

The Crucible Act One Summary Notes

The Reverend Parris searches for answers to his daughter Betty's illness.

It is 1692 and rumors of witchcraft hangover the town of Salem, Massachusetts.

Parris is a middle-aged widower who lives with his daughter and their slave, Tituba.

Tituba feels the neighborhood children's minds with stories of "spirits".

He suspects Betty has been possessed by the devil, but he does not want to ruin his reputation.

The night before, Parris had found Betty and his niece, Abigail Williams dancing "like heathen" in the forest, along with Tituba and other girls from the town.

He believes they were practicing devil-worshiping and has sent for witchcraft expert, Reverend Hale.

Abigail tells him there was no hidden meaning in their dance but that Betty was frightened when Parris jumped out from the bushes.

7months prior, Abigail had been dismissed from work

at the Proctor home after Elizabeth Proctor found out of Abigail's affair with her husband, the farmer John Proctor.

Ann Putnam enters and is certain witchcraft has a hold on the community. Her daughter, Ruth, has fallen ill, and Goody (term for married women) has already had seven babies to die.

Mercy Lewis (Putnam's servant), Mary Warren (Proctor's maid) and Abigail are alone in Betty's room. Mary says that everyone is saying witchcraft. Abby threatens to cause trouble for anyone who talks about their activities.

Mary and Mercy depart when John Proctor arrives. He tells Abigail he no longer has feelings for her. Betty rouses and moans when Parris, the Putnams, and Rebecca Nurse, and Giles Corey rush in.

Rebecca suggests they should trust God. Putnam argues the devil is to blame.

Rev. Hale arrives and can not rouse Betty.

He turns to Abby for answers, and she blames Tituba. Tituba confesses and prompted by Parris names citizens she has seen with the devil, and Betty awakes and Abigail and Betty echo the names.

The Crucible Act II summary notes

Eight days after the events in Act One, Salem is in an uproar.

John Proctor arrives home late from the fields and finds his wife Elizabeth somewhat cold.

She fears he has been at the courts where their servant, Marry Warren is a witness in the witchcraft hearings.

Elizabeth wants John to report Abigail for the fraud she is.

He hesitates leading Elizabeth to believe he still has feelings for Abigail.

Mary returns and gives them a poppet(doll) she made in court. She shocks them by saying Elizabeth was named in court.

She informs them that Goody Osbourn is sentenced to hang because she did not confess while Goody Good will not hang because she does confess. Elizabeth knows Abigail wishes her dead and wants to replace her. John now decides to go to court to prove he has no feelings left for Abigail.

Reverend Hale arrives at their home. He is making rounds testing everyone on their christian beliefs.

He asks them to recite the Ten Commandments. John remembers all but one, adultery.

Francis Nurse and Giles Corey arrive with the news that both their wives have been arrested. Francis Nurse is charged with the murder of Goody Putnam's babies. Hale is surprised because he believes in the good character of these women, but he believes in the court system.

Cheever, a court official, arrives with a warrant for Elizabeth's arrest. She has been accused of attempting to murder Abigail with a long pin. As proof, Cheever finds the poppet which has a pin stuck in it.

Mary admits the doll is hers, and John gets furious and tries to prevent them from taking his wife.

Elizabeth calms him and leaves in chains.

Hale is shaken, but holds to belief that some hidden evil caused it all.

Proctor tells Mary she must tell the court the truth, but she lets slip that she and the other girls know of the affair between him and Abigail.

John knows then he must sacrifice himself to save his wife.

The Crucible Act 3 Summary Notes

Five weeks later, John Proctor and Mary Warren arrive in court to see Judge Danforth and his assistant, Judge Hathorne. Along with Francis Nurse and Giles Corey, they try to prove that the girls are lying.

Corey presents a deposition accusing Putnam of prompting his daughter to cry out against a citizen so that her father could purchase the man's forfeited property. But he refuses to name his witnesses, knowing the man would be jailed.

Proctor presents Mary's deposition and summons the other girls to face her.

Abigail denies that they have been pretending. Hathorne asks Mary to pretend to faint as she says she has done in the past, but she can't. The other girls pretend to be possessed to discredit her.

To stop the hysteria, John calls Abigail a "whore" and admits to his adultery, hoping to expose her motives.

Danforth calls in Elizabeth to see why she fired Abigail.

Elizabeth doesn't realize John has confessed and so she decides to lie thinking this would save her husband.

Hale attempts to plead with Danforth in Proctor's behalf. But he is drowned out by the girls' hysterical shrieks of demonic possession.

They claim to see Mary, in the shape of a bird, threatening them. The girls run wild in the courtroom, and Mary breaks down.

Proctor is accused by Danforth of being in the league with the devil and condemns him to death.

Hale leaves the court in disgust.

The Crucible Act 4 Summary Notes

It is three months later and it is the morning of Proctor's execution.

Parris has given permission for Hale to pray for those who are to hang. Parris begs Danforth and Hathorne to pardon John Proctor and informs them that Abigail and Mercy have fled, taking his money.

Danforth, not wanting the court or himself to appear weak, refuses to pardon anyone, despite the new evidence.

A confession from Proctor would prove the court's findings, so they send for Elizabeth, hoping she will convince him to confess. Hale, having lost his faith in the courts, pleads with her to get John to lie and save his life.

When Elizabeth and John are alone, Elizabeth tells him that Giles Corey has been tortured to death.

Elizabeth tells John it is his decision to make, but of course she wants him alive.
He reluctantly agrees to confess.

When he confesses, Danforth questions John, but he refuses to accuse anyone else.

He signs the confession, but refuses to surrender it. He doesn't want his lie made public. God has seen it, and no one else matters.

Finally, Proctor realizes that he cannot live with this lie, cannot ruin his name, or raise his sons to be men if he lies. He tears up the confession and finds goodness in his action. Despite the final pleas of Parris and Hale, Proctor goes calmly to his death.