

Why Miller Matters

Arthur Miller has been called the single most important playwright in American history. He's an extraordinary writer with an amazing capacity to communicate what makes us tick. His characters may break our hearts or send our spirits soaring, but regardless, they hold a mirror up and force us to examine our motivations, our feelings, our relationships, and our souls. So who is this guy, and how does he do it?

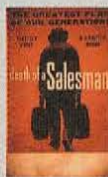
MILLER'S STATISTICS

- BORN: October 17, 1915, in New York City
- PLAYS: 24
- PULITZER PRIZES: 1
- DEATH OF A SALESMAN'S FIRST BROADWAY RUN: 742 performances
- COPIES OF DEATH OF A SALESMAN AND THE CRUCIBLE SOLD PER YEAR: 5,000,000
- WEEKLY PAYCHECK AT HIS FIRST JOB AFTER COLLEGE (WRITING RADIO PLAYS): \$22.77
- NUMBER OF TIMES HE FLUNKED HIGH SCHOOL ALGEBRA: 3
- NUMBER OF TIMES HE APPLIED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN BEFORE BEING ACCEPTED: 3
- DAYS PER YEAR WHEN A MILLER PLAY IS PRODUCED SOMEWHERE ON EARTH: 365 (it's true—it's estimated that an Arthur Miller play is produced somewhere, worldwide, every day)
- DIFFERENT MAJOR AWARDS WON: 10
- MARRIAGES: 3 (including one to Marilyn Monroe)

MILLER'S GREATEST HITS

All My Sons (1947)

"...you got a process, the process don't work you're out of business; you don't know how to operate, your stuff is no good; they close you up, they tear up your contracts, what the hell's it to them? You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes..."
See the excerpt on pp. 16-19.



Death of a Salesman (1949)

"It's important to be well-liked."
Willy Loman has lost his edge, his job, and his mind, but he believes that economic success is "just around the corner." Willy's wife begs that "attention must be paid" to such a man.

MILLER: THEMES & VARIATIONS

There's no single take on Miller's works. He himself has said his plays are both personal and societal. Here you'll find some of the themes of Miller's work. Each topic listed below is a means to understanding what Miller wrote, and a starting point for figuring out what he meant.

QUEST FOR THE AMERICAN DREAM

Death of a Salesman tells the story of a businessman who loses his will to live when he loses his job. *All My Sons* and *The Price* feature characters whose desire for "the good life"—complete with a house in the suburbs and a retirement fund—leads them to value money over life. Miller's work emphasizes that human beings shouldn't be judged only by their economic worth.

SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

In *The Crucible*, John Proctor comes under suspicion for making his own choices about when and where to pray. In *Death of a Salesman*, a son rejects his father's way of life. Miller's protagonists are often individuals struggling to define or establish themselves as different from the rest of society—and society often rushes in to silence them.

THE INDIVIDUAL VS. SOCIETY

While Miller writes about the individual, he's also talking about society. He notes that "people are tempted...to be essentially out for themselves." Miller's plays assert that people can't be only "out for themselves," that society is real and that each individual has an obligation to the people around him or her—a counterweight to his impassioned defense of the individual. See *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, and *Broken Glass*, where the consequences of ignoring other people are fatal.

DANGEROUS POLITICS

The state used as a weapon against individuals—this is Arthur Miller's ultimate nightmare, and he writes

about it in *The Crucible*, *Incident at Vichy*, and *A View From the Bridge*. Miller's plays vilify the use of public laws as vehicles for private vengeance. When reading any Miller play, keep an eye on who has the power, and how they use that power.

WILL HISTORY REPEAT ITSELF?

Miller turns to history for answers—and questions. He has written about the economic collapse of the Great Depression (*The Price*), the state of the nation after World War II (*Death of a Salesman*, *All My Sons*), and the atrocities of the Holocaust (*Incident at Vichy*, *After the Fall*). Miller raises the spectre of the past to connect with the present, exploring how old memories, guilt, and dreams affect present decisions, choices, and surrenders.

INTEGRITY AT ALL COSTS

Miller's characters confront moral quandaries, and it is a commitment to values—the steadfast courage to do or say what one really believes—that Miller celebrates. That's not to say the characters with the most integrity succeed—in *The Crucible*, the steadfast die for their integrity, and in *All My Sons*, a father's sudden realization of integrity causes his suicide.

MILLER ON BROADWAY

A new production of *The Crucible* starring Liam Neeson and Laura Linney, directed by Richard Eyre (see p. 15), is currently running on Broadway until June 8. For information about student group-ticket sales, call 212-302-7000; \$25 student-rush tickets available on the day of performance. Also, Miller's *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, starring Chris O'Donnell, opens on April 19 on Broadway. For information and tickets, call 212-719-1300.

PLAYBILL



The Crucible (1953)

"Is the accuser always holy now?"
See our Pop-Up on pp. 6-13.

