

Sydney Theatre Company Education 2009 presents

The Crucible

by Arthur Miller

Teacher's Resource Kit

written and compiled by Jeffrey Dawson

Acknowledgements

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Cast and Production Team

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The Crucible by Arthur Miller

Cast

Reverend Parris Angus King

John Hale Nathan Lovejoy

John Proctor Joe Manning

Giles Corey/Marshal Herrick Peter Carroll

Thomas Putnam/Ezekiel Cheever/Deputy-Governor Danforth Sean O'Shea

Abigail Williams Arianwen Parkes-Lockwood

Ann Putnam/Elizabeth Proctor Marta Dusseldorp

Betty Parris Celeste Dodwell

Tituba/Mercy Lewis/Rebecca Nurse Lynette Curran

Mary Warren Zindzi Okenyo

Production Team

Director: **Tanya Goldberg**

Set & Costume Designer: **Simone Romaniuk**

Lighting Designer: **Verity Hampson**

Composer/Sound Designer **Max Lyandvert**

Background Information on the Production

See *Moral Madness* Interview with director Tanya Goldberg – downloadable at www.sydneytheatre.com.au/education/season/the-crucible

Plot Synopsis

To familiarise yourself with the story, read through the play synopsis below. Write down your initial response to the story, which you can reflect back on, after you have seen the play.

Written in the early 1950s, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* takes place in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. It recounts the events surrounding the Salem Witch Trials. This was a time when paranoia, hysteria, and deceit gripped the Puritan towns of New England.

Act One:

The initial scenes take place in the home of Reverend Parris, the town's spiritual leader. His ten-year-old daughter lies in bed, unresponsive. She, and the other local girls, spent the previous evening performing a ritual while dancing in the wilderness. Abigail, Parris' seventeen-year-old niece, is the wicked leader of the girls.

Mr. and Mrs. Putnam, loyal followers of Parris, are very concerned for their own sickly daughter. The Putnam's are the first to openly suggest that witchcraft is plaguing the town. They insist that Parris root out the witches within the community. Not surprisingly, they suspect anyone who despises Rev. Parris, or any member who fails to attend church on a regular basis.

Halfway through Act One, the play's tragic hero, John Proctor, enters the Parris household to check on the still comatose Betty. Through dialogue we learn that young Abigail and seemingly humble farmer, John Proctor, had an affair seven months ago. When John's wife found out, she sent Abigail away from their home. Since then, Abigail has been scheming to remove Elizabeth Proctor so that she can claim John to herself.

Reverend Hale, a self-proclaimed specialist in the art of detecting witches, enters the Parris home. Hale confronts Tituba, pressuring her to admit her association with Satan. Tituba believes that the only way to avoid being executed is to lie, so she begins to invent stories about being in league with the devil. Then, Abigail sees her chance to stir up an enormous amount of mayhem. She behaves as though she is bewitched.

When the curtain draws on Act One, the audience realizes that every person mentioned by the girls is in severe danger.

Act Two:

Set in Proctor's home, the act begins by showing the daily life of John and Elizabeth. The protagonist has returned from seeding his farmland. Here, their dialogue reveals

that there is still much tension and frustration. Elizabeth cannot yet trust her husband. Likewise, John has not yet forgiven himself.

Act Two begins eight days after the discussion at Parris' house. Between Act One and Act Two, Deputy Governor Danforth came to Salem to oversee the court proceedings. Fourteen people have been arrested for witchcraft, and there is talk of hanging. Elizabeth Proctor asks John to go to the court and testify against Abigail and the other girls. John doesn't want to get involved.

Mary Warren enters. She was in court testifying against the townspeople. She gives Elizabeth a doll which she has made in court.

Rev. Hale enters to question John and Elizabeth, suspicious of witchcraft. We learn that many women, including the saintly Rebecca Nurse, have been arrested on the charge of witchcraft.

Moments later, officials from Salem arrive with a warrant for Elizabeth's arrest. Elizabeth was accused by Abigail for stabbing Abigail with a needle through a doll. John Proctor protests but Elizabeth is taken away in chains. Proctor demands that Mary goes to court and testify against the girls. He vows that he will fight the proceedings, but he is enraged by the injustice of the situation.

