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English III

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*The Crucible* and McCarthyism Common Theme Paper

During the 1900’s the Klu Klux Klan was formed and used fear to corrupt and terrorize the African American community. The KKK ruined the African American community with murders, arsons, bombings, and assaults. Similar to the Klu Klux Klan and its ruining of a community due to fear and suspicion, the issue focused on in The Crucible is how the fear and suspicion of witchcraft eventually lead to the society falling apart. Additionally, the McCarthyism period went through the dilemma of fear and suspicion, which also lead to the United States becoming corrupt. During the play The Crucible, which is about the Salem Witch Trials, fear and suspicion ran throughout the community, which eventually lead to the society to become ruined. The Salem community was ravaged because innocent people were accused of witchcraft. Villagers being blamed for witchcraft lead to being put into jail, crushed by rocks, or hung. Likewise, during the McCarthyism period, Americans had fear of communism and its influences. Joseph McCarthy eventually ruined the Salem society due to fear and suspicion. McCarthyism caused people to turn against each other and in many communities, citizens losing their jobs. Both The Crucible by Arthur Miller and McCarthyism show the common theme of fear and suspicion can ruin a society.

   Early on in the play The Crucible, readers can see that fear and suspicion of witchcraft appears early on. With fear of witchcraft in the community, people do not want the word to get out, so they tell people to speak nothing of the rumor of witchcraft to anyone in the village because they do not want their reputations to be on the line. In Act I Abigail says, “ Speak nothin’ of it in the village, Susanna”(Arthur Miller 53). Members of the community do not want others to believe that witchcraft is among them, because they fear as if that the rumor spreads throughout the town then the village could end up becoming corrupt. Although, since it is a small town, the rumor spreads very quickly. As the rumor begins to spread like wildfire, people begin to fear that hell is upon them and that the devil himself is within the town. In Act I Paris said,” A wide opinion’s running in the parish that the Devil may be among us…”(Miller 538-539). As the community was a Satan fearing town, they did not want to believe that the devil was among them, but due to the rumors, more and more people started to believe that the rumor was true. Eventually, with fear and suspicion crawling through the town, innocent townsmen and women were accused of witchcraft. People with good names in the village were being blamed. Even villagers with a good reputation in the town and were good religious people were being accused of practicing with the devil or using witchcraft. In Act I, Abigail Williams blamed Tituba, a servant of Reverend Parris, for tempting her with the devils magic. Abigail said, “ Sometimes I wake and find myself standing in the open doorway and not a stitch on my body! I always hear her laughing in my sleep. I hear her singing Barbados songs and tempting me with-”(Miller 930). Abigail blames Tituba for practicing the devils' work because she needed someone to blame in order to cover the fear of her reputation collapsing.  The fear of devils and witches lead to major problems such as; fear of punishment, fear of gossip, and fear of the town being ruined as a whole. With all of the concerns going through the village, it eventually leads to innocent people being put into jail or even killed. It has been shown that villagers in the Salem community have been very contemptuous. They have blamed others, had fear of witchcraft and the devil due to rumors and false accusations. Thus innocent villagers will be killed, put in jail, or to be a ‘witch’ the rest of their lives.

