



INDIANA
REPERTORY
THEATRE

THE CRUCIBLE

by Arthur Miller

Study Guide

Indiana Repertory Theatre 140 W. Washington Street Indianapolis, IN 46204



THE CRUCIBLE: A SYNOPSIS

Characters:

The Afflicted Girls

Betty Parris
Abigail Williams
Susanna Walcott
Mercy Lewis
Mary Warren

Ministers and Magistrates

Reverend Samuel Parris
Reverend John Hale
Judge Hathorne
Deputy Governor Danforth
Ezekiel Cheever
John Willard

The Accused

Tituba
Elizabeth Proctor
Rebecca Nurse
John Proctor
Sarah Good

Adult Accusers

Mrs. Ann Putnam
Thomas Putnam

Defenders

Giles Corey
Francis Nurse

Act I: In 1692, the town of Salem, Massachusetts, is thrown into a panic when several adolescent girls claim they have been bewitched. As the hysteria increases, the minister, Rev. Parris, sends for Rev. Hale of Beverly, an expert in demonology. When Parris' niece Abigail says Tituba, Parris' Barbadian slave, tried to corrupt her by sorcery, the terrified Negress confesses to commerce with the devil, and she and the girls accuse several more women of witchcraft.

Act II: Four judges from Boston and Deputy Governor Danforth arrive to try the accused, many of whom the villagers know to be of unimpeachable character. One of the accused, Elizabeth Proctor, had recently dismissed Abigail from her household when she discovered that her husband, John, and Abigail were having an affair. When Elizabeth is taken, John seizes Mary Warren, the Proctor's present serving girl, and forces her to admit that she and the other girls are only pretending to be possessed.

Act III: John drags Mary into court where she confesses the fraud, but Abigail denies it and accuses Mary of witchcraft. Proctor, in a rage, tells the court of his relations with Abigail and explains that she still loves him and wants to get rid of Elizabeth. Proctor's testimony is discredited, however, when Elizabeth, testifying separately, tries to protect her husband by denying he is an adulterer. When Proctor himself is accused by the hysterical girls, Rev. Hale quits the courtroom in disgust, denouncing the proceedings.

Act IV: Proctor, now awaiting execution, is offered his freedom if he will confess and name the other witches. He refuses. The Rev. Hale urges Elizabeth to get Proctor to lie to save himself, but Elizabeth cried out as her husband approaches the gallows: "He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!"

A TIMELINE CHARTING THE EVENTS OF

1626 Salem founded.

1672 Salem Village parish separates from Salem Town.

1684 Massachusetts Bay Colony loses Charter.

1688 Cotton Mather publishes witchcraft tract which becomes popular reading.

1689 Reverend Parris comes to Salem from Barbados.

1691 Opponents of Parris' win control of the Salem Village parish committee.

1962-Jan. A group of adolescent girls begin to show signs of a strange illness.

Jan. 26 Samuel Sewall (one of the magistrates) records in his diary: "News comes from London that Sir William Phips is made governor of the Province of New England."

Feb. Dr. Griggs summoned to diagnose ailments of Betty Parris and Abigail Williams: concludes unnatural causes; Reverend John Hale, expert in witchcraft lore, is summoned from nearby Beverly.

Feb. 25 The aunt of one of the afflicted girls commissions a witchcake from Tituba, thought to prevent the spread of witchcraft--as Rev. Parris saw it "going to the Devil for help against the Devil."

Feb. 29 The girls "cry out" Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn and Parris's Barbados slave Tituba as confederates of the Devil. Salem magistrates John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin swear out warrants for their arrest.

March 1 First examinations for suspicions of witchcraft take place in Salem; Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn and Tituba examined.

March 5 Tituba's examination is completed--she implicates many others in her confession, thus widening the circle of suspicion.

March 7 First shipment of suspected witches to Boston for safekeeping until their trials can be arranged--Good, Osburn and Tituba sent to Boston Prison in chains.

March 11 Day of fasting and prayer declared in Salem Village--Ann Putnam cries out Martha Corey.