Act Three:

Act Three takes place in court. Francis Nurse, Giles Corey, and John Proctor present their case against the girls to Deputy Governor Danforth and Judge Hathorne. Proctor presents a petition signed by 91 people testifying to the good character of their wives, and Danforth issues warrants for the questioning of all of them. Corey charges Putnam on inciting his daughter to accuse Corey of witchcraft in order get his land. Corey has a witness but will not name him for fear of getting the man arrested. Corey is arrested because of contempt of the court. Proctor presents his case and brings forth Mary Warren who very timidly explains that she and the girls never saw any spirits or devils. Judge Danforth does not want to believe this.

Abigail and the other girls enter the courtroom. They defy the truth that Mary Warren tries to reveal. This charade angers John Proctor and in a violent outburst he calls Abigail a harlot. He reveals their affair. Abigail vehemently denies it. John swears that his wife can confirm the affair. He emphasizes that his wife never lies.

To determine the truth, Judge Danforth summons Elizabeth into the courtroom. Hoping to save her husband, Elizabeth denies that her husband had ever been with Abigail. Unfortunately, this dooms John Proctor.

Abigail leads the girls in a make-believe fit of possession. Judge Danforth is convinced that Mary Warren has gained a supernatural hold upon the girls. Frightened for her life, Mary Warren claims that she too is possessed and that John Proctor is the Devil's Man. Reverend Hale now sees the evil in the court and denounces the proceedings. Danforth places John under arrest.

Act Four:

Three months later, John Proctor is chained in a dungeon. Twelve members of the community have been executed for witchcraft. Many others, including Tituba and Rebecca Nurse, sit in jail, awaiting hanging. Elizabeth is still incarcerated, but since she is pregnant she won't be executed for at least another year.

The scene reveals a very distraught Reverend Parris. Several nights ago, Abigail ran away from home, stealing his life savings in the process. He now realizes that if well loved townspeople such as Proctor and Rebecca Nurse are executed, the citizens might retaliate with sudden and extreme violence. Therefore, he and Hale have been trying to solicit confessions from the prisoners in order to spare them from the hangman's noose.

Hale believes that the blood of the people who are being hanged is on his hands. He asks Elizabeth, who is now pregnant, to tell John to confess to save his life but Elizabeth will not. While Elizabeth is talking to John, she tells him that she has forgiven him of his affair and tells him that he can do as he will. John Proctor confesses that he is a witch, but will not say the others are.

Judge Danforth states that if John Proctor signs a written confession his life will be saved. John reluctantly agrees. They also pressure him to implicate others, but John is unwilling to do this.

Once he signs the document, he refuses to hand over the confession. He doesn't want his name to be posted to the door of the church. He declares, "How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!" Judge Danforth demands the confession. John Proctor rips it to pieces.

The judge condemns Proctor to hang. He and Rebecca Nurse are taken to the gallows. Hale and Parris are both devastated. They urge Elizabeth to plead with John and the judge so that he might be spared. However, Elizabeth, on the verge of collapse, says, "He has his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!"

The curtains close with the eerie sound of drums rattling. The audience knows that John Proctor and the others are moments away from execution.

Plot Analysis

In *The Crucible* all the events flow naturally from one event to the next. Everything happens naturally from the natures of the characters. The fact that the story isn't contrived, and even more that it is based on a true story is interesting. The result is so unbelievable. The incident begins with the girls dancing in the forest and snowballs into a huge witch hunt. The plot is exciting. There was sufficient conflict to keep my interest aroused. There is a lot of tension and suspense in the story. It covers basic human instincts and qualities. It shows the human necessity for survival, and the lengths at which a person will go to save his life. There is the idea of honour and truth. Proctor tries to keep his reputation but gives it up to reveal the truth. Through his struggle he achieves righteousness. All these things keep the plot moving. Proctor's relationship with Elizabeth can be seen to grow and mature. He continually grows more pure in Elizabeth's sight until she is able to forgive him in act four. Proctor's character also improves. He doesn't want to get involved in the court proceedings in act two but stands up for the truth in act four.

