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**Arthur  
Miller  
THE  
CRUCIBLE**

# THE CRUCIBLE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY ARTHUR MILLER



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## THE CRUCIBLE

*A Bantam Book / published by arrangement with  
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*Bantam edition / April 1959  
49 printings through May 1977  
50th printing*

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*For information address: The Viking Press, Inc.*

*625 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.*

ISBN 0-553-11008-X

*Published simultaneously in the United States and Canada*

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## ARTHUR MILLER

was born in the Harlem section of Manhattan in 1915 and attended public schools there. He attended the University of Michigan where he wrote two plays a year and was rewarded with several prizes and awards. On his return to New York after graduation he continued to write plays and worked in radio. In 1949 **Death of a Salesman** received the Pulitzer Prize. His next major play was **The Crucible** (1953), followed by **A View from the Bridge** (1955), which received the Gold Medal Award for Drama from the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

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Mr. Miller's more recent works include **After the Fall** and **Incident at Vichy**, both of which were performed by the Lincoln Center Repertory in New York.

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# INTRODUCTION

*by Richard Watts, Jr.*

"The Crucible" is that rarity in the American theatre, a play which seems finer and more alive today than when it was first produced, in this case 1953. The phenomenon isn't unique, but how unusual and cheering it is can probably be appreciated only by the veteran drama-lover, whose memories are sure to be filled with works he had cherished, only to find in some later revival that they have lost their savor. And what makes the case of "The Crucible" even more gratifying is that, despite its setting of the Salem witch trials toward the end of the seventeenth century, it was essentially a topical drama, the sort which is generally regarded as becoming outmoded most quickly and emphatically.

Considering the date of its writing and first production, which was that of the period of national hysteria and war on social and political heretics that gave a Wisconsin politician named McCarthy his claim to an ugly footnote in history, it was inevitable that a play dealing with a notorious earlier epoch of American hysteria should carry its overtones of contemporary significance. It was even more certain when the dramatist was Arthur Miller, the proud possessor of a bold and sensitive social conscience. The modern comparisons are present only implicitly, but they are proudly there.

Yet somehow they tended to be harmful to "The Crucible" as a play in 1953, even though their courageous fighting spirit gave it a kind of lofty dignity that was impressive and admirable. But even many of those who were entirely on the dramatist's side, and hailed him for the stand he took, were not



without their reservations about what he had written. The contemporary parallels did have a way of distorting, certainly not the truth but the dramatic values, because they distracted one's attention by getting in the way of the story, instead of underlining it, and reminding the spectator almost as frequently of the differences in the two eras as of the shocking similarities.

Today, with the nightmare era of McCarthy moving farther into the past, those particular details are no longer of distracting importance, although the general issue of freedom of judgment opposed to the brutal domination of intolerance remains as great as ever. And, with nothing to distract the attention by forcing on it those parallels with one especial case of national yielding to the hysteria of witch-hunting "The Crucible" can be judged for what it is, a moving drama about the personal tragedy of the notorious Salem trials which makes by implication an eloquent case on the universal subject of intolerance using trumped-up hysteria for its evil purposes.

It represents quite a victory for Mr. Miller that his play should grow in stature with the passing of time. For it is now clear that "The Crucible" was another victim of a sinister epoch in our history. It isn't that the play has improved, but that the atmosphere surrounding it has. It was judged as a kind of political pamphlet for the stage, when it was actually a work of dramatic art all the time. When Mr. Miller felt that it was underrated on the occasion of its first presentation, he was partially to blame by being so frank about its editorial viewpoint, but he was right about its quality.

It may be worth saying parenthetically on behalf of the critics and paying theatregoers who were a trifle chill to the play when they saw it in 1953 and expressed enthusiasm when they looked at it again in 1957 that neither they nor the days of their first attendance were entirely at fault. In large part, the change in verdict was due to the odd fact that the original Broadway production, with a cast of prominent actors, was inferior to the off-Broadway revival, which had a cast of virtually unknown players. But that is a matter of perhaps merely academic interest. The important thing is that, as the reader may find for himself, "The Crucible" is a play worthy of its author.