A View from the Bridge (1955)

"But the truth is holy..."
Dockworker Eddie Carbone shelters two illegal immigrants—his cousins—but when one of them seeks to marry a woman Eddie illicitly loves, Eddie turns them both in. *Bridge* is a brutal study of obsession and jealousy.



After the Fall (1964)

"It's strange—to have to examine what you stand for..."
An allusion to Miller's own life, *After the Fall* is a memory play which takes place in the mind of the narrator, Quentin. It is perhaps the most experimental of Miller's plays. Quentin examines his life, his three marriages, and his own moral ambiguity regarding the McCarthy hearings. The narrator compares the Holocaust to McCarthyism. We watch Quentin's second wife commit suicide, and listen as the narrator wonders if it is his fault.

The Price (1968)

"It's not that you don't love somebody, it's that you've got to survive."
Two sons meet to sell off their family furniture. As they debate the prices of the pieces, they are really debating the prices they've paid for decisions made.

Other works include: *The Man Who Had All the Luck* (1944), *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955), *Incident at Vichy* (1965), *The Creation of the World and Other Business* (1973), *The American Clock* (1980), *The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991), *The Last Yankee* (1993), *Broken Glass* (1994)



A CRUCIBLE IS 1) A CONTAINER USED FOR MELTING SUBSTANCES THAT REQUIRE INTENSE HEAT; 2) A BRUTAL TEST; 3) A SITUATION OR LOCATION WHERE FORCES CONVEGE TO EFFECT CHANGE. MILLER BASED *THE CRUCIBLE* ON HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS AND ACCOUNTS OF THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS IN 1692. WHILE HE CHANGED SOME PARTICULARS, HIS CHARACTERS ARE HISTORICAL FIGURES.

THE CRUCIBLE

by ARTHUR MILLER

THE STORY SO FAR:

It is 1692 in the town of Salem, Massachusetts. A group of women and girls, including 17-year-old Abigail Williams, have been accused in court of witchcraft. Abigail is now accusing others. Caught in the middle are John and Elizabeth Proctor, a couple who used to employ Abigail. She was fired after she had a brief but intense affair with Proctor, and is still in love with him, despite his refusal to see her. Elizabeth knows of the affair, and it has caused great tension in their marriage.

WHY WE ANNOTATED THIS:

The art of **reading deeply** requires you to **read symbolically**. That means reading for the **connections and possibilities** that the words suggest. We've begun the process by calling attention to some of the **meanings and references** behind the words.



CAST OF CHARACTERS

REVEREND JOHN HALE:

40s, a reverend from another town who specializes in witchcraft

JOHN PROCTOR: mid-30s, a fiercely independent man, husband of Elizabeth

ELIZABETH PROCTOR:

30s, a woman of strength and virtue, wife of John

HALE: Good evening.

PROCTOR: **Why, Mr. Hale!** Good evening to you, sir.

Come in, come in.

HALE (to Elizabeth): I hope **I do not startle you.**

ELIZABETH: No, no, it's only that I heard no horse—

HALE: You are Goodwife Proctor.

PROCTOR: Aye; Elizabeth.

HALE (he nods, then): I hope you're not off to bed yet.

PROCTOR (setting down his gun): No, no. (Hale comes further into the room. And Proctor, to explain his nervousness:) We are not used to visitors after dark, but you're welcome here. Will you sit down, sir?

HALE: I will. (He sits.) Let you sit, Goodwife Proctor.

(She does, never letting him out of her sight.) There is a pause as Hale looks about the room.)

PROCTOR (to break the silence): Will you drink cider, Mr. Hale?

HALE: No, it rebels my stomach; I have some further traveling yet tonight. Sit you down, sir. (Proctor sits.) I will not keep you long, but I have some business with you.

PROCTOR: **Business of the court?**

HALE: No—no, I come of my own, without the court's authority. Hear me. (He wets his lips.) I know not if you are aware, but **your wife's name** is—mentioned in the court.

PROCTOR: We know it, sir. Our **Mary Warren** told us. We are entirely amazed.

HALE: I am a stranger here, as you know. And in my ignorance I find it hard to draw a clear opinion of them that come accused before the court. And so this afternoon, and now tonight, I go from house to house—I come now from Rebecca Nurse's house and—

MARY WARREN IS THE PROCTORS' YOUNG SERVANT. SHE IS A FRIEND OF ABIGAIL'S, AND A WITNESS IN COURT.

MILLER ON PROCTOR: "POWERFUL OF BODY, EVEN-TEMPERED, AND NOT EASILY LED.... BUT AS WE SHALL SEE, THE STEADY MANNER HE DISPLAYS DOES NOT SPRING FROM AN UNTRoubLED SOUL. HE IS A SINNER, A SINNER NOT ONLY AGAINST THE MORAL FASHION OF THE TIME, BUT AGAINST HIS OWN VISION OF DECENT CONDUCT."