March 19 Warrant issued for Martha Corey's arrest; Deodat Lawson, former minister of Salem Village visits.

March 20 Lawson preaches in Village Church--notes outrageous behavior of the afflicted girls during his sermon.

March 21 Martha Corey arrested and examined on suspicions of witchcraft. Her husband gives incriminating evidence. She is jailed.

March 23 Rebecca Nurse arrested, despite being aged and confined to her bed.



Gallows Hill, just outside Salem, scene of the 19 hangings.

March 24 Rebecca Nurse examined. Numerous depositions from the afflicted girls. She is jailed.

March 26 Five-year-old Dorcas Good is accused of witchcraft and sent (in chains) to join her mother in Boston Prison where she remains for more than 9 months.

March 28 Elizabeth Proctor is cried out by afflicted girls--perhaps due to her husband's outspoken disdain for the behavior of the afflicted girls.

March 30 Reverend Parris takes daughter Betty to a friend's in Boston so that she may be removed as a witness in the court proceedings.

March 31 Another Public Fasting Day--Abigail Williams describes seeing in a vision the Sacrament celebration of the witches complete with red bread and blood.

April 3 Sacrament Sunday: Rebecca Nurse's sister, Sarah Cloyce walks out in the middle of Parris's sermon and slams the church door in protest against her sister's jailing.

April 4 Abigail Williams cried out John Proctor.

April 8 Sarah Cloyce and Elizabeth Proctor arrested.

April 11 Examinations moved to Salem Town into a bigger meetinghouse, due to large crowds attracted to the hearings. Number of magistrates increased to 6, including Deputy Governor Thomas Danforth. First day of examinations include Sarah Cloyce and Elizabeth Proctor. They are imprisoned, bringing total number of suspected witches in jail to over 300.

April 12 John Proctor arrested, examined, and jailed.

April 18 Bridget Bishop and Giles Corey arrested, examined, and jailed.

April 19 Mary Warren arrested and examined. Because she defended her master, John Proctor, the other afflicted girls began to accuse her of trafficking with the Devil. She is imprisoned.

April 20 Ann Putnam cried out George Burroughs, a former minister of Salem Village, then living quietly in Maine.

April 22 Abigail Hobbes arrested and examined--9 others are implicated in her confession, including Mary Easty, another of Rebecca Nurse's sisters.

THE SALEM WITCHCRAFT TRIALS

April 23 Thomas Putnam writes to the magistrates relating his wife and daughter's visions about George Burroughs; this is sufficient information to lead to his arrest.

April 25 Mary Easty arrested, and jailed.

May 4 Burroughs brought to Salem from Maine on witchcraft charges.

May 8 Burroughs examined; numerous depositions sworn out by afflicted girls who would have been little children when Burroughs was parish minister in 1684-88. He is imprisoned.

May 10 Sarah Osburn dies in Boston Prison.



A 19th century artist's conception of "bewitched" girls at a witchcraft trial.

May 12 Mary Warren recants, accuses John Proctor, and is allowed to resume her position among the afflicted girls.

May 14 Increase Mather arrives in Boston with new Governor William Phips after a four-year ambassadorial mission to get Massachusetts' Charter restored. The new Charter severely limits the power of the church in politics, but Phips' arrival allows for a legal trial system to be set up to try the suspected witches. Phips' arrival also relieves Gov. Bradstreet and Dep. Gov. Danforth of their positions.

May 18 Mary Easty's examination fails to establish sufficient evidence for her further imprisonment and she is released.

May 21 On the evidence of Mercy Lewis's visions and fits, Mary Easty is rearrested and jailed, pending trial.

June 2 Phips sets up a special court of Oyer and Terminer ("to see and to decide") to try suspected witches--this was a special court of the General Court set up only to try numerous outbreaks of a single crime--a jury of 40 is assembled. Bridget Bishop is first to be tried--she is declared guilty but is not sentenced.

June 8 General Court legalizes the death sentence for witchcraft by reviving an old colonial law making witchcraft a capital offense. Bridget Bishop is sentenced to be hanged.

