
Addressing Emotions with Revenge and Retaliation in The Crucible, a Play by Arthur Miller

Revenge and Retaliation

Spite, revenge and curiosity can all be deadly sins. Unfortunately, The Crucible's Ann Putnam gives up her soul to all three. In the Puritan community of Salem, Massachusetts, such contemptuous actions can create complications. Goody Putnam is described as "... a twisted soul of forty-five, a death-ridden woman, haunted by dreams, " (Miller 1.152-153). Her tangled past motivates her to reach out to the deceased, paving the way for the detestable witch trials. In 1692, there could be no greater perturbation than being controlled by the devil. Ann Putnam is the root of this delirium implanted in Salem citizens. She sends Ruth to conjure up spirits and continues to proclaim the infection of witchcraft, which only energizes the hysteria.

Suspicion takes over Ann's conscience after seven of her children are born with pale faces and no heartbeat. Answers are desired, with desperation to know why such tragic events have been occurring. Goody Putnam comes up with a specious conclusion, that a person has been conspiring with devil to rid Ann of her children. In attempts to reach closure, Ann sends her daughter, Ruth, to summon the spirits of her dead children. This is done in hopes to apprehend the person who has been exterminating her children. She admits to doing this, justifying it by saying, "Reverend Parris, I have laid seven babies unbaptized in the earth, " (Miller 1.214-215). She uses this as an excuse for the many problems that she will soon be causing. As a Puritan, having children that are not baptized is basically deemed as a sin itself. With these words, although, she creates a whole other issue.

After sending Ruth to communicate with her babies, Ruth became exceedingly ill. Naturally, Mrs. Putnam decides to tell several people that she would "... not call it sick; the Devil's touch is heavier than sick. It's death, y'know, it's death drivin' into them, forked and hooped, " (Miller 1.180-183). By stating this, Ann Putnam becomes the first person to declare the infestation of witchcraft. With this allegation, there is an array of results. Other people are dragged into the picture, like Reverend Hale, the expert of witchcraft, and Abigail Williams, the expert of false accusations. To summarize, because of her proclamation, traumatic times are rapidly reached.

It may seem as if Mrs. Putnam is innocent. After her confessions, she never continued to take part in the court or the excessive accusations. However, this does not justify for all of the other quandaries she created. For example, if she wouldn't have proclaimed witchcraft, Abigail would not have started accusing people of working with Lucifer. Also, if she wouldn't have suggested

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witchcraft, Reverend Hale would not have been dragged into the picture. The accusations resulted in the formation of the court and the massacre of numerous innocent people. The majority of the events during the Salem Witch Trials can easily be traced back to Goody Putnam, a sure sign of her guilt.

Revenge and retaliation may seem like a plausible way to address emotions from prior calamities. It's not. Miller demonstrates the fallacy of such ideas through Ann Putnam. She had the audacity to make outrageous claims based on her inability to mother healthy children. Despite the loss of so many children, Ann decides to risk Ruth in her quest for answers and revenge. As a result, she unwittingly initiated the first act of witchcraft. She initiates a series of divisive trials and senseless murders, all in the name of witchcraft. It's clear to most that personal desires cannot come before the well-being of everyone. Sadly, this wasn't evident to Ann Putnam. She only fractured her soul more while tearing apart the community.

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