PROCTOR MET HALE A WEEK AGO, WHEN HALE ARRIVED IN SALEM TO INVESTIGATE ACCUSATIONS OF WITCHCRAFT.

HALE HAS ARRIVED UNEXPECTEDLY, AT NIGHT. EVERYONE IS ON EDGE, AWARE THAT THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ACCUSED ARE BEING REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES.

ELIZABETH IS AFRAID OF HALE, DUE TO HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRIALS.

PROCTOR AND ELIZABETH KNOW THAT, BECAUSE OF ABIGAIL'S JEALOUSY, ABIGAIL HAS NAMED ELIZABETH IN COURT. ELIZABETH SUSPECTS THAT ABIGAIL WANTS TO ELIMINATE HER IN ORDER TO HAVE PROCTOR TO HERSELF.



A PERSON'S NAME IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE IN MILLER'S PLAYS. IN HIS VIEW, YOUR NAME IS YOUR IDENTITY AND THE OUTWARD MANIFESTATION OF YOUR INTEGRITY: MILLER OFTEN PLACES HIS CHARACTERS IN THE POSITION OF DEFENDING OR CLEARING THEIR NAMES.

ELIZABETH HAS A STRONG SENSE OF WHAT IS RIGHT AND WRONG, DESPITE WHAT AUTHORITY FIGURES CLAIM. HER MORALITY IS HER HEART, NOT WHAT IS IMPOSED ON HER EXTERNALLY.



HALE IS REFERRING TO THOSE WHO HAVE CLAIMED THAT SOME SENT OUT THEIR SPIRITS TO COMMIT EVIL DEEDS. THIS IS "SPECTRAL EVIDENCE," WHICH ISN'T EVIDENCE AT ALL.

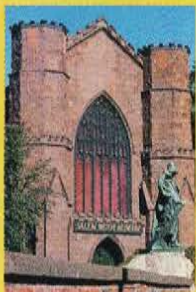
HALE IS ASKING PROCTOR TO BELIEVE IN EVIDENCE THAT DOESN'T EXIST, SIMPLY BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COURT. THIS IS INDICATIVE OF ONE OF THE PLAY'S MAJOR THEMES: THE HANDING OVER OF ONE'S CONSCIENCE TO A LARGER AUTHORITY. ONCE A PERSON DOES THIS, HE HAS LOST HIS IDENTITY AND NAME.

PROCTOR HASN'T FOUND THE STRENGTH TO REVEAL WHAT HE BELIEVES AND CONTRADICT POPULAR OPINION. HE DOES NOT WANT TO REVEAL HIS ADULTERY, AND RUIN HIS NAME.



IN THE NAME OF UNITY AND SAFETY, A TWO-MAN PATROL WAS OFTEN SENT THROUGH SALEM TO KEEP TRACK OF PEOPLE, IF THEY WEREN'T IN CHURCH. THIS INFORMATION COULD LATER BE USED AGAINST PEOPLE, AS IT IS USED AGAINST PROCTOR.

THERE ARE TWO REASONS: ONE IS PROCTOR'S DISLIKE OF PARRIS, AND THE OTHER IS ABIGAIL'S PRESENCE. PARRIS IMPLIES THIS EARLIER WHEN HE SAYS TO ABIGAIL, IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET HER TO CONFESS, THAT ELIZABETH "COMES SO RARELY TO THE CHURCH THIS YEAR BECAUSE SHE WILL NOT SIT SO CLOSE TO SOMETHING SOILED."



ELIZABETH (*shocked*): Rebecca's charged!

HALE: God forbid such a one be charged. She is, however—mentioned somewhat.

ELIZABETH (*with an attempt at a laugh*): You will never believe, I hope, that Rebecca trafficked with the Devil.

HALE: Woman, it is possible.

PROCTOR (*taken aback*): Surely you cannot think so.

HALE: This is a strange time, Mister. No man may longer doubt the powers of the dark are gathered in monstrous attack upon this village. There is too much evidence now to deny it.

You will agree, sir?

PROCTOR (*evading*): I—have no knowledge in that line.

But it's hard to think so pious a woman be secretly a Devil's bitch after seventy year of such good prayer.

HALE: Aye. But the Devil is a wily one, you cannot deny it. However, she is far from accused, and I know she will not be.

(*Pause.*) I thought, sir, to put some questions as to the Christian character of this house, if you'll permit me.

PROCTOR (*coldly, resentful*): Why, we—have no fear of questions, sir.

HALE: Good, then. (*He makes himself more comfortable.*)

In the book of record that Mr. Parris keeps, I note that you are rarely in the church on Sabbath Day.

PROCTOR: No, sir, you are mistaken.

HALE: Twenty-six time in seventeen month, sir. I must call that rare. Will you tell me why you are so absent?

PROCTOR: Mr. Hale, I never knew I must account to that man for I come to church or stay at home. My wife were sick this winter.

HALE: So I am told. But you, Mister, why could you not come alone?