June 10 Bridget Bishop hanged on Gallows Hill in Salem.

June 15 12 ministers from Boston called in to ratify the kinds of evidence that could be accepted in the trials and advise "critical and exquisite caution, lest by too much credulity of things received only upon the devil's authority there be a door opened for a long train of miserable consequences."

June 28 Second session of witchcraft trials: Sarah Good, Sarah Wildes, Susanna Martin, Elizabeth Howe tried. All found guilty.

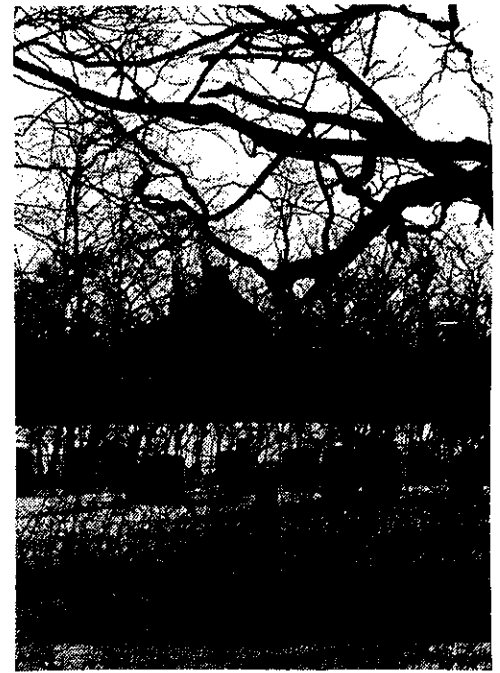
June 29 Rebecca Nurse tried and found innocent by jury; magistrates overturn verdict and ask jury to reconsider--they turn in guilty plea.

July 3 Rebecca Nurse excommunicated from church.

July 4 Rebecca Nurse's family petitions the court for formal statement of why her verdict was reversed.

July 19 Rebecca Nurse, Sarah Good, Susanna Martin, Elizabeth Howe and Sarah Wildes hanged on Gallows Hill. Rebecca's children remove her body from the shallow communal grave into which the witches' bodies had been thrown, and bury her secretly in their family plot.

July 23 John Proctor petitions the ministers of Boston including Increase Mather to investigate the legality of the witchcraft trials--he reports that torture is being used to elicit confessions, and that justice cannot be done with the current magistrates trying the cases. He begs the



Cemetery where Rebecca Nurse is buried; her home is in the background.

ministers to have the trials moved to Boston. He receives no reply.

Aug. 5 Third session of the witchcraft trials. Trials of John Proctor, Elizabeth Proctor, John Willard, George Jacobs, Martha Carrier, George Burroughs. Proctor includes in his own defense a petition with 52 signatures of neighbors, assuring faith in his good character. All but Elizabeth Proctor are found guilty--Elizabeth "pleads her belly" and is acquitted. (She was pregnant, and Puritan law forbade killing an unborn child with its mother. She was to be executed after its birth.)

Aug. 19 Burroughs, Proctor, Willard, Carrier and Jacobs hanged. Cotton Mather manages to calm a near riot sparked by Burroughs moving speech from the gallows, and his inspired recitation of the Lord's Prayer (something that witches weren't supposed to be able to do).

Aug. 25 Fasting Day in Salem Church.

Sept. 9 Fourth session of the Court of Oyer and Terminer--trial and condemnation of six women including Martha Corey and Mary Easty.

Sept. 14 Martha Corey excommunicated.

Sept. 17 Fifth trial session. Nine more death sentences: as usual, a vast majority of the condemned individuals were women.

Sept. 19 Giles Corey pressed to death for refusing to speak at his own examination--the torture is meant to elicit evidence, and was not generally considered a means of execution, but Corey knew that his children couldn't inherit his land or property if he confessed or spoke in his own defense so he chose to die rather than jeopardize his children's inheritance.

Sept. 22 Martha Corey, Mary Easty and six others hanged for witchcraft. Seven others condemned earlier in the month either confess or escape by pleading pregnancy. These hangings are to be the last in Salem and the last hangings in the U.S. for witchcraft.

