

The Crucible

Act I

Arthur Miller

CHARACTERS

Reverend Parris

Betty Parris

Tituba

Abigail Williams

Susanna Walcott

Mrs. Ann Putnam

Thomas Putnam

Mercy Lewis

Mary Warren

John Proctor

Rebecca Nurse

Martha Corey

Reverend John Hale

Elizabeth Proctor

Francis Nurse

Ezekiel Cheever

Marshal Herrick

Judge Hathorne

Deputy Governor Danforth

Sarah Good

Hopkins

Giles Corey

purpose. But all organization is and must be grounded on the idea of exclusion and prohibition, just as two objects cannot occupy the same space. Evidently the time came in New England when the repressions of order were heavier than seemed warranted by the dangers against which the order was organized. The witch-hunt was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom.

16 When one rises above the individual villainy displayed, one can only pity them all, just as we shall be pitied someday. It is still impossible for man to organize his social life without repressions, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom.

17 The witch-hunt was not, however, a mere repression. It was also, and as importantly, a long overdue opportunity for everyone so inclined to express publicly his guilt and sins, under the cover of accusations against the victims. It suddenly became possible—and patriotic and holy—for a man to say that Martha Corey had come into his bedroom at night, and that, while his wife was sleeping at his side, Martha laid herself down on his chest and “nearly suffocated him.” Of course it was her spirit only, but his satisfaction at confessing himself was no lighter than if it had been Martha herself. One could not ordinarily speak such things in public.

18 Long-held hatreds of neighbors could now be openly expressed, and vengeance taken, despite the Bible’s charitable injunctions. Land-lust which had been expressed before by constant bickering over boundaries and deeds, could now be elevated to the arena of morality; one could cry witch against one’s neighbor and feel perfectly justified in the bargain. Old scores could be settled on a plane of heavenly combat between Lucifer⁴ and the Lord; suspicions and the envy of the miserable toward the happy could and did burst out in the general revenge.

19 REVEREND PARRIS *is praying now, and, though we cannot hear his words, a sense of his confusion hangs about him. He mumbles, then seems about to weep; then he weeps, then prays again; but his daughter does not stir on the bed.*

20 *The door opens, and his Negro slave enters. TITUBA is in her forties. PARRIS brought her with him from Barbados, where he spent some years as a merchant before entering the ministry. She enters as one does who can no longer bear to be barred from the sight of her beloved, but she is also very frightened because her slave sense has warned her that, as always, trouble in this house eventually lands on her back.*

21 **Tituba**, *already taking a step backward*: My Betty be hearty soon?

22 **Parris**: Out of here!

4. **Lucifer** (LOO suh fuhr) the Devil.

- 23 **Tituba**, *backing to the door*: My Betty not goin' die . . .
- 24 **Parris**, *scrambling to his feet in a fury*: Out of my sight! *She is gone.* Out of my—*He is overcome with sobs. He clamps his teeth against them and closes the door and leans against it, exhausted.* Oh, my God! God help me! *Quaking with fear, mumbling to himself through his sobs, he goes to the bed and gently takes BETTY'S hand.* Betty. Child. Dear child. Will you wake, will you open up your eyes! Betty, little one . . .
- 25 *He is bending to kneel again when his niece, ABIGAIL WILLIAMS, seventeen, enters—a strikingly beautiful girl, an orphan, with an endless capacity for dissembling. Now she is all worry and apprehension and propriety.*
- 26 **Abigail**: Uncle? *He looks to her.* Susanna Walcott's here from Doctor Griggs.
- 27 **Parris**: Oh? Let her come, let her come.
- 28 **Abigail**, *leaning out the door to call to Susanna, who is down the hall a few steps*: Come in, Susanna.
- 29 SUSANNA WALCOTT, *a little younger than Abigail, a nervous, hurried girl enters.*
- 30 **Parris**, *eagerly*: What does the doctor say, child?
- 31 **Susanna**, *craning around PARRIS to get a look at BETTY*: He bid me come and tell you, reverend sir, that he cannot discover no medicine for it in his books.
- 32 **Parris**: Then he must search on.
- 33 **Susanna**: Aye, sir, he have been searchin' his books since he left you, sir. But he bid me tell you, that you might look to unnatural things for the cause of it.
- 34 **Parris**, *his eyes going wide*: No—no. There be no unnatural cause here. Tell him I have sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly, and Mr. Hale will surely confirm that. Let him look to medicine and put out all thought of unnatural causes here. There be none.
- 35 **Susanna**: Aye, sir. He bid me tell you. *She turns to go.*
- 36 **Abigail**: Speak nothin' of it in the village, Susanna.
- 37 **Parris**: Go directly home and speak nothing of unnatural causes.
- 38 **Susanna**: Aye, sir. I pray for her. *She goes out.*
- 39 **Abigail**: Uncle, the rumor of witchcraft is all about; I think you'd best go down and deny it yourself. The parlor's packed with people, sir. I'll sit with her.
- 40 **Parris**, *pressed, turns on her*: And what shall I say to them? That my daughter and my niece I discovered dancing like heathen in the forest?
- 41 **Abigail**: Uncle, we did dance; let you tell them I confessed it—and I'll be whipped if I must be. But they're speakin' of witchcraft. Betty's not witched.