Student Web-based Activities

Glossary

Abomination - a person who is loathsome or disgusting; hate coupled with disgust; an action that is vicious or vile; an action that arouses disgust or abhorrence.

Adamant - unshakable in determination or purpose

Afflict - to cause someone suffering or unhappiness

Apparition - a ghost or ghostlike figure

Barbados - A country occupying the easternmost island of the West Indies. Probably first visited by the Portuguese, the island was settled by the British in the early 1600s, became a separate colony in 1885, and gained full independence in 1966.

Calumny - a false or malicious statement; slander

Clamour - to demand noisily; to make a loud noise or outcry

Clapped in the stocks – imprisoned by a device consisting of a heavy timber frame with holes for confining the ankles and sometimes the wrists, formerly used for punishment.

Covenanted – promised by a formal sealed agreement or contract.

Deposition - the sworn statement of a witness used in court in his or her absence

Excommunication - A formal ecclesiastical censure or rejection that deprives a person of the right to belong to a church.

Faction - a group or clique within a larger group, party, government, organization, or the like: *a faction in favour of big business.*

Gibbet - a gallows with a projecting arm at the top, from which the bodies of criminals were formerly hung in chains and left suspended after execution.

Goody – Goodwife

Gulling - To deceive or cheat.

Heathen - One who adheres to the religion of a people or nation that does not acknowledge the God of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. Such persons considered as a group; the unconverted. One who is regarded as irreligious, uncivilized, or unenlightened.

Incubus - an imaginary demon or evil spirit supposed to descend upon sleeping persons, esp. one fabled to have sexual intercourse with women during their sleep.

Intimation - A hint; an obscure or indirect suggestion or notice; a remote or ambiguous reference; as, he had given only intimations of his design.

Ipsa facto - By the fact itself; by that very fact.

Jabberer - someone whose talk is trivial drivel

Lechery - Excessive indulgence in sexual activity; lewdness.

Licentious - Lacking moral discipline or ignoring legal restraint, especially in sexual conduct; having no regard for accepted rules or standards.

Lucifer - a proud, rebellious archangel, identified with Satan, who fell from heaven.

Ordained - invested with ministerial or priestly functions; "an ordained priest" ; fixed or established especially by order or command; "at the time appointed (or the appointed time.)"

Parish - An administrative part of a diocese that has its own church in the Anglican, Roman Catholic, and some other churches; the members of such a parish; a religious community attending one church.

Pilgrimage - a journey, esp. a long one, made to some sacred place as an act of religious devotion: *a pilgrimage to Lourdes*

Pious - Having or exhibiting religious reverence; earnestly compliant in the observance of religion; devout.

Prodigious - Impressively great in size, force, or extent; enormous: *a prodigious storm*; extraordinary; marvellous: *a prodigious talent*.

Providence - re or preparation in advance; foresight; prudent management; economy; the care, guardianship, and control exercised by a deity; divine direction:

Quakers - The Religious Society of Friends, also known as The Quakers, is a movement that began in England in the 17th century. The word "Quaker" means to tremble in the way of the Lord. In its early days it faced opposition and persecution; however, it continued to expand, extending into many parts of the world, especially the Americas and Africa.

Quailing - To shrink back in fear; cower.

Shovelboard - A board on which a game is played, by pushing or driving pieces of metal or money to reach certain marks; also, the game itself.

Succubus - a demon in female form, said to have sexual intercourse with men in their sleep; any demon or evil spirit; a strumpet or prostitute.

Theocracy - form of government in which God or a deity is recognized as the supreme civil ruler, the God's or deity's laws being interpreted by the ecclesiastical authorities.

Tittle - the tiniest bit; an iota.

Context

- See Miller's "A Note on the Historical Accuracy of The Play," p.11 of the Penguin Classic edition.
- Google Time Lines for the Contexts of *The Crucible* – **1692** (setting of the play) **and 1953** (play premieres) **and 2009** (your context as responder to Tanya Goldberg's STC Ed production).
- Introduction to *The Collected Plays*
- Journey to *The Crucible*

Playwrights at Work (Modern Library)

by [Paris Review](#)

Arthur Miller was born October 17, 1915, on 112th Street in Harlem to a well-to-do Jewish family that fell out of the middle class during the Great Depression. There was little in his youth to suggest that an accomplished playwright would emerge; an unaccomplished student and late reader, the young Miller had a passion for baseball. His family's economic decline nearly cost him his chance to attend college, but he took a job in a warehouse and talked the University of Michigan into accepting him. It was then that he began writing plays, which won a few awards but did not bring him much fame. A novel, *Focus*, appeared in 1945.