PROCTOR: I surely did come when I could, and when I could not I prayed in this house.

HALE: Mr. Proctor, your house is not a church; your theology must tell you that.

PROCTOR: It does, sir, it does; and it tells me that a minister may pray to God without he have golden candlesticks upon the altar.

HALE: What golden candlesticks?

PROCTOR: Since we built the church there were pewter candlesticks upon the altar; Francis Nurse made them, y'know, and a sweeter hand never touched the metal. But Parris came, and for twenty week he preach nothin' but golden candlesticks until he had them. I labor the earth from dawn of day to blink of night, and I tell you true, when I look to heaven and see my money glaring at his elbows—it hurt my prayer, sir, it hurt my prayer. I think, sometimes, the man dreams cathedrals, not clapboard meetin' houses.

HALE (*he thinks, then*): And yet, Mister, a Christian on Sabbath Day must be in church. (*Pause.*) Tell me—you have three children?

PROCTOR: Aye. Boys.

HALE: How comes it that only two are baptized?

PROCTOR (*he starts to speak, then stops, then, as though unable to restrain this*): I like it not that Mr. Parris should lay his hand upon my baby. I see no light of God in that man. I'll not conceal it.

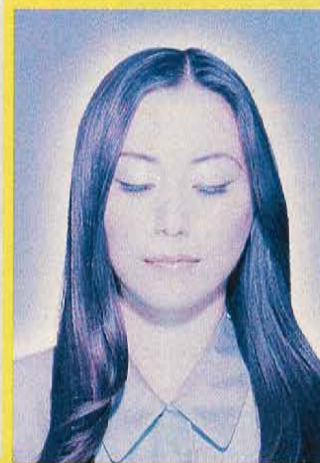
HALE: I must say it, Mr. Proctor; that is not for you to decide. The man's ordained, therefore the light of God is in him.

HALE IS SAYING THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PROCTOR TO GO TO CHURCH AND HEAR THE SERMON. AGAIN, THE THEME OF TURNING OVER THOUGHT AND CONSCIENCE TO AUTHORITY IS RAISED.

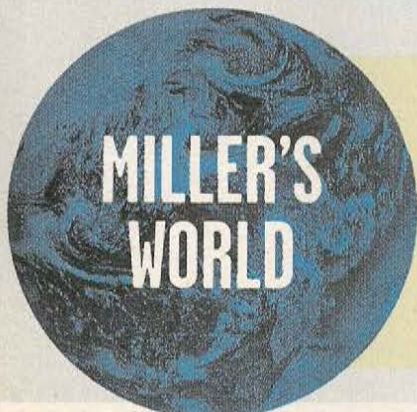


AS PROCTOR REVEALS HIS FEELINGS ABOUT PARRIS AS AN AUTHORITY FIGURE, HE IS RETURNING TO HIS TRUE SELF, UNCONCERNED ABOUT CONTRADICTING POPULAR OPINION...

...OR SAYING SOMETHING THAT SOME MIGHT FIND GREATLY OFFENSIVE. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER HE CAN DO THIS WHEN HIS LIFE—AND HIS GOOD NAME—ARE AT RISK, AND WHEN IT REQUIRES HIM TO REVEAL HIS MORAL MISTAKE.



THE WORD "SEE" IS USED REGULARLY IN THIS PLAY, OFTEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THINGS THAT CANNOT TRULY BE SEEN, SUCH AS "SEEING" PEOPLE IN THE COMPANY OF THE DEVIL. HERE, PROCTOR USES THE WORD TO REFER TO SOMETHING THAT COULD BE CONSTRUED AS EQUALLY CIRCUMSTANTIAL—THE ABILITY TO LITERALLY "SEE" THE LIGHT OF GOD IN SOMEONE.



THE MCCARTHY HEARINGS In the 1950s, under the leadership of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) stepped-up its campaign to uncover Communists. HUAC began a "red hunt," searching for Communist sympathizers. Thousands were asked, "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" Some were deemed guilty for supporting such ideas as peace and racial integration. In all, 600 college professors, 2,700 federal employees, and 1,750 actors, directors, and writers lost their jobs. Miller wrote *The Crucible* in part to show the injustices of the hearings. In 1957, HUAC asked him to testify and name names. He refused, and was cited (and later exonerated) for contempt of Congress. Many colleagues avoided him rather than risk association. "They walked past me as if I was another post holding up the ceiling."



IT WAS THE CUSTOM FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY TO BUILD THEIR CHURCH, OR MEETING HOUSE, TOGETHER.

HALE WANTS TO HEAR SOMETHING THAT WILL CONVINCHE HIM OF THE PROCTORS' ALLEGIANCE TO GOD. MILLER WROTE THIS PLAY, IN PART, IN RESPONSE TO MCCARTHYISM (SEE P. 9). DURING THE MCCARTHY HEARINGS, PEOPLE WHO WERE SUSPECTED OF BEING COMMUNISTS WERE ASKED QUESTIONS THAT WOULD PROVE—OR DISPROVE—THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO AMERICA, AND THE AMERICAN WAY.