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In the stage directions in paragraph 24, mark details that suggest Parris's extreme emotions.

QUESTION: Why does Miller include these details?

CONCLUDE: How would these details affect the audience's perceptions of Parris in a performance?

- 42 **Parris:** Abigail, I cannot go before the congregation when I know you have not opened with me. What did you do with her in the forest?
- 43 **Abigail:** We did dance, uncle, and when you leaped out of the bush so suddenly, Betty was frightened and then she fainted. And there's the whole of it.
- 44 **Parris:** Child. Sit you down.
- 45 **Abigail, quavering, as she sits:** I would never hurt Betty. I love her dearly.
- 46 **Parris:** Now look you, child, your punishment will come in its time. But if you trafficked with spirits in the forest I must know it now, for surely my enemies will, and they will ruin me with it.
- 47 **Abigail:** But we never conjured spirits.
- 48 **Parris:** Then why can she not move herself since midnight? This child is desperate! *Abigail lowers her eyes.* It must come out—my enemies will bring it out. Let me know what you done there. Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies?
- 49 **Abigail:** I have heard of it, uncle.
- 50 **Parris:** There is a faction that is sworn to drive me from my pulpit. Do you understand that?
- 51 **Abigail:** I think so, sir.
- 52 **Parris:** Now then, in the midst of such disruption, my own household is discovered to be the very center of some obscene practice. Abominations are done in the forest—
- 53 **Abigail:** It were sport, uncle!
- 54 **Parris, pointing at BETTY:** You call this sport? *She lowers her eyes. He pleads:* Abigail, if you know something that may help the doctor, for God's sake tell it to me. *She is silent.* I saw Tituba waving her arms over the fire when I came on you. Why was she doing that? And I heard a screeching and gibberish coming from her mouth. She were swaying like a dumb beast over that fire!
- 55 **Abigail:** She always sings her Barbados songs, and we dance.
- 56 **Parris:** I cannot blink what I saw, Abigail, for my enemies will not blink it. I saw a dress lying on the grass.
- 57 **Abigail, innocently:** A dress?
- 58 **Parris—it is very hard to say:** Aye, a dress. And I thought I saw—someone naked running through the trees!
- 59 **Abigail, in terror:** No one was naked! You mistake yourself, uncle!
- 60 **Parris, with anger:** I saw it! *He moves from her. Then, resolved:* Now tell me true, Abigail. And I pray you feel the weight of truth upon you, for now my ministry's at stake, my ministry and perhaps your cousin's life. Whatever abomination you have

done, give me all of it now, for I dare not be taken unaware when I go before them down there.

- 61 **Abigail:** There is nothin' more. I swear it, uncle.
- 62 **Parris,** *studies her, then nods, half convinced:* Abigail, I have fought here three long years to bend these stiff-necked people to me, and now, just now when some good respect is rising for me in the parish, you compromise my very character. I have given you a home, child. I have put clothes upon your back—now give me upright answer. Your name in the town—it is entirely white, is it not?
- 63 **Abigail,** *with an edge of resentment:* Why, I am sure it is, sir. There be no blush about my name.
- 64 **Parris,** *to the point:* Abigail, is there any other cause than you have told me, for your being discharged from Goody⁵ Proctor's service? I have heard it said, and I tell you as I heard it, that she



NOTES

5. **Goody** title used for a married woman; short for Goodwife.

In the 1996 film version of *The Crucible*, Winona Ryder portrays Abigail Williams.

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In the dialogue between Parris and Abigail, paragraphs 65–69, mark details that suggest Abigail’s reputation in Salem may be questionable.

QUESTION: Why does Miller include these details about Abigail at this point in the play?

CONCLUDE: What conflicts do these clues suggest are at work in Salem?