Miller's first professional play was *The Man Who Had All The Luck*, which had four performances in 1944. This was an ignominious beginning, and his next play was not staged until 1947, but when it came it was a triumph. *All My Sons* was a commercial and critical success and won a New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. It was followed in quick succession by what are regarded as his greatest works: *Death of a Salesman* (1949), which won the Pulitzer Prize. *The Crucible* (1953), and *A View From The Bridge* (1955). The latter two plays addressed America's experience with McCarthyism, and a year after *A View From The Bridge* closed, Miller himself was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee. He refused to name names and was sentenced to prison, although the sentence was overturned by the Supreme Court on appeal. Nine years would pass before Miller could get a new play produced in the United States.

Offstage, Miller continued to make a stand against threats to intellectual freedom and was elected international president of PEN, the writers' group, in 1965. His first marriage ended in 1956 and was followed by his second to Marilyn Monroe. This ended as well, in 1960, but the actress's struggles formed the foundation of Miller's screenplay, *The Misfits* (which was filmed in 1960), and the breakdown of their marriage was reflected in his next play, *After the Fall* (1964).

Miller was even more prolific in his last years, producing works such as *The American Clock* (1980), *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991) and *Broken Glass* (1993). He lived in a farmhouse with his third wife, photographer Inge Morath, whom he married in 1962. Miller's daughter Rebecca is a film-maker and is married to actor Daniel Day Lewis, who played Proctor in the 1996 film of *The Crucible*, for which Miller himself wrote the screenplay.

Pre-Performance Activities

Before seeing the production explore these questions:

5 Questions for students who haven't read the play:

1. Look over some of Miller's language in the Glossary and their meanings before you see *The Crucible*.
2. Compare the attitudes toward women in the 17th Century – and the way they are represented today.
3. What would you include in the program for a play about a witch-hunt? Can you think of any similar contemporary issues that represent our context? Your context as a member of the i-Generation? Why do you think the director of this production has given the play a neutral setting?
4. An image of actor Peter Carroll as Giles Corey features in the publicity campaign for the play, holding a large rock. (See Act Four, p118 Penguin Classic edition). What can you tell about the play from this STC poster image of the play? How does the inclusion of the following text contextualise the play for the audience: *"...though our hearts break, we cannot flinch; these are new times, sir. There is a misty plot afoot so subtle we should be criminal to cling to old respects and ancient friendships. I have seen too many frightful proofs in court – the Devil is alive in Salem, and we dare not quail to follow wherever the accusing finger points!"*
5. Do you think Proctor would be reported to the police or other authorities for his behaviour today?

5 Questions for students who have read the play:

1. A crucible – (noun):

A vessel made of a refractory substance such as graphite or porcelain, used for melting and calcining materials at high temperatures.

A severe test, as of patience or belief; a trial.

A place, time, or situation characterized by the confluence of powerful intellectual, social, economic, or political forces: *"Macroeconomics . . . was cast in the crucible of the Depression"* (Peter Passell).

What does the title tell you about the play?

2. Re-read Act I in your group. Analyse the stage directions that Miller has not italicised.
 - a) Find a quote that shows the reason Abigail has fallen under suspicion.
 - b) Find 3 words that describe Abigail.
 - c) Write a journal entry in which you reflect on your first impression of Proctor and the attitudes to women you are seeing in the text. (250 words)

3. Read Act II in your group.
 - a) Describe in your own words Proctor's domestic life.
 - b) Write a journal entry in which you reflect on your impressions of the marriage of John and Elizabeth Proctor and the attitudes to women and marriage you saw in the text. (250 words)

4. What expectations do you have for Miller's political play in production now you have read scenes from the play?
 - a) Discuss the following questions about Proctor and write your answers in point form:
 - How would you describe his character at the beginning of the play?
 - How would you describe his character at the end of the play?
 - For each question find a quotation to support your point.