ONE WHO HAS PLEDGED LIFE AND HEART TO GOD.

IN ANY OTHER SITUATION, PROCTOR WOULD BE INFURIATED BY SUCH A TEST, AND HE WOULD REFUSE. IN THIS CASE, HIS GUILT GETS THE BETTER OF HIM AND HE COMPLIES.

PROCTOR (*flushed with resentment but trying to smile*): What's your suspicion, Mr. Hale?

HALE: No, no, I have no—

PROCTOR: I nailed the roof upon the church, I hung the door—

HALE: Oh, did you! That's a good sign, then.

PROCTOR: It may be I have been too quick to bring the man to book, but you cannot think we ever desired the destruction of religion. I think that's in your mind, is it not?

HALE (*not altogether giving way*): I—have—there is a softness in your record, sir, a softness.

ELIZABETH: I think, maybe, we have been too hard with Mr. Parris, I think so. But sure we never loved the Devil here.

HALE (*he nods, deliberating this. Then, with the voice of one administering a secret test*): Do you know your Commandments,

Elizabeth?

ELIZABETH (*without hesitation, even eagerly*): I surely do. There be no mark of blame upon my life, Mr. Hale. I am a **convenanted** Christian woman.

HALE: And you, Mister?

PROCTOR (*a trifle unsteadily*): I—am sure I do, sir.

HALE (*he glances at her open face, then at John, then*): Let you repeat them, if you will.

PROCTOR: The Commandments.

HALE: Aye.

PROCTOR (*looking off, beginning to sweat*): Thou shalt not kill.

AND FURTHERMORE...

THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS

In 1692, several girls in Salem began having fits, and the diagnosis was witchcraft. Salem was predominantly populated by Puritans, who followed the teachings of Protestant theologian John Calvin (1509-1564). In their Calvinist zeal, the Puritans attempted to make the laws of the Bible the legal code of Salem. Thus, witchcraft was a crime. In order to "cure" the afflicted girls, 150 men and women suspected of practicing witchcraft were thrown

into jail. Yet the girls' condition remained unchanged. In search of a solution, the governor convened a court to try these suspected witches. As *The Crucible* relates, fear of witchcraft led to spurious accusations, while fear of the court inhibited citizens from speaking out against the trials. Meanwhile, the "evidence" of the fits—which many, like John Proctor, perceived as an act—led to numerous convictions, 19 executions,

and one death by torture.

By the time the governor revoked the authority of the court in 1693, the damage was done. In the words of Nathaniel Hawthorne, a descendant of a Salem judge, "All the prisoners on account of witchcraft were set free. But the innocent dead could not be restored to life and the hill where they were executed will always remind people of the saddest and most humiliating passage in our history."

HALE: Aye.

PROCTOR (*counting on his fingers*): Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, nor make unto thee any graven image. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain; thou shalt have no other gods before me. (*With some hesitation:*) Thou shalt remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. (*Pause. Then:*) Thou shalt honor thy father and mother. Thou shalt not bear false witness. (*He is stuck. He counts back on his fingers, knowing one is missing.*) Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

HALE: You have said that twice, sir.

PROCTOR (*lost*): Aye. (*He is flailing for it.*)

ELIZABETH (*delicately*): Adultery, John.

PROCTOR (*as though a secret arrow had pained his heart*): Aye. (*Trying to grin it away—to Hale:*) You see, sir, between the two of us we do know them all. (*Hale only looks at Proctor, deep in his attempt to define this man. Proctor grows more uneasy.*) I think it be a small fault.

HALE: Theology, sir, is a fortress; no crack in a fortress may be accounted small. (*He rises; he seems worried now. He paces a little, in deep thought.*)

PROCTOR: There be no love for Satan in this house, Mister.

HALE: I pray it, I pray it dearly. (*He looks to both of them, an attempt at a smile on his face, but his misgivings are clear.*) Well then—I'll bid you good night.

ELIZABETH (*unable to restrain herself*): Mr. Hale. (*He turns.*)

I do think you are suspecting me somewhat? Are you not?

HALE (*obviously disturbed—and evasive*): **Goody** Proctor, I do not judge you. My duty is to add what I may to the godly wisdom of the court. I pray you both good health and good fortune. (*To John:*) Good night, sir. (*He starts out.*)

ELIZABETH (*with a note of desperation*): **I think you must tell him, John.**

THE FACT THAT THE COMMANDMENT HE CANNOT REMEMBER (ADULTERY) IS THE ONE OF WHICH HE IS GUILTY, IS SYMBOLIC OF HIS INABILITY TO DEAL WITH HIS MORAL ERROR. HE HAS NOT YET FORGIVEN HIMSELF FOR IT, AND THUS IS UNABLE TO VIEW HIMSELF AS A MORAL MAN.