As for the current status of Arthur Miller in the American theatre, it is stating an accepted fact to say that he, Tennessee Williams and William Inge are the living American drama-

tists who stand out pre-eminently. Since the death of Eugene O'Neill, it is they who have given our stage its chief dignity and importance in the eyes of not only their fellow countrymen but of the world. In addition to their standing at the head of their class, the Big Three of our post-war drama have at least one other thing in common. Their vision of existence is a gloomy one. This tendency toward philosophical sadness has caused a number of people chiefly in this country, to complain that they are lacking in the spirit of good, old-fashioned American optimism, an objection which blithely ignores the inescapable fact that such indigenously American authors as Melville, Poe, Hawthorne and O'Neill were likewise apostles of philosophical gloom. Miller, Williams and Inge are clearly in an entirely respectable national tradition.

Being a playwright who has a definite way of doing things in the theatre, Mr. Miller not unexpectedly is said to find the lack of interest in contemporary social problems and their concentration on subjective concerns in the plays of Tennessee Williams and William Inge a weakness in their work. It is natural that he should. A creative writer of the strong convictions necessary for important achievements is bound to feel intensely that his approach to artistic creation is the only correct one. The chances are that the Messrs. Williams and Inge believe their individual approaches are what Mr. Miller needs. Since a diversity of visions and approaches is necessary to a properly diversified theatre, it would be a shame if they tried the same road, but it is right that each should be convinced that his way is the soundest. It is, for him.

As matters stand, Mr. Miller is our one important social dramatist, now that Lillian Hellman appears to be devoting her time to adaptations and Clifford Odets is a screen writer in Hollywood. It is my impression that Miller lacks something of Miss Hellman's gift for dramatic fireworks and Mr. Odets' capacity to give a touch of poetry to his realistic prose. On the other hand, he has, I think, a mind that broods over the state of the world and over moral concerns more philosophically, more compassionately and less dogmatically. He gives the impression of being a man who is earnestly striving to find his way through a world beset by moral difficulties, and the results of his pilgrimage can be very stirring.

He is essentially a moralist, which makes the charge that he is some kind of orthodox left-wing economic determinist seem disproved immediately. The problems faced in his plays



are invariably moral problems. As a social dramatist, Mr. Miller is concerned with analyzing the quality of contemporary American civilization, and he can be deeply critical of it. But the weaknesses he finds are moral weaknesses. In his "Death of a Salesman," which is one of the most important plays ever written in this country, the essential tragedy of the central figure was, not his failure in business or his discovery of the arrival of old age, but his surrender to false ideals of success. His other troubles were important chiefly because they enabled him to recognize his basic failure.

Being preoccupied with the moral problems of modern American society, Mr. Miller inevitably still had them in mind when he wrote his play about seventeenth century Salem. He was interested in something that had shocked his moral sense, the weakness in the national character that made a people presumably dedicated to a belief in freedom and the right of dissent so susceptible to hysterical violence against dissenters and heretics. The frightening thing was happening at the time he wrote, and he turned to a famous period in our early annals, which appeared to have so many parallels to the current frenzy and from which contemporary lessons might be drawn.

Granting that the similarities were undoubtedly many, there were also those differences. For one matter, the danger from Russian subversion was a more believable menace than the witch cults of pioneer Massachusetts. Delving for a moment into the paradox known as constructive criticism, "The Crucible" might have proved more effective in 1953 if the playwright had acknowledged that there was a witch cult in the seventeenth century which gave plausibility to the wild and evil charges against innocent people. Anyway, the fact that there were differences as well as similarities in the two periods did get in the way of a proper appreciation of a powerful and disturbing drama.

Such a difficulty happily doesn't interfere with the play's effectiveness today. The basic issues of emotional terrorism and the endless struggle between the rights of free men and mass efforts to destroy them under the guise of defending decency and right-mindedness being still with us, "The Crucible," unhampered by distracting topical questions, stands forth as an eloquent statement on the universal subject of the free man's courageous and never-ending fight against mass pressures to make him bow down in conformity.