5. **Related Text:** Nathaniel Hawthorne *The Scarlet Letter*

Post-Performance Activities

Before seeing the production explore these questions:

5 Questions for students who hadn't read the play:

1. Represent what you consider to be the main theme of the play in any form you wish.
2. Try answering the following essay question: *The Crucible* uses specific stage techniques and dramatic qualities to achieve its themes. Explain how Arthur Miller has presented a view of American life in the 20th Century. Define the context of the play to unlock its themes. Discuss the effectiveness of Miller's techniques.
3. *Direction* – What do you think was the vision of the director and her interpretation of the play. (The role of the director of a theatrical production not only includes finding the best actors for the play, creating truthful and believable performances, and building an effective ensemble, but also defining a particular vision for the text.)
4. *Sound* – Miller gives us some unusual sound cues in Act Four, such as, “*The sibilance of dragging feet on stone*” and “*Voices are heard in the hall, speaking together in suppressed excitement.*” How are such effects interpreted by Sound Designer Max Lyandvert in this production?
5. *Design* - What mood does the set evoke from the out-set of the play? How does this alter at different times in the production? Sketch Simone Romaniuk's set.

5 questions for students who had read the play:

1. Select a **monologue** to be memorised and performed for the class. Read through it very carefully. Seek clarification on any parts of the speech you do not understand.

Rewrite your monologue in very modern language.

Create a **mindmap** about your character. Show what you know about your character's personality, background, beliefs and attitudes, appearance etc.

Design a costume for your character. Label your diagram clearly and provide explanations for your choices. Provide a swatch of fabric for your costume and attach it to your design.

Rehearse your monologue. Decide how you are going to move, use the space, incorporate body language, voice, props etc.

Perform the monologue for the class.

2. **Performance Workshop:** As a group, perform a short excerpt of *The Crucible* to demonstrate your interpretation of the characters and staging.

You can be either Proctor OR Abigail OR the director if your 'reading' is chosen.

3. How did the actors use the space to convey the shifts in character and narrative and time?
4. How does lighting contribute to the mood of the scenes? What effect do these lighting states achieve? List some that were used.
5. How does music and other sound design elements contribute to the production?

Useful Links

NSW HSC online

http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/english/area_of_study/belonging/3720/crucible.htm

This comprehensive site, written by Adam Johnston of Hunter River High School, gives an eclectic understanding of the concept of Belonging and how it applies to *The Crucible*, including keeping a journal on Belonging, understanding the context of Miller's play, selecting related texts, including visual texts, a possible assessment task and the demands of the HSC. Adam Johnston also offers an innovative seven slips of Paper approach to *The Crucible*.

http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/english/area_of_study/belonging/3634/aos.htm

This comprehensive site, written by Melissa Giddins of Engadine High School, gives an overview of the concept of Belonging and how to look for and adapt it to related texts, giving an example of an effective related text *Freedom Writers*, a film text. Giddins also offers a six step analysis of texts about belonging, a possible additional text reading list including electronic texts and Essay questions.

<http://honors.umd.edu/HONR269J/archive/MillerCrucible.html>

This article is Miller's response to the question: Why I Wrote *The Crucible*. It gives insights into Miller's purpose and audience, and in particular the role of politics, especially McCarthyism in his composing *The Crucible*.

www.imagi-nation.com/moonstruck/clsc10.htm - Biography of American playwright Arthur Miller--plus links to all of his works currently in print.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/salem>

This website gives insights into what it was like to live through the Salem Witch Hunts.

<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SALEM.HTM>

This website contains a chronology of events and historical documents and references from the time of the Salem Witchcraft trials in 1692. It gives an historical perspective of what it was like to live through the Salem Witch Hunts.

A hero for all our times – Spectrum in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 21, 2009

Scott Murray – review of Christopher Bigsby, **Arthur Miller**, Weidenfeld & Nicolson London 2008

THE 1881 assassination of Alexander II, the most progressive of all the Russian tsars, irrevocably changed the world. Anti-semitism ran rampant across Europe, leading to mass Jewish migration, especially from Poland. In the shtetl of Radomizl, in the bleak countryside outside Cracow, the Miller family packed for America, making the hellish decision to leave behind to die their slow-witted son, Isidore. He was just four or five years old.