A FORTRESS IS A STRONGHOLD, A STRUCTURE THAT CAN PROVIDE PROTECTION. HALE IS SAYING THAT HE PERCEIVES A FLAW IN PROCTOR'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, WHICH LEAVES HIM UNPROTECTED AND OPEN TO DANGEROUS FORCES.

"GOODY" IS SHORT FOR GOODWIFE, WHICH IS THE EQUIVALENT OF TODAY'S MRS. OR MS.

ELIZABETH KNOWS THAT THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THIS IS TO IMPLICATE ABIGAIL.

ELIZABETH AND PROCTOR JUST HAD AN ARGUMENT ABOUT WHY PROCTOR IS HESITANT TO REVEAL WHAT HE KNOWS ABOUT ABIGAIL. ELIZABETH SUSPECTS HE DOES NOT WANT TO INCRIMINATE HER BECAUSE OF THEIR PAST INVOLVEMENT. SHE FEELS THAT PROCTOR MUST MAKE CLEAR TO ABIGAIL THAT THERE IS NOTHING BETWEEN THEM ANYMORE, AND ONE WAY FOR HIM TO DO THIS IS TO ACCUSE HER, IN COURT, OF LYING.



TITUBA IS REVEREND PARRIS' SLAVE, AND SARAH GOOD IS AN OLD, POOR WOMAN.



IF THERE IS ONE THING PROCTOR CANNOT STAND, IT IS UNJUST AUTHORITY OPPRESSING THE INDIVIDUAL.

HALE: What's that?

ELIZABETH (*restraining a call*): Will you tell him? (*Slight pause. Hale looks questioningly at John.*)

PROCTOR (*with difficulty*): I—I have no witness and cannot prove it, except my word be taken. But I know the children's sickness had naught to do with witchcraft.

HALE (*stopped, struck*): Naught to do—?

PROCTOR: Mr. Parris discovered them sportin' in the woods. They were startled and took sick. (*Pause.*)

HALE: Who told you this?

PROCTOR (*he hesitates, then*): Abigail Williams.

HALE: Abigail!

PROCTOR: Aye.

HALE (*his eyes wide*): Abigail Williams told you it had naught to do with witchcraft!

PROCTOR: She told me the day you came, sir.

HALE (*suspiciously*): Why—why did you keep this?

PROCTOR: I never knew until tonight that the world is gone daft with this nonsense.

HALE: Nonsense! Mister, I have myself examined

Tituba, Sarah Good, and numerous others that have confessed to dealing with the Devil. They have *confessed* it.

PROCTOR: And why not, if they must hang for denyin' it? There are them that will swear to anything before they'll hang; have you never thought of that?

HALE: I have. I—I have indeed. (*It is his own suspicion, but he resists it. He glances at Elizabeth, then at John.*) And you—would you testify to this in court?

PROCTOR: I—had not reckoned with goin' into court. But if I must I will.

HALE: Do you falter here?

PROCTOR: I falter nothing, but I may wonder if my story will be credited in such a court. I do wonder on it, **when such a steady-minded minister as you will suspicion such a woman that never lied, and cannot, and the world knows she cannot!**

I may falter somewhat, Mister; I am no fool.

HALE (*quietly—it has impressed him*): Proctor, let you open with me now, for I have a rumor that troubles me. **It's said you hold no belief that there may even be witches in the world.**

Is that true, sir?

PROCTOR (*he knows this is critical, and is striving against his disgust with Hale and with himself for even answering*): I know not what I have said, I may have said it. I have wondered if there be witches in the world—although I cannot believe they come among us now.

HALE: Then you do not believe—

PROCTOR: I have no knowledge of it; the Bible speaks of witches, and I will not deny them.

HALE: And you, woman?

ELIZABETH: **I—I cannot believe it.**

HALE (*shocked*): You cannot!

PROCTOR: Elizabeth, you bewilder him!

ELIZABETH (*to Hale*): I cannot think the Devil may own a woman's soul, Mr. Hale, when she keeps an upright way, as I have. I am a good woman, I know it; and if you believe I may do only good work in the world, and yet be secretly bound to Satan, then I must tell you, sir, I do not believe it.

HALE: But, woman, you do believe there are witches in—

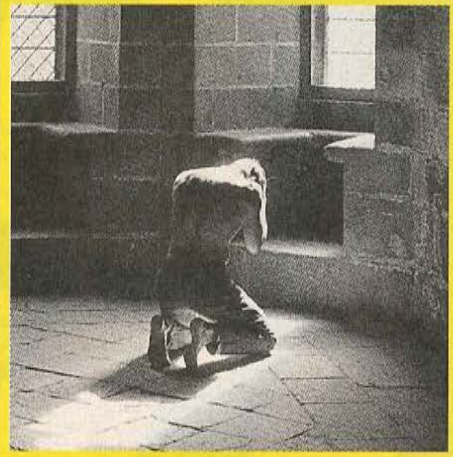
ELIZABETH: If you think that I am one, then I say there are none.