Only someone who had neither seen nor read a play by Arthur Miller could imagine that, because "The Crucible" is a polemic, it might be cold, bloodless and unemotional as a drama. For one of his most notable qualities as a playwright is his ability to say what he has to say with narrative skill and vigorous dramatic power. It may be in part because he is so much less concerned with subjective brooding and emotional self-analysis than with the setting down of objective events, with contemplating the state of the world and not the state of his own subconsciousness, that his plays, even his less satisfying ones, have such straightforward theatrical forcefulness.

Whether or not this is the chief reason, it is a fact that he has the rare ability to write tragedies for extroverts, who are not ordinarily the people one expects to appreciate tragedy. This was particularly the case with "Death of a Salesman," and must have had much to do with its popular success. But I was convinced of this through considerable cross-examining of many playgoing friends and acquaintances, with the curious discovery of a new law of inverse proportions. The less introverted they were, the more they were emotionally overwhelmed by the tragedy of Willie Loman, the doomed salesman.

There was another odd thing about the appeal of "Death of a Salesman." It is an accepted fact that women make up the bulk of the audiences at serious plays, and this wasn't changed at Mr. Miller's drama. But it was true that men constituted a larger proportion of the audience attending it than at virtually any other tragedy known to box offices, and that it was the men who, instead of attending to drag their wives away at the end of the first act, stayed on enthralled to find themselves caught up in the meaning of the play.

It would be impossible to make any similar suggestion about the appeal of "The Crucible." But it seems to me that the same quality of frank theatrical impact and concern with straightforward narrative interest that gave "Death of a Salesman" a far larger audience success than we have come to expect of plays with tragic themes, has much to do with the popular appeal of "The Crucible." It would be wildly unfair to suggest that Mr. Miller is a conscious showman in this respect, shrewdly putting in spectator values to stir up business at the box office. He is clearly too conscientious an artist for that, and he certainly never softens the stern honesty of

his theme and viewpoint. But he also happens to have a gift for sheer dramatic effect, and it serves him admirably.

This isn't to say that "The Crucible" is without its weaknesses. Its opening exposition seems to me a little cluttered and clouded, and it takes a bit of time before the situation of the frightened girls is made clear. And the play has some of the defects of its virtues. The straightforwardness of the narrative and the viewpoint, once the exposition is out of the way, tends to oversimplify the conflict and make the characters representing good and evil seem dramatized points of view rather than full-length, fully-rounded human beings.

It might be argued, though, that this is really not a criticism of the drama but a description of the sort of drama it is. Despite its realistic form, "The Crucible" is less dramatic realism than a modern morality play, in which the characters are intended to be dramatized symbols of good and evil. My only reason for doubt, probably an unfair one to Mr. Miller, is that Shaw was even more devastating about intolerance in "Saint Joan" by giving its representatives a sound, logical case and making them good and conscientious men, and then showing the horrifying results of what they did. I say this may be unfair to Mr. Miller, but it is also a justified tribute to him that he deserves to be judged by comparison with such a giant as Shaw.

Certainly, too, the characters in his play make up in theatrical vividness for what they may lack in completely rounded proportions. And "The Crucible" is filled with dramatically effective figures. Take just one of them, the conniving girl named Abigail, who is largely responsible for starting the hysteria. She comes close to being a villainess out of melodrama, but, in her evil little way, she is a remarkably fascinating creature. Yet she is not one of his characters to whom Mr. Miller devotes most of his attention. And I doubt if there is a figure in the entire play that doesn't come to striking theatrical life.

Although the actual amount of Arthur Miller's writing for the stage is not large, no one seems to doubt any more that he is one of the most important of contemporary dramatists. And, now that he has become a recognized figure of world dramatic literature, his plays are as familiar in production to the playgoers of Europe as to ours. As a dramatist and a moral force speaking for the conscience of America, he is well represented in "The Crucible."



