



The Crucible

By Arthur Miller

. . . When History and Literature Collide

The Crucible is . . .

Puritanism

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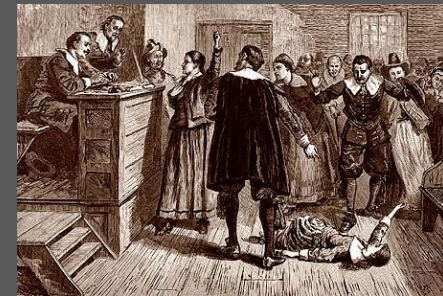
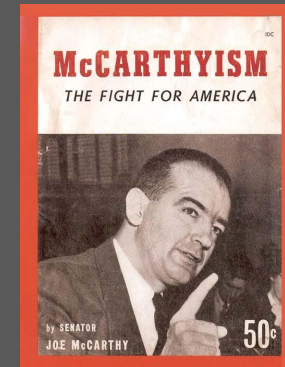
Witchcraft

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McCarthyism

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Arthur Miller



“CRUCIBLE”

- The word crucible means:
 - A glass container that can sustain high temperatures
 - A severe test of patience or beliefs; a trial
- Based on the definition, what do you predict this play will be about?

Puritanism

- Christian faith that originated in England during the early 1600s
- Puritans believed in predestination: the idea that God had determined in advance one's destiny.
- Puritans split from the Church of England in 1633
- Many emigrated to the American colonies
- Their radical beliefs flourished: *Life revolves around God, believe in demons, salvation, heaven and hell*
- *Puritans were not tolerant of other religions.*
- *Aim of early Puritans was to "purify" the Church, not leave it, but their ideas were too strict and they had to practice their beliefs in secret.*

Church & State



- The Massachusetts government was run by a small select group of religious men. This type of government is called an Oligarchy.
- Those men believed the Puritans were a chosen people that the devil would do anything to destroy.
- The Puritans considered all government actions to be necessarily “good,” or sanctioned by Heaven
- As a result, any attempt to question, obstruct, or resist any of the government’s actions, no matter how ludicrous, was considered to be an attempt to overthrow God.

Basic Puritan Beliefs

- Mankind is basically sinful—Doctrine of Original Sin—Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden
- God “saves” those He wishes – predestination or the “Doctrine of the Elect.” No amount of good behavior or good works can alter God’s plan.
- Jesus died for “the chosen” only, not everyone.
- God’s grace is freely given, it cannot be earned or denied. But, it is only given to “the chosen.”
- People wanted to appear as if they were one of the chosen, so outward behavior and appearance were important, creating opportunity for hypocrisy.

Education of Children

- All children were required to attend school.
- Puritan children had to learn to read and do mathematics.
- Children and adults read the Bible or religious texts. There were no novels.
- Anything pleasant was inspired by the Devil. Women couldn't dress prettily, children couldn't play games, theater was forbidden.
- Dancing was a cardinal sin.