Fate intervened, however, and Isidore survived, arriving in Manhattan some years later and in 1915 becoming the father of a son, Arthur Asher Miller, one of the greatest playwrights of the 20th century.

All his life Arthur Miller wrote about abandonment. This reflected not only what had happened to his father but to himself. He was raised in a wealthy family, his mother Augusta being independently well off and Isidore having made good in the garment trade. But Isidore began investing everything he could in the stock market. In 1929 the market crashed and the Miller family's wealth and dreams went with it.

Biographer Christopher Bigsby writes beautifully of these formative years in Miller's life. The professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia, Bigsby knew Miller well, and his writing reveals great insight and empathy for his subject. If there is a weakness in the early chapters, it is that Bigsby includes too many quotes from other writers (Alfred Kazan, Irving Howe, etc), as if he were writing a social history of the Jewish experience in Manhattan. It is a flaw of over-enthusiasm (as is the often exhausting detail).

When Miller was 14, the family resettled in Brooklyn. Miller was forced to balance his studies with earning money and to put up with his mother's crushing sense of disappointment. To please her parents, Augusta had agreed to an arranged marriage with Isidore. It was only later she discovered he was illiterate. That hadn't mattered when he was making money but it certainly did when he wasn't. Her intense anger and frustration were crucial factors in Miller's teenage life and later resurfaced in many of his plays, including *All My Sons*.

Convinced that capitalism's greed had callously let down the American people, Miller became a Marxist at 17. That activism intensified at Michigan University, where he became a communist, though he never joined the party.

It was there he wrote his first play, *No Villain*, based on his family life and the garment trade. It explores the conflicts between the responsibilities of being a child and a citizen, between labour and capital. It won the Avery Hopwood Award and Miller's future was set.

With the rise of fascism in Germany and Spain, Miller increasingly became an ideological puritan. He forgave the communists the non-aggression pact with Hitler, ignored Stalin's toast to Hitler's good health and even the Soviet invasion of Finland. The pain of capitalism's failures still burned too deeply.

Bigsby is scrupulously fair in outlining this period and in exposing the racism and fascism in the trade union movement. He places (for the first time in print) Miller as one of the leading writers to denounce black racism in his writings, even if they were not always finished or published.

Miller's politics finally got him in trouble in the 1950s, when at the height of his fame he was investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee. Unlike Elia Kazan, who had directed Miller's first two stage triumphs, *All My Sons* and *Death Of A Salesman*, Miller did not name names. Kazan had previously asked Miller for absolution for what he was about to do, explaining that his Hollywood career would be over if he didn't submit to the committee's demands. Their friendship, and one of theatre's greatest working relationships, abruptly ended. Until his death, Kazan could never understand that by naming names he was supporting a political state as flawed as the communism that he was denouncing.

The book is particularly fascinating in detailing the genesis of *The Crucible*, based on the persecution and execution of 19 "witches" (and two dogs) in Salem in 1692. Written during the committee's witch-hunts, it was both praised and damned (as it is to this day) for excoriating McCarthyism. Surprisingly, though, Bigsby doesn't fully connect the writing of the play with Miller having recently fallen in love with the young Marilyn Monroe. The tortured author, caught in an unhappy marriage made even more miserable by his newfound wealth and fame and all the socialist guilt that entailed, was rebelling against the strictures of faithfulness, against the sanctioned rules of sexual behaviour. The Salem trials were nothing if not about sexuality and Miller brilliantly denounces puritanism in *The Crucible* because he was battling it within himself.

Many commentators have put Miller's affair and later marriage to Monroe in the too-hard basket. After all, what could they have possibly had in common? Bigsby's explanation (Marilyn's abandonment as a young girl plays a key role) is intriguing to read. Certainly, their passionate but troubled times led to an extraordinary novella, *The Misfits*, and an equally remarkable film.

Miller was strangely unaware of the film's qualities during its famously difficult production, criticising director John Huston for not providing the long shots that would "remind us constantly how isolated these people are, physically and morally". But that is exactly what Huston achieved and many viewers find themselves forever haunted by the stark black-and-white images of Monroe, Montgomery Clift and Clark Gable humbled and alone in the barrenness.

