Book Report On The Crucible Essay, Research Paper

Hysteria in a Godly Town

The term, innocent until proven guilty is synonymous with the justice system. The saying also applies to people while among their peers. In the sleepy little town of Salem, Massachusetts, however, it turns out to be quite the opposite. When lies and rumors run rampant through their community, the townspeople destroy each other s lives. Why does this happen? Simply because the beliefs of a society are led astray. In Salem, people forget about morals and respect for life, and head toward tragedy. In his play, The Crucible, Arthur Miller displays how feelings such as revenge, greed and jealousy can distort the views of a small population.

One of the contributive factors towards the downfall of Salem is revenge. Elizabeth s need to be vengeful towards Abigail sprouts from the affair Abigail and Elizabeth s husband, John Proctor. When the topic of Abigail is comes up, Elizabeth remarks that she should be, ripped from the earth (Miller 76). She goes further by telling John Proctor to, go and tell her she s a whore (62). Never acting upon her rage, Elizabeth only dismisses Abigail from her house. Abigail, on the other hand, wants Elizabeth Proctor to die. Abigail desires to do away with Elizabeth so that she can have her husband, John Proctor. Hysterically, Betty Proctor screams that Abigail, drank a charm to kill John Proctor s wife (19). After hushing Betty, Abigail follows by accusing Elizabeth of witchcraft. Elizabeth is taken to jail when Abigail is found with a needle stuck in her stomach and, [testifies] that it were [Elizabeth s] familiar spirit that pushed it in (74). This is of no avail to Abigail though, because John Proctor is put in jail trying to save his wife.

Next, the influence of rapacity, and how it affects the ruin of Salem. Thomas Putnam, a prominent man in Salem, is so insatiable for land that he, prompted [his] daughter to cry witchery (96) upon people to obtain their land. He knows what his daughter, Ruth said are lies, however greed blinds him to his moral wrong doings. Inevitably, people realize what he is doing and confront the court with his treachery. Giles Corey proclaims that [Thomas] is killing his neighbors for their land (96). However, when he refuses to reveal the name of his witness to the deed, he goes to jail. Equally greedy, is Reverend Samuel Parris. Unlike Thomas Putnam though, his greed is not for the possessions of others, they are for material wealth for himself. Early on in the play, it is established that he has a selfish persona when he exclaims My contract provides I be supplied with all my firewood (29). Like Thomas Putnam, his greed is obvious to the village.

Further, jealousy added to the wreck of Salem. It led to the trivial deaths of innocent people. For example, because Anne Putnam s jealousy for Rebecca Nurse was so intense, Rebecca Nurse s death resulted. Anne first voices her resentfulness towards Rebecca Nurse at Betty s bedside when she moaned, [Rebecca] should never lose a child, nor grandchild either, an I bury all but one (28). It is learned later in the play that Anne Putnam s jealousy rises to another level when Rebecca Nurse goes to in jail for, the marvelous and supernatural murder of Goody Putnam s babies (71). Another person jealousy corrupts is Abigail William. She is envious of Elizabeth Proctor because she cannot have her husband, John Proctor. At first, Abigail only criticizes Elizabeth Proctor by calling her, a cold, sniveling woman (24) to make her look inferior. Unfortunately, later in the novel is it clear that Abigail has deadly intentions for Elizabeth Proctor when she accuses her of witchcraft. Upon hearing Abigail s accusations, Elizabeth Proctor knows that, [Abigail] thinks to take [her] place (61). At that point, Elizabeth Proctor leaves for jail to await trial.

Finally, Arthur Miller illustrates in his play, The Crucible, how certain emotions evoke the vulgarity in one community. For some, the vengefulness of the characters results in unnecessary grief and destruction. The avarice of others leads to a lack of morals, causing treachery and lies. Lastly, jealousy gone awry leads to the petty deaths of innocent people. Ultimately, Salem’s undoing was its inability to cope with lies and betrayal. Unfortunately, people can take lies easily for the truth.