# THE CRUCIBLE

A PLAY BY ARTHUR MILLER

STAGED BY JED HARRIS

CAST (*in order of appearance*)

REVEREND PARRIS	Fred Stewart
BETTY PARRIS	Janet Alexander
TITUBA	Jaqueline Andre
ABIGAIL WILLIAMS	Madeleine Sherwood
SUSANNA WALCOTT	Barbara Stanton
MRS. ANN PUTNAM	Jane Hoffman
THOMAS PUTNAM	Raymond Bramley
MERCY LEWIS	Dorothy Joliffe
MARY WARREN	Jennie Egan
JOHN PROCTOR	Arthur Kennedy
REBECCA NURSE	Jean Adair
GILES COREY	Joseph Sweeney
REVEREND JOHN HALE	E. G. Marshall
ELIZABETH PROCTOR	Beatrice Straight
FRANCIS NURSE	Graham Velsey
EZEKIEL CHEEVER	Don McHenry
MARSHAL HERRICK	George Mitchell
JUDGE HATHORNE	Philip Coolidge
DEPUTY GOVERNOR DANFORTH	Walter Hampden
SARAH GOOD	Adele Fortin
HOPKINS	Donald Marye

The settings were designed by Boris Aronson. The costumes were made and designed by Edith Lutyens.

Presented by Kermit Bloomgarden at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York on January 22, 1953.

## A NOTE ON THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THIS PLAY

This play is not history in the sense in which the word is used by the academic historian. Dramatic purposes have sometimes required many characters to be fused into one; the number of girls involved in the "crying-out" has been reduced; Abigail's age has been raised; while there were several judges of almost equal authority, I have symbolized them all in Hathorne and Danforth. However, I believe that the reader will discover here the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history. The fate of each character is exactly that of his historical model, and there is no one in the drama who did not play a similar—and in some cases exactly the same—role in history.

As for the characters of the persons, little is known about most of them excepting what may be surmised from a few letters, the trial record, certain broadsides written at the time, and references to their conduct in sources of varying reliability. They may therefore be taken as creations of my own, drawn to the best of my ability in conformity with their known behavior, except as indicated in the commentary I have written for this text.



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# ACT ONE

## (AN OVERTURE)

*A small upper bedroom in the home of Reverend Samuel Parris, Salem, Massachusetts, in the spring of the year 1692.*

*There is a narrow window at the left. Through its leaded panes the morning sunlight streams. A candle still burns near the bed, which is at the right. A chest, a chair, and a small table are the other furnishings. At the back a door opens on the landing of the stairway to the ground floor. The room gives off an air of clean spareness. The roof rafters are exposed, and the wood colors are raw and unmellowed.*

*As the curtain rises, Reverend Parris is discovered kneeling beside the bed, evidently in prayer. His daughter, Betty Parris, aged ten, is lying on the bed, inert.*

At the time of these events Parris was in his middle forties. In history he cut a villainous path, and there is very little good to be said for him. He believed he was being persecuted wherever he went, despite his best efforts to win people and God to his side. In meeting, he felt insulted if someone rose to shut the door without first asking his permission. He was a widower with no interest in children, or talent with them. He regarded them as young

adults, and until this strange crisis he, like the rest of Salem, never conceived that the children were anything but thankful for being permitted to walk straight, eyes slightly lowered, arms at the sides, and mouths shut until bidden to speak.

His house stood in the "town"—but we today would hardly call it a village. The meeting house was nearby, and from this point outward—toward the bay or inland—there were a few small-windowed, dark houses snuggling against the raw Massachusetts winter. Salem had been established hardly forty years before. To the European world the whole province was a barbaric frontier inhabited by a sect of fanatics who, nevertheless, were shipping out products of slowly increasing quantity and value.

No one can really know what their lives were like. They had no novelists—and would not have permitted anyone to read a novel if one were handy. Their creed forbade anything resembling a theater or "vain enjoyment." They did not celebrate Christmas, and a holiday from work meant only that they must concentrate even more upon prayer.

Which is not to say that nothing broke into this strict and somber way of life. When a new farmhouse was built, friends assembled to "raise the roof," and there would be special foods cooked and probably some potent cider passed around. There was a good supply of ne'er-do-wells in Salem, who dallied at the shovelboard in Bridget Bishop's tavern. Probably more than the creed, hard work kept the morals of the place from spoiling, for the people were forced to fight the land like heroes for every grain of corn, and no man had very much time for fooling around.

That there were some jokers, however, is indicated by the practice of appointing a two-man patrol whose duty was to "walk forth in the time of God's worship to take notice of such as either lye about the meeting house, without attending to the word and ordinances, or that lye at home or in the fields without giving good account thereof,