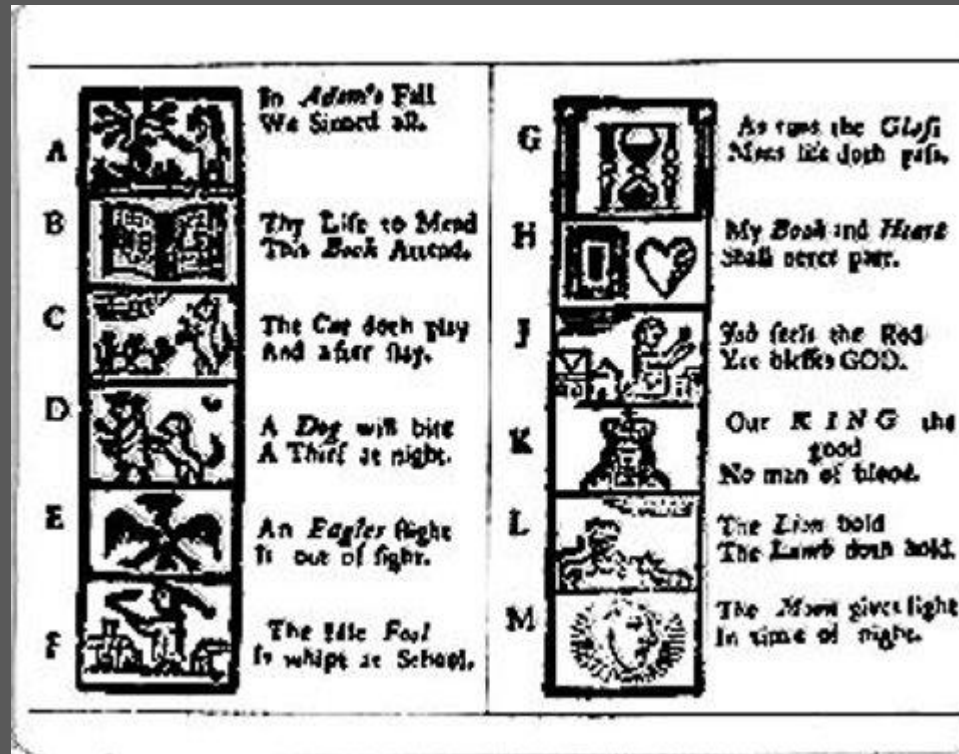
The Hornbook



A Puritan child holding a Hornbook.

A Hornbook was a wooden paddle with a narrow handle. Handwritten lessons on parchment were tacked onto the wood each day.

Page of the Hornbook



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“Witch Hunt”

- Definition (noun)

1. a searching out for persecution of persons accused of witchcraft

2. the searching out and deliberate harassment of those with unpopular views

The Puritans were a strict society. Sins both social and religious were punished.

- Stocks – A man convicted of public drunkenness would have his head shaved and hands placed in a locked stockade for a day. The community would be invited to pelt the guilty with food.
- A man or woman would be forced to wear a handwritten sign indicating their crime.
- Branding on the cheek, forehead or hand would reveal a more serious crime such as horse thief or adulterer.
- One of the worst sins was adultery.

Punishments Continued

Women only could be dunked into the water on a stool – crime – gossip.

Whipping was a common punishment.

Various crimes had a certain number of lashes.

Public shaming – the criminal is pulled by a rope through town while everyone points fingers, throws small objects and laughs.

Puritan Concepts of the Devil and Witches

- During 17th and 18th century people believed in the actual existence of witches and thousands were executed.
- Puritans took the Bible literally—Exodus 22:18 “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live”
- The Devil wanted to destroy the New World to ruin the Puritan’s model society.

Witches

- A witch could be invisible and enter a person's body without that person realizing it.
- The devil and his witches could assume the shape of an innocent person and then torment another person.
- Ironically, once a person confessed to witchcraft, that person was free because he confessed his sin.
- If a person claimed innocence, he was not believed and was put to death.

Witchcraft in Salem

- Like all Puritans, the residents of Salem Village believed in witches and witchcraft.
- They believed that witchcraft was “entering into an agreement with the devil in exchange for certain powers to do evil.”
- They considered witchcraft both a sin and a crime; it was a very serious accusation, which was carefully and thoroughly investigated.



Witchcraft in Salem

- The witchcraft hysteria began in Salem, Massachusetts, in early 1692.
- Reverend Samuel Parris's daughter and Abigail Williams started having fits of convulsion, screaming, and hallucination.
- A doctor examined the girls and concluded that the only explanation for these bizarre behaviors was witchcraft.



Witchcraft in Salem

- The girls pointed fingers at Tituba (the Parris' slave), Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborn. This sparked a witch hunt.



Witchcraft in Salem

- During the next eight months of terror, more than 150 people were imprisoned for witchcraft.
- By the time court was dismissed, 27 people had been convicted, 19 hanged, and 1 pressed to death.
- The hysteria that snowballed in Salem reveals how deep the belief in the supernatural ran in colonial America.



