



9.6 Knowledge Organiser – The Crucible

Key Characters

Abigail Williams: <i>the 17-year-old niece of Reverend Parris. She is an orphan and a former servant to the Proctors.</i>
Reverend Parris: <i>the minister of Salem, Betty's father, and Abigail's uncle.</i>
Betty Parris: <i>Reverend Parris's ten year old daughter. Cousin to Abigail Williams.</i>
Tituba: <i>A woman kidnapped from Barbados who has been enslaved by Rev Parris.</i>
Mary Warren: <i>naïve and lonely servant of the Proctors.</i>
John Proctor: <i>a farmer, and the husband of Elizabeth. He is well respected in the local community and values his reputation.</i>
Elizabeth Proctor: <i>loyal wife to John Proctor. She fires Abigail Williams as her servant before the play begins.</i>
Rev John Hale: <i>minister in the nearby Massachusetts town of Beverly, and an expert in identifying witchcraft.</i>
Thomas Putnam: <i>an influential citizen but not well liked in the community.</i>
Ann Putman: <i>the wife of Thomas Putnam.</i>
Rebecca Nurse: <i>the wife of Francis Nurse and is well respected in the community.</i>
Francis Nurse: <i>an influential citizen. He is well liked in the community but is enemies with Thomas and Ann Putnam.</i>
Giles Corey: <i>An elderly member of the community. A farmer and well known for filing lawsuits.</i>
Mercy Lewis: <i>eighteen year old servant of Thomas and Ann Putnam.</i>
Susanna Walcott: <i>Abigail William's friend.</i>
Deputy Governor Danforth: <i>a Deputy governor of Massachusetts who comes to Salem to preside over the witch trials.</i>
Judge Hathorne: <i>a bitter, remorseless Salem judge.</i>

The Crucible

Written	written in 1950-1952, first performed in 1953 at the height of the McCarthy trials
Era	1950s - at the time of The Cold War
Set	Salem, Massachusetts, USA 1692 (17 th Century)
Genre	Tragedy, tragic drama, American drama, realist drama.
Structure	Each of the four acts ends with a climax (unusual structure)

Context

The Salem Witch Trials (1692)

- The play is a fictionalised account of the famous 17th Century witch trials.
- In a Puritan society, anything that could not be explained was said to be the work of the devil.
- Villagers began to accuse each other of witchcraft, which then extended to people with grudges and jealousies.
- Many made accusations as revenge for petty things.
- Within a few weeks, dozens of people were in jail.
- By the end of the trials, twenty innocent men and women were hanged and hundreds were convicted.

McCarthyism (1947-1956)

- An American Senator called Joseph McCarthy rose to power by stirring up the nation into becoming terrified of Communists.
- Stemmed from the fear and tension between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during The Cold War.
- In 1947 he ordered all employees of the civil service to be screened for 'loyalty'
- Anyone named as a Communist was placed on "Blacklists" that prevented them from getting work.
- The McCarthy hearings (also known as McCarthy trials) ran from April to June 1954.
- Many non-Communists confessed to being Communists and falsely named others as Communists to escape punishment.
- Miller was brought before Congress in 1956 and convicted of contempt of Congress for refusing to cooperate (his conviction was later overturned).
- Eventually McCarthy was condemned and the hysteria died down, but the damage caused to the lives of hundreds of people was already done.

Key Vocabulary: Terms and Definitions

Allegory	The Crucible can be read as an allegory of the anti-communist investigations in 1950's USA. .
Crucible	A container that can be heated to a high temperature and separate the pure bits of metal from the impure.
Communism	A political system where all property is owned by the community and each person contributes and receives according to their ability and needs.
Hysteria	Exaggerated or uncontrollable emotion or excitement.
Hypocrisy	The practice of engaging in the same behaviour or activity for which one criticise or condemns another.
Integrity	The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.
Puritan	A member of a group of English Protestants of the late 16th and 17th centuries. They thought the Reformation of the Church under Elizabeth I as incomplete and wanted to simplify and regulate forms of worship.
Puritanical	Having or displaying a very strict moral attitude.
Theocracy	A type of government where the rulers believe they are guided by God.
Tragic Hero	A character who makes an error in judgement or has a fatal flaw

The Playwright – Arthur Miller

Born to a Jewish family in New York in 1915. He deals with realistic characters and events usually focussing on political and moral issues. Interested in the way we each lead our own lives and how people struggle to do what is right.