

Name:

## Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*

### Literary Analysis: Development of Theme

The havoc that fear and suspicion can wreak if not countered by reason is the most obvious theme of *The Crucible*. A theme is a central idea of insight that a writer tries to convey in a literary work. Miller's depiction of paranoia in Salem and his references to America in the 1950's make clear his ideas on the topic.

A work of literature may have more than one theme. Miller carefully intertwines other topics and themes as well. The personal motivations of the characters, for example, contribute to their fates along with the religious issue of witchcraft. John withholds critical information about Abigail, for example, because of his past relationship with her. Hale's academic pride blinds him to hysteria's momentum for too long. How does Miller spin these threads into themes about people and how they behave? What themes does he express?

**Directions:** Use the following chart to help you analyze the development of themes in *The Crucible*. In the first column are literary elements that Miller uses as tools to develop the themes of the play. In the second column, write a sentence that states a theme expressed by the literary element. In the third, list the examples in the play that develops the theme you have identified.

Literary Elements	Theme Statement*	Examples from the play
Characterization or Character Motivation	Authority offers no guarantee of goodness.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Parris, Salem's church and town leader, is more concerned with his reputation than possessing moral character.</li><li>2. Marshal Herrick is authorized to watch over the imprisoned woman, but inappropriately intoxicated on prison watch.</li><li>3. Judge Danforth realizes that the persecution of witches in Salem is unfounded but continue to hang the accused.</li></ol>
Setting or Mood	Fear and suspicion are infectious and can produce a mass hysteria that destroys public order and rationality.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The weak construction of the meeting house vestry room shows the fragile foundation or structure of the Salem community which is a breeding ground for hysteria.</li><li>2. The long table symbolizes The Last Supper.</li><li>3. The high windows with little light shining through represents that God's light is unreachable to those inside the meeting house.</li></ol>

RL.11-12.02: Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account.

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Topic	Theme Statement	Examples from the play
Allegory	Personal vengeance is a hidden motive for public actions.	
Irony	It is nobler to die with integrity than it is to live with compromised values or principles that harm others.	

\*Themes to Consider:

Fear and suspicion are infectious and can produce a mass hysteria that destroys public order and rationality.

Accepting responsibility and letting go of one's guilt can be empowering.

Personal vengeance is a hidden motive for public actions.

Authority offers no guarantee of goodness.

It is nobler to die with integrity than it is to live with compromised values or principles that harms others.

Intolerance of others leads to destruction and devastation of a society.

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### *The Crucible* Literary Analysis: Development of Theme

**Directions:** Use the following charts to help you analyze the development of multiple themes in *The Crucible*. First, consider two themes that MAY relate or interact in some way throughout the play. Next, find examples or specific moments in the text that highlight these themes. Determine which literary element or tool Miller uses to develop the theme in these specific moments. Provide a thorough explanation and analysis to support your claim (theme). Lastly, draw conclusions from your analysis by completing the sentence frame.

Theme #1:		
Accepting responsibility and letting go of one's guilt can be empowering.		
Specific examples	Literary Element or Tool	Explanation and Analysis
In Act 2, John Proctor reveals to his wife that he refuses to tell the court about Abigail's fraudulent claims.	Character motivation	John is motivated by guilt of his affair with Abigail to remain silent. Admitting Abigail is a fraud would also be an admittance of guilt of his adultery. Therefore, in his silence, John remains powerless while Abigail seems to control the Salem court proceedings.
In Act 3, John admits his affair with Abigail to the court in an attempt to save Elizabeth from prosecution for witchcraft.	Character Motivation	John is motivated by his desire to protect his wife from the Witch Trials. In admitting his affair, Abigail no longer holds power over him. In this declaration, John regains his power over his guilt and essentially his own destiny.
Conclusion:		
In the tragedy, <i>The Crucible</i> , Arthur Miller develops the theme of <u>accepting responsibility and letting go of one's guilt can be empowering</u> through <u>the character motivation of the tragic hero, John Proctor</u> .		

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Theme #2:  It is more noble to die with integrity than it is to live with compromised values or principles that harms others.		
Specific examples	Literary Element or Tool	Explanation and Analysis
Rebecca Nurse refuses to admit any wrongdoing of witchcraft and is sentenced to death and hanged.	Characterization- the character's actions	Rebecca Nurse was a reputable Christian woman who maintained her innocence despite being put to death. She would remain true to her own virtues by remaining truthful even if it meant death.
John Proctor tears his deposition implicating himself as a witch to spare his sons the burden of living with a tarnished or soiled name.	Characterization- the character's actions	John Proctor maintained his innocence despite being put to death. He was tempted to plead guilty in order to avoid prosecution and certain death. However, he would remain true to his own virtues by remaining truthful even if it meant death.
Conclusion:  In the tragedy, The Crucible, Arthur Miller develops the theme of <u>it is more noble to die with integrity than it is to live with compromised values or principles that harms others</u> through <u>the characterization or character development of the tragic hero, John Proctor and the character, Rebecca Nurse.</u>		

(Hale could also be considered for Theme #2 as well. Although he didn't face an actual death, some may claim that he did risk a political or social death to maintain his integrity).

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Theme #1:		
Specific examples	Literary Element or Tool	Explanation and Analysis
Conclusion:		
In the tragedy, <i>The Crucible</i> , Arthur Miller develops the theme of _____		
_____ through _____.		

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Theme #2:		
Specific examples	Literary Element or Tool	Explanation and Analysis
Conclusion:		
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## *The Crucible* Literary Analysis: Development of Theme

Consider your two specified themes. Respond to the questions in bold below.

**How does Miller develop these themes? How do they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account?**

(Guided questions: Are the literary elements or tools used similar or different? Why? Do specific moments develop more than one theme? How?)

[illegible]

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