The luminous Monroe also figures in a noble attempt to reconcile Miller with Elia Kazan. It is one of the book's most emotional passages. Though they would do one more play together (*After The Fall*), things were never the same. Miller could not forgive and often exhibited towards Kazan and others a chilling coldness not dissimilar to that he deplored in the Salem judges.

Bigsby's book ends in the early 1960s (one presumes another will follow) but, in the decades since, Miller's plays have shown no sign of fading quietly into history. Few would disagree that the finest play on Broadway until it closed in January was *All My Sons*, with John Lithgow, Dianne Wiest and Katie Holmes. It wasn't a case of audiences and critics paying homage to a great past but of responding to a play that speaks today even more powerfully than at its creation.

For most of his life, Miller tried to make sense of the contradictions that crowded his life: he was born into wealth only to see it evaporate; he loved America but was denounced for suggesting it had fixable flaws; he felt ostracised as a Jew but married the most desired gentile in America; he wrote of misery and pain and loss and yet made a fortune; he had the chance to help his near destitute father, the man who had, against all odds, given him life and supported him so well in his youth but turned him down.

Miller's life, like everyone's, was full of contradictions. Unlike most, these helped him become a writer of genius.

Bibliography

Text

The Crucible Penguin Classics – first published 1953

Autobiography

Arthur Miller, *Time Bends* Methuen

Biography

Christopher Bigsby, *Arthur Miller*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson London 2008

Resource Text on *The Crucible* and Belonging – Highly recommended
Jane Curran, Lyndall Hough & Gillian Lovell, *Belonging 2 The Guide to the HSC English Area of Study Belonging* – includes introduction to Area of Study concept of belonging; Analysis of related texts and writing for HSC English Paper 1'

See <www.thelearningcurve.net.au>.

Filmography - <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0115988/>

Nicholas Hytner (director) *The Crucible* U.S.A. 1996 – starring

[Daniel Day-Lewis](#) ...

[John Proctor](#)



[Winona Ryder](#) ...

[Abigail Williams](#)



[Paul Scofield](#) ...

[Judge Thomas Danforth](#)



[Joan Allen](#) ...

[Elizabeth Proctor](#)



[Bruce Davison](#) ...

Reverend Parris

This site has an illuminating Message Board, particularly regarding Arthur Miller's own screenplay adaptation of his play.

Web Site

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/education - STC Ed

You can also send us your feedback on the productions you have seen, e-mail our archivist for specific information you may be searching for or check the date and time of a performance.

Curriculum Links

Characters

Look at Miller's prescription for each character in the play text. Each character has his or her own distinct quality. Most characters are distinctly good or evil though few characters are really developed. The reader is only able to see one side of each character. Even John Proctor, the main character isn't as developed as it could be. This is probably due to the restrictions of time and narration of this particular genre.

Parris - A minister in Salem who is more worried about his own reputation than the town or the truth.

Betty - Parris' daughter. She is faint in the beginning of the play and later accuses various people for witchcraft. Miller says she's "seventeen, a strikingly beautiful girl, an orphan, with an endless capacity for dissembling."

Abigail Williams - Parris' niece and Proctor's mistress. She is the leader of the girls who accuses people of witchcraft during the trial.

Tituba - Parris' slave from Barbados. She is the first accused with being accused by Abigail.

Mrs. Putnam - Wife of Thomas Putnam. She first plants the idea of Betty being bewitched.

Ruth - Daughter of the Putnams. She is one of Abigail's friends who accuses people at the trial.

Mercy Lewis – the Putnams' servant. She is also involved in the accusations of the witches.

John Proctor - Main character. He is a good man, but has committed adultery with Abigail.

Elizabeth Proctor - John Proctor's wife. She is an upright woman who is accused of being a witch. She couldn't forgive Proctor for adultery until just before he died.

Mary Warren - Proctor's servant, naïve, lonely girl. She is one of Abigail's friends and plants evidence on Elizabeth.

Reverend Hale - Self proclaimed expert on witchcraft. He is a minister who at first believes the girls accusations but eventually sees the evil in the court.

