TERMS TO KNOW:

***Communism***- a theory or system of social organization based on the holding of all property in common, actual ownership being ascribed to the community as a whole or to the state.

***Theocracy***- a form of government in which God is recognized as the supreme ruler

***Dissembling***- to give a false or misleading appearance to; to conceal the truth or real nature; a liar

***Hysteria***- an uncontrollable outburst of emotion or fear, often characterized by irrationality, laughter, weeping, etc.

***Mass Hysteria***- a condition affecting a group of persons, characterized by excitement or anxiety, irrational behavior or beliefs, or inexplicable symptoms of illness.

***Goody***- Goodwife. The equivalent of Mrs. today.

***Sly***- sneaky, mischievous

***Conjure***- to call or bring into existence by magic; to call upon or command a spirit by invocation or spell.

***Charm***- a formula with magical power

***Hypocrite***- a person who pretends to have virtues, moral or religious beliefs, principles, etc., that he or she does not actually possess

***Ail***- to be unwell; feel pain; be ill

***Prodigious***- extraordinary in size, amount, degree; wonderful or marvelous

***Licentious***- unrestrained by law or general morality; lawless; immoral

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**Historical Background**

*The Crucible* by Arthur Miller

Written in 1953

- Cold War
  - Tensions between the U.S. and Russia
  - U.S. was afraid of communism
Red Scare

- Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin accused government workers of being communists.
  - The HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee), ran by McCarthy asked “Are you or have you ever been a Communist?”
- McCarthy also accused directors, writers and actors in Hollywood of being communists and spreading communist ideas in their movies
  - Walt Disney was accused and gave up names of others.
  - Arthur Miller was accused and refused to talk. He was charged with contempt of court.

Setting: Salem, Massachusetts 1692

- Based on a true story, but Arthur Miller changed some of the details.
- There were not actually witches in Salem, but the mass hysteria of the time made the citizens of Salem believe there were.

If you were accused of being a witch you had two options:

1. Deny you were a witch, stand trial and possibly be condemned to death.
2. Confess, name other witches and live.

Extension: An example of a 2009 witch hunt would be the hunt for terrorists.

Puritans:

- A sect of Christianity that was suffered religious persecution in England and was unwelcome there.
- Came to the U.S. to find religious freedom and tolerance.
- Had a strict moral code. Did not allow drinking or dancing.
  - Believed that God would punish people for their sins.

Three Basic Beliefs:

1. Believe in God
2. Social Class is there for a reason
3. Love each other
**Act 1**

They are in an upper bedroom of the Parris household. Parris is praying over Betty’s bed. Betty is sick. The night before a group of girls (Abigail, Betty, Tituba and others) were in the forest dancing - one of them appeared to be naked. Abigail says that Betty was scared by Reverend Parris when he jumped out of the bushes on them. Abigail insists what they were doing was innocent. Rev. Parris says he is concerned about Abigail. We find out that Abigail used to be the Proctor’s servant, but she was fired. There are rumors going around about Abigail. Abigail has questionable morals, but she is very upset by Rev. Parris’ questions.

A group of girls danced in the forest around a fire. One of the girls was naked. Rev. Parris found them, jumped out of the bushes and Betty Parris fainted. The town thinks it is witchcraft. Abigail says it isn’t. Parris hints that Abigail’s reputation isn’t clean in the town. The Putnams enter and say that Ruth, their daughter is sick too. Ann Putnam admits that she sent her daughter to conjure the spirits of her dead sisters. Abigail drank a charm (blood) to kill Goody Proctor, John Proctor’s wife. Abigail has something for John Proctor. Abigail threatens to stab the girls until they are dead if they tell that she drank blood in the woods. She reveals that she saw her parents killed by Indians.

We find out that Abigail and John Proctor definitely had an affair. Abigail talks about how John “clutched her back” and “sweated like a stallion”. John Proctor is over the affair and wants nothing to do with her, but Abigail still wants to be with him. John Proctor doesn’t think there is any witchcraft going on and when he asks Abigail, she says they were just “sportin’” and that there is absolutely no witchcraft going on - that they were just dancing in the woods. While Betty is sick in the middle of the room, Giles, John Proctor, Rev. Parris and Thomas Putnam fight over Parris’ salary, what he preaches about and who owns land at the edge of town. Rebecca Nurse attempts to be the voice of reason saying the girls are in their “silly seasons” and will snap out of it when she feels like it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doesn’t Believe in Witchcraft</th>
<th>On the Fence</th>
<th>Believes in Witchcraft</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Proctor</td>
<td>Rev. Parris</td>
<td>Ann Putnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Nurse</td>
<td>Giles Corey</td>
<td>Thomas Putnam</td>
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</table>

