*The Crucible* by Arthur Miller

background notes

**PURITANISM** - group was persecuted in England, came to America to escape;

They wanted to make the New World a haven for their religion. They believed

that their religion was the only right way to heaven. This belief caused them

to be INTOLERANT of differences, persecuted others who believed differently.

**MAIN PRINCIPALS (TENETS) OF PURITANISM**

1. **Doctrine of the ELECT** – only a few people were CHOSEN by God to go

to Heaven. No one knew who those were, so they believed they had to

live righteously. (also called Predestination or Foreordination) Choosing

could have happened at birth, or before, or after.

1. **Believed that ANY PLEASURE was inspired by the Devil.**

Women could not dress prettily; kids could not play games; theatres

were forbidden (plays); dancing was the MOST forbidden; **Life was a**

**tragedy meant to be endured.**

--- Witches 🡪 If asked for forgiveness, would be forgiven, not

killed; however, SHUNNED, LOST ALL PROPERTY

RIGHTS, VOTING RIGHTS (citizenship), etc.

If confessed to being a witch – killed you by hanging,

pressing, burned at the stake

If you denied being a witch, and refused to confess, they

tested you (drowning --- oops; if survived, then hang you)

PROBLEM 🡪 how to prove? young girls “saw”

apparitions (unacceptable evidence); resulted in

naming people, out of prejudice, and dislike or to

get self out of trouble

\*\* They believed if “one of the elected,” they could do no

wrong. Then it becomes a problem of pride, people

assuming and judging others

DEVIL 🡪 people believed the Devil was REAL (prior angel

who betrayed God), whose purpose was to keep people

from Heaven and to mess up God’s work, and that he

EMPLOYED (USED) people, willingly or unwillingly (by

bewitching, possession, witches)

1. **THEOCRACY** – “God government” – They believed that their religion should

govern (the government was totally controlled by the church); If a

person weren’t attending church, was not a believer, the

government could tax you, jail you, take your property

**MAIN CHARACTERS OF *THE CRUCIBLE***

1) Abigail Williams – 17 year old servant (in real life she was 11 years old),

wanted John Proctor for herself

2) Reverend Parris – preacher in 1692 Salem, MA, mainly responsible for belief

in witches

3) Tituba – Parris’ West Indian slave, partly responsible for teaching children

about “spirits” (in real life, she taught them fortune telling through the

reading of palms)

4) John Proctor – local member of the church, hasn’t been attending regularly,

opposes Rev. Parris’ expenditures

5) Elizabeth Proctor – wife of John Proctor – discovers adulterous relationship

of husband and Abigail

6) Reverend Hale – investigating minister

7) Rebecca Nurse – lady of immense goodness and respect who is later

accused of being a witch

8) Judge Hathorne (in real life an ancestor of American writer, Nathanial

Hawthorn) -- a special judge sent in, dedicated to removing all

witches and would not allow anyone to tamper with his authority

(pride kept him from admitting any wrong doings)