# The Crucible: Marxism And Isa In A Play

In this essay, I am going to analyse The Crucible by playwright Arthur Miller from a Marxist perspective and the ideological state apparatus (ISA). Moreover, I will discuss how the play could be staged and the costumes characters would wear and why.

The Crucible was written as an allegory to make a point about the USA in the 1950s, by telling a story from the 17th century. The Crucible is a four-act play that deals with themes of prejudice and injustice. Miller highlights the irony in the fact that the dichotomy between good and evil, throughout history, transcends religion and manifests itself into various ideas, including the red scare.

But first however, what is a Crucible? A crucible has two definitions. According to the online Cambridge Dictionary ‘A container in which metals or other substances can be heated to very high temperatures’. The latter is a severe test.

This can help when it comes to the staging of the play. Many performances of The Crucible have been performed in-the-round. There are plenty advantages in staging The Crucible in particular this way. One advantage is that it creates an intimate atmosphere with the audience. The audience isn’t distanced and out of reach from the drama. This helps to stop the feeling of a fourth wall effect a proscenium arch stage has. Moreover, a 3D set will help the actors to feel more immersed into the world, thus making the performance more convincing. For example, during act 3 an intense and heated court scene takes place. This relates back to the second definition of a crucible, in this the presence of the audience is turned into a metaphor as pressure is felt more by the characters being encircled. Furthermore, Marxism seeks for everyone in society to be equal amongst each other. With in-the-round staging, everyone will feel involved in the heat of the drama. Another reason why in-the-round staging works is that there are many entrances and exits for characters. The Crucible has a large cast of actors who come on and off stage at various points.

The costume also plays a vital role. The society in which behaviour and manners are very tightly controlled by customs. I would have the female characters in the playwear long tight-fitted dresses. The characters reactions are a response to cultural inflexibility and religious pressure. Two characters of the play I want to focus on a costume with is John Proctor the protagonist, and Abigail Williams the Antagonist. John Proctor is a farmer and described he doesn’t ‘Doesn’t suffer to fools’. Through this description, I would have him wear rugged loose clothes with earthy tones. This could display his down-to-earth, agricultural and humble disposition. Also, it can be used to show his stoic personality too.

On the other hand, Abigail Williams is described as ‘strikingly beautiful’ and manipulative. She is a leader for the younger girls and she calls all the decisions. In this case, I would have Abigail in a tight-fitting red gown. Red has connotations of dominance, danger, lust and the devil. Also, I would have the rest of the girls in dull, unattractive colours like dark pales greens, yellows, purples and blues. This contrast would make Abigail stand out as more attractive and enticing. Furthermore, she could be used to represent America’s perception of communists ‘sinister’ nature.

They may include educational institutions (e.g. schools), media outlets, churches, social/sports clubs and the family. Specifically, in this case, it is media outlets e.g. Newspapers, magazines and television. Now before the 50s, the world war 2 ended in 1945, America was beaming at this and troops, soldiers and sailors were on their way home, America was becoming a global superpower. This also gave way for the (USSR) aka the Soviet Union, they had communist ideals whereas America was a capitalist nation. A new senator Joe McCarthy didn't want communism to infest America so he tried to sniff out these said communists through what became known as the red scare. He mostly saw Hollywood as influenced by communist and blacklisted the communists in Hollywood accordingly. Miller drew a comparison to this and the Salem witch trials.

Miller highlights the irony in the fact that the dichotomy between good and evil, throughout history, transcends religion and manifests itself into various ideas, including the red scare. Miller said that he had no doubt that people practiced witchcraft in Salem; however, much like the fear of communism, mass hysteria was perpetuated through propaganda and turned into something worse than what it really was.

The problem here is that people are always viewing things in extremity. To them, it's all black and white, wrong and right, no and yes, guilty or not guilty. This means if something is not of God, it must be of the devil, so what starts as political opposites turns into moral opposites.

The crooked right-wingers has made it that capitalists are all holy. And communists are nothing but scummy devil worshippers.

In Conclusion, Arthur Miller's The Crucible reveals how general members of society will do anything to attain or maintain a position of power and status amongst the bourgeoisie (Abigail Williams) while a few will go through great lengths to remain true to their faith;(John Proctor) ultimately revealing that the act of trying to achieve a higher position in life, at the cost of others, is a choice.