Reverend Hale enters and indicates that he knows some members of the town by reputation (Rebecca Nurse and Thomas Putnam). Hale states that they must believe him if he doesn’t find the presence of witchcraft in Salem. Mrs. Putnam admits that she sent Ruth to raise the spirits of her dead sisters - and
gets angry with Rebecca when she thinks she is being judged. Giles asks Hale what it means when someone reads “strange books”, and someone forgets their prayers while that person is reading the books. He accidentally suggests that his wife is doing something “witchy”. Hale is awfully suggestive when he questions the girls about how they were “witched”- he tells them how to fake it.

*an invisible bird, pig, mouse, or other beast can tell you what to do

* you can feel a strange cold wind or a trembling in the ground

Abigail gets in trouble for there being a living frog in the soup from the night before. To get out of trouble Abigail blames Tituba, using her as a scapegoat. They bring in Tituba and Parris threatens to beat her. Putnam threatens to hang her. Tituba “confesses” but not before she says that the Devil told her to kill Parris. They ask her to name other witches. She does. She gives the names of people Putnam suggested earlier- lower class people he doesn’t like (Goody Good and Goody Osburn). Hale praises Tituba and Abigail jumps in and starts naming names. Betty starts naming other witches too. Parris and Putnam want the accused jailed. At the end of Act 1 eleven people are accused.

Act 2

Setting: The Proctor household—8days later

John and Elizabeth are discussing the events in town, but there is tension between them. Mary Warren has left the house although John Proctor told her not to. Mary Warren is now an official of the court. Elizabeth wants John to tell the courts that Abigail is lying about there being witchcraft, but John is reluctant to do so. Elizabeth is angry with him. Mary Warren comes home and says there are 39 people now accused of witchcraft. Goody Osburn is sentenced to hang. Sarah Good will live because she confessed to witchcraft. Mary Warren states that she will not allow John Proctor to whip her anymore because she is no longer a “girl”, but a “woman”.

John Proctor’s Decision...

John needs to decide whether to tell that Abigail told him there was no witchcraft or to keep it a secret- Elizabeth already knows.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>If He Tells...</th>
<th>If He Keeps Quiet...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protects himself</td>
<td>Abigail will keep her power over the town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protects his wife from being accused</td>
<td>Elizabeth will continue to be mad at him for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reverend Hale comes to question the “Christian character” of the household. When asked his commandments, John forgets the one on adultery. Giles Corey and Francis Nurse come and tell the Proctors that Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse have been accused of witchcraft and have been arrested. Elizabeth knows “the noose is up” for her and that she will be accused soon. Shortly Ezekiel Cheever (a policeman) comes to the house asking for the poppet that Mary Warren made. Abigail was stabbed with a needle that night at dinner and said that Elizabeth’s “familiar spirit” stabbed her with it. Cheever finds a needle in the poppet and presents a warrant for Elizabeth’s arrest. John rips up the warrant for Elizabeth. He tries to fight Elizabeth’s arrest, but she goes without a fight. She knows she has no choice. John Proctor is furious about his wife being arrested. He plans to get Elizabeth out of jail by going to the court and tell them Abigail is lying. His proof is that Mary Warren gave her the doll with the needle already in it and that Abigail wants Elizabeth dead because of the affair. Mary Warren is going to tell the court about the doll- John is going to make her. He is hoping this will make Abigail lose her credibility. He is not concerned about Abigail bringing up the affair- he just wants to save Elizabeth. He will not let her die for his sins. He has made a choice. His wife’s life is more important than his reputation. He wants to do the right thing and take responsibility.

**Act 2 Scene 2 - 36 days after Elizabeth is arrested**

Abigail meets Proctor in the woods. She is crazy. She is starting to believe her own lies. She is injuring herself and saying that other people are injuring her. She thinks god is sending her visions. She is convinced she will marry Proctor after Elizabeth is hanged. She reveals that she has chosen the people she has accused as “witches” because they are hypocrites and she is getting her revenge on them for the bad things they have said about her.

