481-490). John and Elizabeth are talking before John is supposed to hang. Rev. Hale has asked that all John do is confess to witchcraft, but he does not find that very satisfying. He is so wound up, filled with guilt, and distraught. He feels that he has already been blackened at the soul by his actions and asks his wife for her forgiveness.

The theme of Integrity is now shown throughout the *Crucible* by Rebecca Nurse, Martha Corey, and John Proctor. In Act I, Rebecca Nurse speaks her mind in front of the group that was in Betty’s sick room. The integrity she had to speak her mind about what she felt, without care of what others thought, shows her sense of honor to the truth. Mrs. Putnam tells Rebecca that the doctor is baffled, Rebecca states that “if so he is, then let us go to God for the cause of it. There is prodigious danger in the seeking of loose spirits. I fear it, I fear it. Let us rather blame

ourselves" (1. 559-562). Rebecca Nurse is in Betty Parris's room talking with the Putnam's and Rev. Parris. She speaks her mind and tells that if they think of witchcraft for the cause they are wrong. Even though it is what everyone believes, she refuses and sticks to her gut that all they have to do is pray to God. Additionally, the theme of integrity is shown when John Proctor was asked to confess to witchcraft and sign his name stating that he gave his name to the devil. Yet, John Proctor ripped up the document. John Proctor kept his good name and used his integrity to honor the actual truth.

John Proctor pleads in tears that "is is [his] name! Because [he] cannot have another one in [his] life! Because [he] lie and sign [himself] to lies! Because [he] is not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may [he] live without [his] name? [He] have given you [his] soul; leave [him] [his] name" (4. 725-730)! John's only way out of being hung is to sign away his name to a confession of witchcraft. Danforth is saying it will be posted on the church door. Proctor refuses and rips up his confession, for he does not, and will not give up his good name to what everyone knows is a lie. Furthermore, another scene where integrity is shown when John Proctor had just ripped his confession and kept his good name. Danforth asks and interrogates him about the confession. With integrity, John is accepting the fact that he will die, but he will die with his good name. Proctor is told he will hang and replies "I can. And there's your first marvel, that I can. You have made your magic now, for now I do thin I see some shred of goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to weave a banner with, but white enough to keep it from such dogs. Give them no tear! Tears pleasure them! Show honor now, show a stony heart and sink them with it" (4. 745-753)! John has accepted the fact that he will hang for not confessing to lies. He holds himself with integrity and says they're not worth the lies just to live. Proctor has regained his goodness.

As you now understand the reasoning behind the themes, you also understand how things were portrayed in that time of life. Throughout this story the themes of guilt and integrity are heavily shown throughout many of the characters. Arthur Miller was known as the greatest dramatist in these times, yet all the drama was actually true in reality. He studied the records and files of the trials to gain insight for his storyline. The insight he obtained gave him a puritan way of life insight, and the character's he used, who were real people in the witch trials. Arthur Miller's book of *The Crucible* is filled with drama, horror, death, and hysteria, just like what actually happened in the Salem Witch trials of 1692. This portrayal of the actual events is a great way to depict life during these dark times.