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“The Crucible” by Arthur Miller

Witchcraft may be uncommon nowadays however, in the puritan community it was well known for being part of a worship in doing the devil's work. This play was based on the 1692 Salem Witch trials and through all of the disturbing events that had taken place along with it. In the play, “The Crucible”, Arthur Miller explores the big idea on how more authority breeds more power especially in conflicts connected to blackmailing, paranoia, and scapegoating.

During the marriage of John and Elizabeth Proctor, an affair was occurring. John Proctor fell for Abigail Williams but he is quickly realizing that he is committing adultery with her and makes the decision to end their relationship. After this occurrence, Abigail took advantage of it and is using this to blackmail John Proctor. Abigail is being manipulative and argues with John, “You are singing secret hallelujahs that your wife will hang!” (Miller 46). What Abigail states foreshadows on what she is planning to do to get the most power and accuse Elizabeth for any reason that comes to her mind. John Proctor later has internal and external conflict and wants to avoid his name and identity to get taken away and decides to confess. He has made his point and exclaims, “God does not need my name; God knows how black my sins are!” (Miller Act IV). He discovers that only God will be the one to judge him

and will always keep his name. John Proctor is not the only one to go under such internal conflict.

As for paranoia, Mary Warren undergoes great pressure and has multiple breakdowns as Proctor wants her to confess so Elizabeth's life would be saved. Mary is told to confess that what Abigail was saying was a hoax. As she was undergoing great stress she found herself to be very scared and states, "I cannot charge murder on Abigail. She'll kill me for saying that! Abby'll charge lechery on you Proctor! I cannot they'll turn on me" (Miller 24). It had come the attention that Mary did not want to be seen as the backstabber when all she is doing is telling the truth to save the lives of others. As for Proctor, he wanted to show how Mary had changed through all this chaos and explaining to Judge Danforth, "You saw her scream, she howled, she swore familiar spirits choked her, she even testified that Satan tried to win her soul away" (Miller 30). It was obvious to find Mary in such an uncomfortable position and make up events to get herself away from any trouble whatsoever.

Scapegoating can affect how the antagonist was able to gain much more power than others. Abigail accuses Elizabeth Proctor for witchcraft so she'll be hung. That would lead to Abigail wanting to marry John Proctor since Elizabeth will not be in the picture anymore. One way Abigail blames Elizabeth was through a poppet. The poppet has a needle inserted through its stomach and Abigail stabs herself just like the poppet and acts as if Elizabeth was the one to insert it. Reverend Hale confronts Elizabeth stating, "Abigail were stabbed tonight; a needle were found stuck in her belly" (Miller 23). She wanted to expose Elizabeth for using witchcraft to torture or slowly murder her. Abigail also blames Tituba for her own

wrongdoings. When Abigail was in the woods with Tituba and the young girls, she drank blood to kill Elizabeth. She blames Tituba and tells Reverend Parris and Thomas Putnam, “She made me do it! She made me drink blood!” (Miller 13). It is now known that Abigail refuses to get into any trouble and using her own tricks even if it meant someone will get hung for her lies.

Showing this proves how blackmailing, paranoia, and scapegoating came into conflict on how more authority bred more power. This is significant to understand because all of these similar characters became dynamic through all sorts of trouble and how people turned against each other through one’s strange behavior.

Works Cited:

Miller, Arthur. "The Crucible." Penguin Books, 1995.