HALE: You surely do not fly against the Gospel, the Gospel—

PROCTOR: **She believe in the Gospel, every word!**

ELIZABETH: Question Abigail Williams about the Gospel, not myself! (*Hale stares at her.*)

PROCTOR, REFERRING TO ELIZABETH, REVEALS HERE THE RESPECT HE HAS FOR HER, WHICH IS MORE THAN THE RESPECT HE HAS FOR HIMSELF AT THE MOMENT. STRUGGLING TO GET OUT FROM UNDER GUILT IS ANOTHER COMMON THEME IN MILLER'S PLAYS.



THIS IS QUITE AN ACCUSATION. HALE IS BASICALLY ASKING PROCTOR IF HE DISAGREES WITH THE BIBLE, SINCE WITCHES ARE MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE.

AGAIN, ELIZABETH CANNOT HELP BUT SPEAK HER OWN BELIEFS. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR HER TO DO OTHERWISE, EVEN AT GREAT RISK TO HERSELF. SHE SETS A GOOD EXAMPLE FOR PROCTOR.



PROCTOR IS AFRAID THAT IF ELIZABETH IS SEEN AS REFUTING THE GOSPEL AND PROTESTING AGAINST THE MAJORITY, SHE WILL BE IDENTIFIED AS A WITCH. THROUGHOUT HISTORY, MOB MENTALITY HAS WON OVER INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE TAKEN A STAND AGAINST INHUMANITY AND BRUTAL AUTHORITY.

NOW WHAT HAPPENS? LATER IN THIS SCENE, COURT OFFICIALS COME TO TAKE ELIZABETH TO JAIL. PROCTOR SWEARS TO HER, "I WILL BRING YOU HOME. I WILL BRING YOU HOME SOON." IN AN EFFORT TO SAVE HER, HE ENDS UP SULLYING HIS GOOD NAME AND REVEALING HIS ADULTERY IN ORDER TO EXPOSE POSSIBLE MOTIVES FOR ABIGAIL'S BEHAVIOR. DOES IT WORK? YOU DON'T REALLY EXPECT US TO TELL YOU, DO YOU? READ IT!

ARTHUR MILLER

DURING HIS NEARLY 60 YEARS AS A BROADWAY PLAYWRIGHT, ARTHUR MILLER HAS GIVEN HUNDREDS OF INTERVIEWS, SPEAKING OUT ON POLITICS, KNOWLEDGE, TRENDS, CURRENT EVENTS, AND OF COURSE, LITERATURE. MILLER'S IDEAS—AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO DEFEND THEM—HAVE MADE HIM A MAJOR FIGURE IN AMERICA'S CULTURAL DIALOGUE, AND ONE OF THE CREATORS AND CHALLENGERS OF MODERN SOCIETY. HERE'S MILLER ON . . .

ART & POLITICS (1995)

"In the end, we call a work of art trivial when it illuminates little beyond its own devices, and the same goes for political leaders who bespeak some narrow interest rather than those of the national or universal good. The fault is not in the use of the acting arts but in their purpose."

HIS CREATIVE PROCESS (1966)

"I plan something for weeks or months and suddenly begin writing dialogue which begins in relation to what I had planned and veers off into something I hadn't even thought about. I'm drawing down the lightning, I suppose. Somewhere in the blood you have a play, and you wait until it passes behind the eyes."

REVISION (1953)

"Each actor brings his own personality to his part and would—if you were not careful—tend to change the meaning of the play. The playwright must rewrite both in order to make the actor comfortable in the part and also to protect the meaning of the play . . ."

THEATER AND THE COMMUNITY (1986)

"I think we have a theater now that loses its political quality. By 'political' I don't mean Republican, Democrat, Socialist, or Communist—I mean it was a theater addressed to the *polis*, the Greek idea of community When I began writing, when Tennessee Williams began writing, we shared the illusion that we were talking to everybody. Both of us wrote for the man on the street."

LER SPEAKS

IDEAS (1995)

"Like every writer, I am asked where my work originates, and if I knew I would go there more often to find more. But there are simply circumstances in which plays collect and form, like bacteria in a laboratory dish, later to kill or cure."

SENATOR JOSEPH MCCARTHY (1996)

"McCarthy's power to stir fears of creeping Communism was not entirely based on illusion, of course; the paranoid, real or pretended, always secretes its pearl around a grain of fact. From being our wartime ally, the Soviet Union rapidly became an expanding empire. In 1949, Mao Zedong took power in China. Western Europe also seemed ready to become Red—especially Italy, where the Communist Party was the largest outside Russia, and was growing. Capitalism, in the opinion of many, myself included, had nothing more to say, its final poisoned bloom having been Italian and German Fascism. McCarthy—brash and ill-mannered but to many authentic and true—boiled it all down to what anyone could understand: we had "lost China" and would soon lose Europe as well, because the State Department—staffed, of course, under Democratic Presidents—was full of treasonous pro-Soviet intellectuals. It was as simple as that."