Causes for the Witchcraft Hysteria in Salem

1. Strong belief that Satan is acting in the world.

-----"The invisible world": disease, natural catastrophes, and bad fortune

2. A belief that Satan recruits witches and wizards to work for him.

-----Prior witchcraft cases

3. A belief that a person afflicted by witchcraft exhibits certain symptoms.

4. A time of troubles, making it seem likely that Satan was active.

-----Congregational strife in Salem Village

-----Frontier wars with Indians

Causes for the Witchcraft Hysteria in Salem

5. Stimulation of imaginations by Tituba.
6. Teenage boredom.
-----No television, no CDs, and lots of Bible reading
7. Confessing "witches" adding credibility to earlier charges.
8. Old feuds (disputes within congregation, property disputes) between the accusers and the accused spurring charges of witchcraft.

McCarthyism



- McCarthyism is the term used to describe a period of intense suspicion in the United States during the early 1950s.
- It began when Senator Joseph McCarthy, a U.S. senator from Wisconsin, claimed that communists had infiltrated the Department of State.
- A special House Committee on Un-American Activities was formed to investigate allegations of communism.
- During this period, people from all walks of life became the subjects of aggressive “witch hunts” often based on false or inconclusive evidence.

McCarthyism



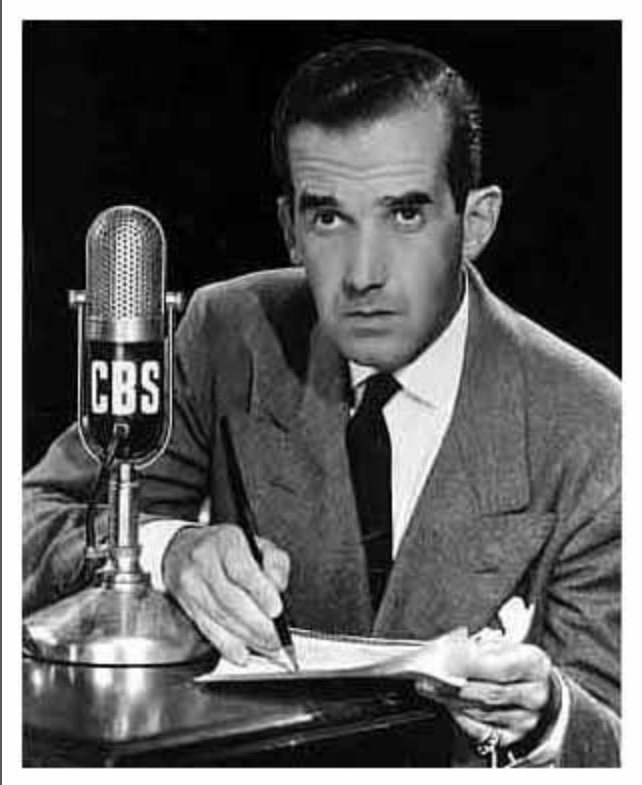
- Persons accused of being communists were often denied employment in both the public and private sector.
- In the film industry alone, over 300 actors, writers, and directors were denied work in the U.S.
- American writer, Arthur Miller accused, or blacklisted.

McCarthyism

- McCarthy's influence finally faltered in 1954 when a famous CBS newsman, Edward R. Murrow, aired an investigative news report which revealed McCarthy as dishonest and abusive.
- The public was finally made aware of how McCarthy's false accusations.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N35lugBYH04><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N35lugBYH04><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N35lugBYH04>

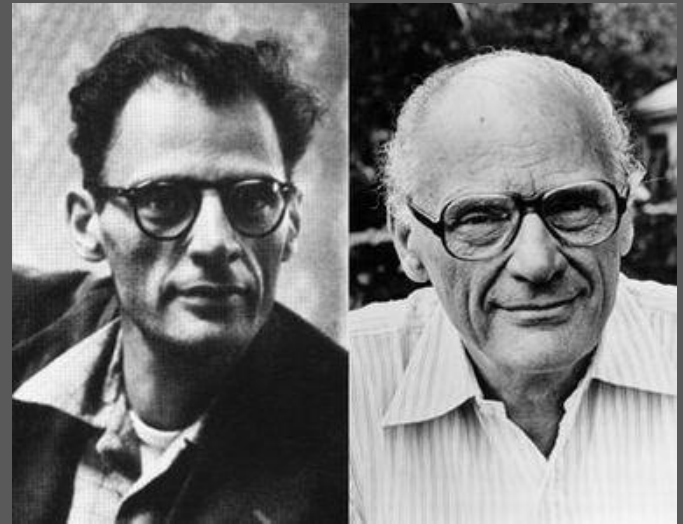
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Edward R. Murrow