Deputy Governor Danforth - Deputy Governor of Massachusetts who believes the testimony of the girls despite evidence to the contrary. He works more to keep the reputation of the court than to seek justice.

Judge Hathorne - Judge presiding over the witch trials.

Rebecca Nurse - Respected, upright wife of Francis nurse. She is accused of witchcraft.

Francis Nurse - Rebecca's Husband. He had land disputes with the Putnams.

Giles Corey - Old villager who accidentally causes his wife to be accused. Elizabeth Proctor calls him "a fearsome man." "Great stones they lay upon his chest until he plead ay or nay. They say he give them but two words. 'More weight,' he says and dies".

Cheever - He arrests the witches.

Herrick - Also arrests the witches.

Setting

The play takes place in Salem, Massachusetts during the 17th century. Since this story is based on a true story, the setting is real. The fact that the story takes place during the 17th century is important. The community needed to be superstitious and gullible in order for this incident to actually happen. Also, the event needed to be in a Puritan society to have such an aversion to witches. People in the twentieth and even the nineteenth centuries would be too skeptical about the supernatural to believe the girls. Also, they would be likely to dismiss the act of dancing in the forest as just a little game.

Style – Techniques

Miller's style is very simple. He uses simple sentences and words which are easy to understand. He brings out the evil quality of Abigail and the other girls and also the gullibility of the judges. His style is easy to understand and should be in order to be successful as a play. While using the simple style, Miller doesn't take anything away from the suspense in the plot. The dialogue of his character is like actual speech. His words are used effectively and don't include anything not necessary for making a good play. Many clever figurative devices are used. For example, Abigail says that John "sweated like a stallion." The writing is really memorable.

Themes

The theme of the story is rising over adversity, and standing for the truth even to death. This is the theme for many stories and is always an exciting one. John, in the beginning, wanted to keep distant from the trials. He did not want to have a part, whether good or bad. When Elizabeth was arrested, he was forced to become part of it. He went to court first to set his wife free but after watching the proceedings, he saw that the evil was not only being done to his own wife but many others like his wife. As a result, he worked even harder to free the other innocent people, getting himself arrested. Despite this drawback, he did not give up. He had the chance to free himself if he testified against the others but he realised that this would be wrong, and even though he wanted to free himself, he would not if it meant bringing trouble upon others. He cleansed himself at the trial, standing for what he knew was right and died a righteous person. Though he stayed away from church, he became more pure than the common Puritans, dying as a martyr like the original apostles. He learned what truth meant through his suffering.

Through Proctor's struggle, Miller displays the struggles within each of our own hearts. Many times we have witnessed some wrong happening to some other person and wished not to get involved. However, sometimes, like Proctor, there might be something that forces us in. Would we quit after only saving our wife like Proctor could have done, or would we go for the entire community as Proctor did?

Conclusion

The story reminds its readers of an ugly blemish on human history. It reminds us that man is not perfect, and that we can make mistakes. However, even with these mistakes, we can cleanse ourselves and purify ourselves by making what is wrong right. The sufferings become to the sufferer like a crucible.

'...though our hearts break, we cannot flinch; these are new times, sir. There is a misty plot afoot so subtle we should be criminal to cling to old respects and ancient friendships. I have seen too many frightful proofs in court – the Devil is alive in Salem, and we dare not quail to follow wherever the accusing finger points!'

In this astounding modern classic, Arthur Miller chronicles the horrors and corruption of the Salem witch-trials of 1692. A powerful allegory for what Miller considered to be a witch-hunt in his own time – the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings – the play examines justice, injustice, honour and courage.

The Crucible opens as Reverend Parris weeps at his ailing daughter's bedside. His fear is that she has been possessed by a dark magic and that the same force is tightening its grip on others in Salem. As suspicion spreads, the deeply pious village descends into a religious and moral hysteria, as it attempts to define the beliefs at the community's very foundation.

Brilliant young director Tanya Goldberg has realised an abridged version of Miller's masterpiece, exposing the unnerving immediacy of the timeless work. This bold, contemporary production will reveal the multiple layers of allegory, demonstrating that this is as much a play for our own time as it is was for Miller's.