- comes so rarely to the church this year for she will not sit so close to something soiled. What signified that remark?
- 65 **Abigail:** She hates me, uncle, she must, for I would not be her slave. It’s a bitter woman, a lying, cold, sniveling woman, and I will not work for such a woman!
- 66 **Parris:** She may be. And yet it has troubled me that you are now seven month out of their house, and in all this time no other family has ever called for your service.
- 67 **Abigail:** They want slaves, not such as I. Let them send to Barbados for that. I will not black my face for any of them! *With ill-concealed resentment at him:* Do you begrudge my bed, uncle?
- 68 **Parris:** No—no.
- 69 **Abigail, in a temper:** My name is good in the village! I will not have it said my name is soiled! Goody Proctor is a gossiping liar!
- 70 *Enter MRS. ANN PUTNAM. She is a twisted soul of forty-five, a death-ridden woman, haunted by dreams.*
- 71 **Parris, as soon as the door begins to open:** No—no. I cannot have anyone. *He sees her, and a certain deference springs into him, although his worry remains.* Why, Goody Putnam, come in.
- 72 **Mrs. Putnam, full of breath, shiny-eyed:** It is a marvel. It is surely a stroke of hell upon you.
- 73 **Parris:** No, Goody Putnam. It is—
- 74 **Mrs. Putnam, glancing at BETTY:** How high did she fly, how high?
- 75 **Parris:** No, no, she never flew—
- 76 **Mrs. Putnam, very pleased with it:** Why, it’s sure she did. Mr. Collins saw her goin’ over Ingersoll’s barn, and come down light as bird, he says!
- 77 **Parris:** Now, look you, Goody Putnam, she never— *Enter THOMAS PUTNAM, a well-to-do, hard-handed landowner, near fifty.* Oh, good morning, Mr. Putnam.
- 78 **Putnam:** It is a providence the thing is out now! It is a providence. *He goes directly to the bed.*
- 79 **Parris:** What’s out, sir, what’s—?
- 80 *MRS. PUTNAM goes to the bed.*
- 81 **Putnam, looking down at BETTY:** Why, *her eyes* is closed! Look you, Ann.
- 82 **Mrs. Putnam:** Why, that’s strange. *To PARRIS:* Ours is open.
- 83 **Parris, shocked:** Your Ruth is sick?
- 84 **Mrs. Putnam, with vicious certainty:** I’d not call it sick; the Devil’s touch is heavier than sick. It’s death, y’know, it’s death drivin’ into them, forked and hoofed.
- 85 **Parris:** Oh, pray not! Why, how does Ruth ail?

- 86 **Mrs. Putnam:** She ails as she must—she never waked this morning, but her eyes open and she walks, and hears naught, sees naught, and cannot eat. Her soul is taken, surely.
- 87 PARRIS *is struck*.
- 88 **Putnam, as though for further details:** They say you've sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly?
- 89 **Parris, with dwindling conviction now:** A precaution only. He has much experience in all demonic arts, and I—
- 90 **Mrs. Putnam:** He has indeed; and found a witch in Beverly last year, and let you remember that.
- 91 **Parris:** Now, Goody Ann, they only thought that were a witch, and I am certain there be no element of witchcraft here.
- 92 **Putnam:** No witchcraft! Now look you, Mr. Parris—
- 93 **Parris:** Thomas, Thomas, I pray you, leap not to witchcraft. I know that you—you least of all. Thomas, would ever wish so disastrous a charge laid upon me. We cannot leap to witchcraft. They will howl me out of Salem for such corruption in my house.
- 94 A word about Thomas Putnam. He was a man with many grievances, at least one of which appears justified. Some time before, his wife's brother-in-law, James Bayley, had been turned down as minister at Salem. Bayley had all the qualifications, and a two-thirds vote into the bargain, but a faction stopped his acceptance, for reasons that are not clear.
- 95 Thomas Putnam was the eldest son of the richest man in the village. He had fought the Indians at Narragansett, and was deeply interested in parish affairs. He undoubtedly felt it poor payment that the village should so blatantly disregard his candidate for one of its more important offices, especially since he regarded himself as the intellectual superior of most of the people around him.
- 96 His **vindictive** nature was demonstrated long before the witchcraft began. Another former Salem minister, George Burroughs, had had to borrow money to pay for his wife's funeral, and, since the parish was remiss in his salary, he was soon bankrupt. Thomas and his brother John had Burroughs jailed for debts the man did not owe. The incident is important only in that Burroughs succeeded in becoming minister where Bayley, Thomas Putnam's brother-in-law, had been rejected; the motif of resentment is clear here. Thomas Putnam felt that his own name and the honor of his family had been smirched by the village, and he meant to right matters however he could.
- 97 Another reason to believe him a deeply embittered man was his attempt to break his father's will, which left a disproportionate amount to a stepbrother. As with every other public cause in which he tried to force his way, he failed in this.

vindictive (vihñ DIHK tihv) *adj.*
characterized by an intense,
unreasoning desire for
revenge

NOTES

6. **abyss** (uh BIHS) *n.* deep crack in the earth.