Arthur Miller

- Born in 1915, Died in 2005
- In 1953, he wrote *The Crucible*, which uses the Salem Witchcraft Trials of 1692 to attack the anti-communist “witch hunts” of the 1950s.
- He believed the hysteria surrounding the witch craft trials in Puritan New England was very similar to McCarthyism – Senator Joseph McCarthy’s obsessive quest to uncover communist party infiltration of American institutions.
- After the publication of the *The Crucible*, Miller himself was investigated for possible associations with the communist party.
- He refused to give information regarding his colleagues and was found guilty of contempt of court. His sentence was later overturned.



Abigail Williams

- Niece of Reverend Parris
- She was once the mistress of John Proctor but was turned out when his wife discovered the affair.
- She is extremely jealous of Elizabeth Proctor and uses her power in the town to rid herself of Elizabeth as well as any others who have insulted her in the past.
- She cannot let go of her obsession with Proctor.
- She is the leader of the girls.



John Proctor

- Husband to Elizabeth
- He is a farmer
- He had an affair with Abigail when she was employed in his household.
- He knows that the girls are pretending but cannot tell what he knows without revealing having been alone with Abigail. When
- Abigail uses her influence to convict his wife, he tries to tell the truth and finds himself condemned.
- He refuses to admit to witchcraft or to consider Abigail as anything more than a liar.



Elizabeth Proctor

- Wife of John Proctor
- She discovered an affair going on between her husband and Abigail Williams and turned Abigail out of her house.
- She is Abigail's main target
- She feels responsible for driving her husband to have an affair.



Tituba

- Servant to the Parris household
- She is a native of Barbados.
- She is enlisted by Ruth Putnam and Abigail to cast spells and create charms.
- When Abigail turns on her to save herself from punishment, Tituba confesses to everything and saves herself.



Reverend Parris

- Pastor of the church in Salem
- He is the father of Betty and the uncle of Abigail Williams.
- He believes that he is being persecuted and that the townspeople do not respect his position as a man of God.



Deputy Governor Danforth

- He seems to feel particularly strongly that the girls are honest.
- He is sensitive to the presence of the devil and reacts explosively to whatever evidence is presented.



The Girls

- **Betty Parris**- Daughter of the Reverend, cousin to Abigail Williams. She is a weak girl who goes along with her cousin as soon as she is threatened.
- **Susanna Walcott**- One of the girls. She is initially sent between Parris and Dr. Griggs to determine the cause of Betty's ailment. She is easily guided by Abigail.
- **Mercy Lewis**- Servant to the Putnam household. She is a merciless girl who seems to delight in the girls' activities.
- **Mary Warren**- Servant to the Proctor household. Abigail uses her to effectively accuse Elizabeth. John Proctor takes Mary to the court to confess that the girls are only pretending. She is not strong enough to fight Abigail and as soon as Abigail leads the other girls against her, Mary caves and runs back to her side by accusing Proctor himself.



Satire...

- The Crucible is juvenalian satire.
- The people want to “save” Salem, but refuse to see that THEY are the ones causing the problem.
- Remember that Juvenalian Satire is supposed to make you (the reader) angry and want to be a cause of change.

So what's it about and why should I care?

- “Witch Hunts” can still happen today
- We must be the change we wish to see in the world.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6tnuW2G2FFo>

Sixty Second Intro

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MxD3QffAjA>

The Characters

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=udKw4RqKsMI&t=12s>

John Proctor