The fear and suspicion of witchcraft eventually lead to the destroying of the Salem community. With the thought of the community turning towards hell, and to cover themselves or keep themselves holy, more people are being charged with witchcraft. Giles Corey, a farmer who was accused of witchcraft alongside his wife Martha Corey, explains how he can see how even before the fear and suspicion of witchcraft, the town was already corrupt. Giles said,”  It suggests to the mind what the trouble be among us all these years. Think on it. Wherefore is everybody is suing everybody else? Think on it now, it’s a deep thing, and dark as a pit. I have been six time in court this year-”(Miller 663). With grudges held from the past, people have been being accused of witchcraft because of the hatred for each other throughout the town. The Salem community, mainly the girls who were under the control of witchcraft, started to blame members of the community of witchcraft. People in the town that had a good reputation, went to church, and good community members were getting condemned of witchcraft. In Act I, Abigail Williams began to blame numerous people for witchcraft. Abigail said, “ I want to open myself! I want the light of God, I want the sweet love Jesus! I danced for the Devil; I saw him; I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss his hand. I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil” (Miller 1050). As the scene goes on, the rest of the girls continue to name off townspeople who they thought who they saw with the devil. As the play continues, more and more people are blamed for witchcraft. With people getting accused, people began to be put into jail or even hung. In Act III Danforth, a judge sent from Boston, who shows neither mercy nor humanity, speaks about hanging. Danforth said, “ Hang them high over the town! Who weeps for these, weeps for corruption!” (Miller 769). Danforth fell into the hysteria like the rest of the town, into believing that people were working with the devil. Fear and suspicion ruined the Salem community because numerous people were afraid that witchcraft was among them. With people fearful of witchcraft and the devil, anyone who was accused was either put into jail or executed.

Joseph McCarthy ruined society by taking advantage of this fear and suspicion by starting the trend known as McCarthyism. In the same way as The Crucible, McCarthyism, which was a term used for the attitudes, tactics, and policies used by Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy during his campaign against the alleged.  Communist infiltration of the U.S. institutions, fear and suspicion eventually lead to the destroying of a civilization. Joseph McCarthy wanted to gain political power so he began to accuse people in the United States government of being a communist. In Herblock’s History they wrote, “.. in 1950, a young senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, seeking political gain, began a well-publicized campaign using smear tactics, bullying and innuendo to identify and purge communists and ‘fellow travelers’ in government” (Herblock’s History). Joseph McCarthy using fear, set off paranoia and accusation propelled McCarthy into a national spotlight. With the national scandal of communism spreading throughout the country many people including celebrities, people in government, school teachers, and many more started to get accused of being apart of the communist party. In Herblock’s History they wrote, “During the postwar anti-communist campaign hundreds of elementary and high school teachers were investigated and lost their jobs, sometimes as a result of being named by proliferating ‘anti-subversive;’ groups and individuals”(Herblock’s History). People throughout the United States began to become corrupt. People who were innocent began to get blamed for belonging to the communist party. With McCarthyism spreading, Americans had begun to fear communists and feel suspicious about communism influences on the United States.

As McCarthyism spreading citizens of the United States wanted to end communism because they feared that it could ruin their society. McCarthy began to launch investigations of communism in the entertainment industry. The U.S. History in Context wrote a bibliography about McCarthyism. They stated, “ In 1946 HUAC launched an investigation of Hollywood, alleging that communists had established a significant political base in the entertainment industry and were placing subversive political messages in Hollywood movies” ( 2015 Gale, Cengage Learning). People who were in the entertainment industry ended up being convicted of being a part of the communist party, although they were not. McCarthy went after numerous people and groups including Adlai Stevenson for being a communist. In a U.S. History in Context document they explained how Joseph McCarthy targeted many people throughout the United States. They wrote, “ Then, in a speech sponsored by Chicago business leaders, McCarthy sought to link the Democratic presidential candidate, Governor Adlai Stevenson of Illinois, to communism”( 1994 Gale, COPYRIGHT 2009 Gale, Cengage Learning). Many of the accused were blacklisted, the practice of denying employment to screenwriters, actors, directors, musicians, and other professionals. Others accused, who were not in the entertainment industry, lost their jobs, were separated from their families, and were considered a communist for the rest of their lives.

In conclusion, McCarthyism and The Crucible, both show a strong central theme of how fear and suspicion can ruin a society. In The Crucible, we can see that the fear and suspicion can ruin a society because of falsely accusing people of witchcraft. The town was torn apart due to the fear of witchcraft. People through the town were put into jail or killed, which in the end ruined the Salem society. McCarthyism demonstrates how the fear of communism in the United States caused the entire country to blame others and become fearful of communism. The society was ruined because of people losing their fame, jobs, and being considered a communist. Fear and suspicion can run through many different types of societies and ruin them to a very dreadful state.

Works Cited

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