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: Mark details in Mrs. Putnam’s speech in paragraph 101 that relate to things that are unexplainable or secret.

QUESTION: What do these details suggest about the ways in which Mrs. Putnam understands the world?

CONCLUDE: How do these details add to the growing sense of tension in the scene?

So it is not surprising to find that so many accusations against people are in the handwriting of Thomas Putnam, or that his name is so often found as a witness corroborating the supernatural testimony, or that his daughter led the crying-out at the most opportune junctures of the trials, especially when— But we’ll speak of that when we come to it.

98 **Putnam**—*at the moment he is intent upon getting PARRIS. for whom he has only contempt, to move toward the abyss:*⁶ Mr. Parris, I have taken your part in all contention here, and I would continue; but I cannot if you hold back in this. There are hurtful, vengeful spirits layin’ hands on these children.

99 **Parris:** But, Thomas, you cannot—

100 **Putnam:** Ann! Tell Mr. Parris what you have done.

101 **Mrs. Putnam:** Reverend Parris, I have laid seven babies unbaptized in the earth. Believe me, sir, you never saw more hearty babies born. And yet, each would wither in my arms the very night of their birth. I have spoke nothin’, but my heart has clamored intimations. And now, this year, my Ruth, my only—I see her turning strange. A secret child she has become this year, and shrivels like a sucking mouth were pullin’ on her life too. And so I thought to send her to your Tituba—

102 **Parris:** To Tituba! What may Tituba—?

103 **Mrs. Putnam:** Tituba knows how to speak to the dead, Mr. Parris.

104 **Parris:** Goody Ann, it is a formidable sin to conjure up the dead!

105 **Mrs. Putnam:** I take it on my soul, but who else may surely tell us what person murdered my babies?

106 **Parris, horrified:** Woman!

107 **Mrs. Putnam:** They were murdered, Mr. Parris! And mark this proof! Mark it! Last night my Ruth were ever so close to their little spirits; I know it, sir. For how else is she struck dumb now except some power of darkness would stop her mouth? It is a marvelous sign, Mr. Parris!

108 **Putnam:** Don’t you understand it, sir? There is a murdering witch among us, bound to keep herself in the dark. *PARRIS turns to BETTY, a frantic terror rising in him.* Let your enemies make of it what they will, you cannot blink it more.

109 **Parris, to ABIGAIL:** Then you were conjuring spirits last night.

110 **Abigail, whispering:** Not I, sir—Tituba and Ruth.

111 **Parris turns now, with new fear, and goes to BETTY, looks down at her, and then, gazing off:** Oh, Abigail, what proper payment for my charity! Now I am undone.

112 **Putnam:** You are not undone! Let you take hold here. Wait for no one to charge you—declare it yourself. You have discovered witchcraft—

- 113 **Parris:** In my house? In my house, Thomas? They will topple me with this! They will make of it a—
- 114 *Enter* MERCY LEWIS, *the Putnams' servant, a fat, sly, merciless girl of eighteen.*
- 115 **Mercy:** Your pardons. I only thought to see how Betty is.
- 116 **Putnam:** Why aren't you home? Who's with Ruth?
- 117 **Mercy:** Her grandma come. She's improved a little, I think—she give a powerful sneeze before.
- 118 **Mrs. Putnam:** Ah, there's a sign of life!
- 119 **Mercy:** I'd fear no more, Goody Putnam. It were a grand sneeze; another like it will shake her wits together, I'm sure. *She goes to the bed to look.*
- 120 **Parris:** Will you leave me now, Thomas? I would pray a while alone.
- 121 **Abigail:** Uncle, you've prayed since midnight. Why do you not go down and—
- 122 **Parris:** No—no. *To* PUTNAM: I have no answer for that crowd. I'll wait till Mr. Hale arrives. *To get* MRS. PUTNAM *to leave:* If you will, Goody Ann . . .
- 123 **Putnam:** Now look you, sir. Let you strike out against the Devil, and the village will bless you for it! Come down, speak to them—pray with them. They're thirsting for your word, Mister! Surely you'll pray with them.
- 124 **Parris, swayed:** I'll lead them in a psalm, but let you say nothing of witchcraft yet. I will not discuss it. The cause is yet unknown. I have had enough contention since I came; I want no more.
- 125 **Mrs. Putnam:** Mercy, you go home to Ruth, d'y'hear?
- 126 **Mercy:** Aye, mum.
- 127 MRS. PUTNAM *goes out.*
- 128 **Parris, to** ABIGAIL: If she starts for the window, cry for me at once.
- 129 **Abigail:** I will, uncle.
- 130 **Parris, to** PUTNAM: There is a terrible power in her arms today. *He goes out with* PUTNAM.
- 131 **Abigail, with hushed trepidation:** How is Ruth sick?
- 132 **Mercy:** It's weirdish. I know not—she seems to walk like a dead one since last night.
- 133 **Abigail, turns at once and goes to** BETTY, *and now, with fear in her voice:* Betty? BETTY *doesn't move. She shakes her.* Now stop this! Betty! Sit up now!
- 134 BETTY *doesn't stir.* MERCY *comes over.*