Sept. 27 Samuel Sewall (one of the magistrates) calls a meeting of the ministers and magistrates to determine how to make the court proceedings a matter of public record. Cotton Mather's Wonders of the Invisible World is the result of this discussion.

late Sept. Governor Phips' wife is cried out by the afflicted girls for signing a pardon for one of the condemned witches when her husband was away fighting Indians. This accusation is quickly silenced. Reverend Hale's wife is also cried out--this accusation leads Hale to look deeper into the madness and eventually his scepticism turns the tide.

Oct. 11 Governor Phips writes to King William seeking advice on how to deal further with the witchcraft trials.

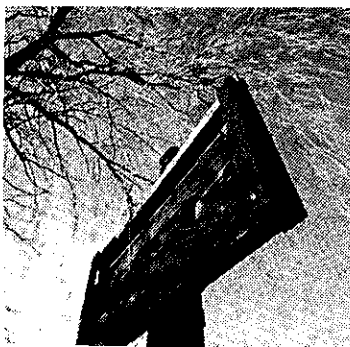
Oct 12 In Andover, where other witches were being accused and jailed in reaction to the Salem trials, the town council grants the release of imprisoned wives and children into the custody of their husbands as winter approaches and conditions in the jails worsen due to overcrowding.

Oct. 15 Sewall diary entry: "Went to Cambridge to consult Mr. Danforth and discoursed with him about the witchcraft. He thinks that the court cannot continue except that there be some better consent of

Oct. 19 Increase Mather at last acts on Proctor's petition and comes to Salem to examine the conditions under which confessions were being obtained.

Oct. 24 A petition in Andover denounces the afflicted girls as "distempered persons."

Oct. 29 Court of Oyer and Terminer dismissed: 150 accused, untried witches languish in jail.



A pillory outside the jail--used to detain law offenders and submit them to public scorn.

Nov. 23 Special Session of Superior Court of Judicature appointed to complete trials--led by Thomas Danforth. Major new development in kinds of evidence accepted by this court: no spectral evidence accepted and no evidence based on prior quarrels is allowed.

Dec. 16 Second Special Session.

1693, Jan. 3 Third Session convened which remains in session until May 31. All but a handful of accused witches are released, as the majority of evidence used to condemn in earlier trials was spectral. Elizabeth Proctor is released with her child, but without legal right to her husband's property. Tituba is also released after she is bought by a new master and her prison fees paid by him.

Jan. 10 Reverend Parris's salary "made void" by enraged Salem village parish.

1694, Nov. Accusations against Parris and his part in the trials.

1695, April Council of Churches, under the leadership of Increase Mather, arbitrates case of Parris against parish--recommend that Parris resign. He consents to leave after being paid 70

1696, Jan. Parris replaced by Reverend Joseph Green who begins a slow and steady campaign to reunite his factious congregation.

Nov. 15 Cotton Mather's diary entry confesses to bad dreams and fear of reprisals against his family for his part in the witch trials.

1697, Jan. 14 Judge Samuel Sewall issues statement publicly repenting his part in the witchcraft trials.

Jan. 15 General Court sets this day aside for official fasting in repentance for wrongs committed in witchcraft trials.

1702 Reverend Green starts proceedings to revoke Martha Corey's excommunication.

1703 Green's motion to reinstate Martha Corey into the church ranks denied by town meeting.

1706 Ann Putnam recants her part in the witchcraft trials.

1707 Martha and Giles Corey reinstated in Salem church register.

1709 Surviving accused witches and children of condemned witches seek financial redress for losses suffered due to witchcraft trials and executions.

1711 Nearly 600 pounds awarded to recompense survivors--John Proctor's wife and children receive largest settlement--150 pounds.

March 2 First Church of Salem revokes Rebecca Nurse's excommunication.

1716 Last hangings for witchcraft in England.

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1957, Aug. 28 Commonwealth of Massachusetts issues Chapter 145 Resolve which denounces the Salem Witch Trials as "shocking, and the result of a wave of popular hysterical fear." It does not, however, question the