**Act 3**

Rebecca will be hanged for not confessing to being a witch. 400 people are now accused of being witches and are in jail, 72 are condemned to die by hanging for refusing to confess. *(There are only 600 people who live in the town of Salem at this time!)* Elizabeth is pregnant and will live for another year.
John Proctor is given two options: be happy that Elizabeth is saved and let the trials go on, or keep trying to stop the trial because he knows they are wrong. To John it isn’t just about saving Elizabeth anymore—John wants to stop the trials completely. Francis Nurse gives Danforth a petition saying that Elizabeth, Martha Corey and Rebecca are good, Godly women. 91 people have signed it. All 91 people are ordered to be arrested. Giles says that Putnam is having his daughter Ruth accuse people of being witched so they will lose their land and he can buy it. Someone told Giles they overheard Putnam saying this. Danforth orders Giles to tell him who overheard the conversation, but Giles refuses to give the name. Giles is arrested for contempt.

**Evidence That Is Presented Against the Trials**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Result</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Petition with 91 names stating the Christian character of Rebecca Nurse, Martha Corey and Elizabeth Proctor</td>
<td>Warrants are drawn up for arrest for the 91 people and they are to be questioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles states that he has evidence that Thomas Putnam told his daughter to accuse George Jacobs of witchcraft in order to purchase his land</td>
<td>Giles is charged with contempt for not giving up the name of his source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Proctor gives a deposition that Mary Warren gave stating that the girls are lying about their being witched</td>
<td>The courts do not believe her, and think she is lying.</td>
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Cheever brings in Abigail, Mercy, Betty and Susanna. Danforth questions Abigail on whether or not she is lying. Proctor wants Mary to tell how the girls danced naked in the woods. Parris lies and says he never saw them. Hale interjects and says Parris told him he did see the girls dance, and Parris changes his story. Parris admits that he saw them dance, but no one was naked. Danforth says that if Mary can make herself faint like she did in the courts that they would believe that the girls are lying; but she can’t make herself faint. They think she’s lying. Danforth questions Abigail once more and she openly threatens him with a hint of an accusation before pretending to be bewitched by Mary Warren. John calls Abigail a whore and admits to having an affair with her. He says a man won’t throw away his good name for nothing. They call Elizabeth into the court. They plan to ask her if she fired Abigail because of the affair. Abigail is being found out. It is pretty clear that almost everyone believes John Proctor except for Parris. Parris refuses to believe it is true for three reasons. 1- Abigail is his niece. 2- He doesn’t like
John Proctor. 3- He is worried about what would happen to his reputation if the witch trial is a hoax. The plan for verifying the affair may or may not work. Elizabeth has been described as being honest and unable to lie. If she says Yes, they did have an affair, the trials are over but John’s reputation is ruined and he will be on trial for adultery. If she denies the affair she protects John’s reputation, but the trials go on and John is in danger of being accused or charged with contempt of court.

Danforth brings Elizabeth into the court and asks why she fired Abigail. Elizabeth lies to protect John. Abigail starts acting again she pretends to see a bird and says that Mary Warren is sending her spirit on her. The girls start mimicking Mary Warren and it gets her to break down. She runs to Abigail and apologizes. Mary Warren accuses John Proctor of being a witch. Danforth arrests John. Abigail is probably not too happy with this because she still wants to marry him and her plan is now ruined. John is taken out of court saying “God is dead”. He seems not to care about being arrested. Reverend Hale quits the court. No one is listening to him when he says there is no witchcraft going on in Salem.

**Act 4**

3 to 4 months later. It is Fall/Winter. The town is almost deserted. There are rotting crops and wandering children because their parents are arrested. Cows and livestock roam the streets. Tituba and Sarah Good have gone crazy. Danforth and Herrick talk. Reverend Parris reveals that Abigail robbed him of 30 pounds (almost half of his salary) and ran away with Mercy Lewis. They went somewhere on a boat. Reverend Parris asks for the hangings to be postponed. He is afraid of riots and the court will be overturned. His request is refused. Reverend Hale has returned to Salem and is trying to get Rebecca Nurse, Martha Corey and John Proctor to confess to being witches so they will live. Hale feels guilty about his role in the courts.

John talks to Elizabeth. It is revealed that Giles was killed by pressing (they placed stones on him until he suffocated. They were trying to force the name of his informant out of him). John battles with the idea of confessing. He signs, then tears up the confession. He chooses to die with integrity then live with an unclean name. John Proctor, Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey are hanged at dawn.

**After the Play**

Parris was voted from office and was never heard from again. Abigail turned up as a prostitute in Boston. The government awarded compensation to the victims still living. Elizabeth Proctor remarried 4 years after John’s death. Farms that belonged to the accused were left vacant for more than a century. The power of theocracy was broken in Massachusetts.