- 135 **Mercy:** Have you tried beatin' her? I gave Ruth a good one and it waked her for a minute. Here, let me have her.
- 136 **Abigail, holding MERCY back:** No, he'll be comin' up. Listen, now: if they be questioning us, tell them we danced—I told him as much already.
- 137 **Mercy:** Aye. And what more?
- 138 **Abigail:** He knows Tituba conjured Ruth's sisters to come out of the grave.
- 139 **Mercy:** And what more?
- 140 **Abigail:** He saw you naked.
- 141 **Mercy:** *clapping her hands together with a frightened laugh:* Oh, Jesus!
- 142 *Enter MARY WARREN, breathless. She is seventeen, a subservient, naive, lonely girl.*
- 143 **Mary Warren:** What'll we do? The village is out! I just come from the farm; the whole country's talkin' witchcraft! They'll be callin' us witches, Abby!
- 144 **Mercy, pointing and looking at MARY WARREN:** She means to tell. I know it.
- 145 **Mary Warren:** Abby, we've got to tell. Witchery's a hangin' error, a hangin' like they done in Boston two year ago! We must

In this still from the 1996 film version of *The Crucible*, the other girls hold Betty Parris back as she attempts to fly.



tell the truth, Abby! You'll only be whipped for dancin', and the other things!

146 **Abigail:** Oh, we'll be whipped!

147 **Mary Warren:** I never done none of it, Abby. I only looked!

148 **Mercy**, *moving menacingly toward MARY:* Oh, you're a great one for lookin', aren't you, Mary Warren? What a grand peeping courage you have!

149 *BETTY, on the bed, whimpers. ABIGAIL turns to her at once.*

150 **Abigail:** Betty? *She goes to BETTY.* Now, Betty, dear, wake up now. It's Abigail. *She sits BETTY up and furiously shakes her.* I'll beat you, Betty! *BETTY whimpers.* My, you seem improving. I talked to your papa and I told him everything. So there's nothing to—

151 **Betty**, *darts off the bed, frightened of ABIGAIL, and flattens herself against the wall:* I want my mama!

152 **Abigail**, *with alarm, as she cautiously approaches BETTY:* What ails you, Betty? Your mama's dead and buried.

153 **Betty:** I'll fly to Mama. Let me fly! *She raises her arms as though to fly, and streaks for the window, gets one leg out.*

154 **Abigail**, *pulling her away from the window:* I told him everything, he knows now, he knows everything we—

155 **Betty:** You drank blood, Abby! You didn't tell him that!

156 **Abigail:** Betty, you never say that again! You will never—

157 **Betty:** You did, you did! You drank a charm to kill John Proctor's wife! You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!

158 **Abigail**, *smashes her across the face:* Shut it! Now shut it!

159 **Betty:** *collapsing on the bed:* Mama. Mama! *She dissolves into sobs.*

160 **Abigail:** Now look you. All of you. We danced. And Tituba conjured Ruth Putnam's dead sisters. And that is all. And mark this. Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word, about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it; I saw Indians smash my dear parents' heads on the pillow next to mine, and I have seen some reddish work done at night, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down! *She goes to BETTY and roughly sits her up.* Now, you—sit up and stop this!

161 *But BETTY collapses in her hands and lies inert on the bed.*

162 **Mary Warren**, *with hysterical fright:* What's got her? *ABIGAIL stares in fright at BETTY.* Abby, she's going to die! It's a sin to conjure, and we—

163 **Abigail**, *starting for MARY:* I say shut it, Mary Warren!

164 *Enter JOHN PROCTOR. On seeing him, MARY WARREN leaps in fright.*

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In Abigail's speech in paragraph 160, mark the short sentences.

QUESTION: Why does Miller mix short and long sentences in this speech?

CONCLUDE: How do these short sentences add to the emotional intensity of Abigail's speech?