MARILYN MONROE (1995)

"She relied on the most ordinary layer of the audience, the working people, the guys in the bars, the housewives

in the trailers bedeviled by unpaid bills, the high school kids mystified by explanations they could not understand, the ignorant and—as she saw them—tricked and manipulated masses. She wanted them to feel they'd gotten their money's worth when they saw a picture of hers."

BEING CITED FOR CONTEMPT OF CONGRESS (1966)

"It was really a dreadful waste of time and money and anger, but I suffered very little, really, compared to others who were driven out of their professions and never got back . . ."

THE VIETNAM WAR (1969)

"The problem is that our military is having to admit that it has not won a war; our aircraft and armaments technologists and industrial experts are having to admit that all their destructiveness has not broken the will of naked peasants. Politically, our geopoliticians are having to admit the limits of American power."

TERRORISM (2001)

"I can't get rid of the idea that it is within the range of possibility for someone in a small boat to bring an atomic bomb into New York Harbor, figuring he's going to go straight to heaven. To me, this is possible. About 50 years ago this could not be thought, except by a lunatic . . . In my plays I search for illumination, but I've lost any illusion of safety. I'm not paranoid, it's perfectly real."

In March, *The Crucible* will open on Broadway. Here, the director, Richard Eyre, talks with LC about the play.

LC: What makes Arthur Miller a uniquely American playwright?

Eyre: Because his work is based on the idea of examining freedom and the opposite side of freedom. And because it's about self-realization—play after play, you get the notion of somebody fighting to keep their identity, their individuality.

LC: *The Crucible* is typically read as an allegory for McCarthyism. Is that

how you see it?

Eyre: No, I honestly think that the play gains from the distance from those historical events. This play has the power of myth. It's a fable that can apply to vastly different societies.

LC: What parallels do you see between the time in which *The Crucible* is set and the present?

Eyre: It's a society in which it's hard to make a living, in which there's a lot of differences between those who have and those who don't. It's a small society where everybody knows each other's business.

LC: It's also a bit like high school.

Eyre: Absolutely. Anyone in high school must understand the notion of bullying and looking for victims, and the way a group of people can gang up against the dissenters in a school. We'd all like to think that if we're presented with a moral dilemma that we would act well. We'd have the courage to act well and to speak out. We're all confronted with moral dilemmas. They're there at school, they're there at work when you see somebody being treated badly. The question of *The Crucible* is, do we stand up and say, you can't do that, even at the expense of our job?



MILLER'S DYNAMIC BLEND OF HEARTRENDING DRAMA AND SOCIAL COMMENTARY HAS BEEN PICKED UP BY A NEW GENERATION OF PLAYWRIGHTS. HERE ARE SIX OTHER PLAYWRIGHTS ANGLING FOR THE TITLE OF AMERICA'S GREATEST. THEIR WORK, WHICH CONFRONTS THE ISSUES OF AMERICA TODAY, OWES A DEBT TO MILLER.

HEIRS TO THE MILLER THRONE

THE ISSUE:

AIDS

Tony Kushner

Angels in America (Millennium Approaches and Perestroika)
Kushner's two-part, Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angels in America*, a social document of the AIDS epidemic, is about the conflicts between love and law. Kushner's plays explore the conflicts between Catholics, Jews, blacks, Mormons, and homosexuals, and mythologizes the life of Roy Cohn, an anti-Communist witch-hunter who hushed up his own AIDS.



Larry Kramer

The Normal Heart
Set during the early years of the AIDS epidemic, *The Normal Heart* tells the story of love and plague. Kramer denounces the ignorance and fear that killed a staggering number of people by stifling real AIDS discussion and research.



THE ISSUE:

RACE

Anna Deavere Smith

Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities
Smith's one-woman show is about the 1991 race riots between religious Jews and blacks in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

August Wilson

The Piano Lesson
In Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, a family argues about selling a piano with a dark history. The instrument becomes a symbol of the legacy of slavery and pride in family history.

Suzan Lori-Parks

Topdog/Underdog
In a riveting tale of urban struggle, two brothers fight to achieve fame and prosperity in desperate circumstances.

THE ISSUE:

THE AMERICAN DREAM

David Mamet

Glengarry Glen Ross
A team of real-estate developers turn on each other in their struggle to sell land in Florida. Competition becomes so fierce that one of them resorts to thievery to get ahead. Mamet deconstructs the myth of the honorable salesman, portraying American capitalists as a back-stabbing cadre of heartless achievers.

Jon Robin Baitz

The Substance of Fire
A Holocaust survivor builds a publishing company to produce books of substance and merit. His American children want less substance, more profits. An honest and incisive portrait of the dangers of "caring capitalism" and family business.

