

## ENGLISH – ENCOUNTERING CONFLICT

### Topic: 'Conflict Hurts the Innocent Above All Else'

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Conflict like a lingering shadow, follows us everywhere. It is an inevitable facet of our daily lives where many innocent people are unnecessarily affected as a result. Divergences occur due to the endless subjectivity individuals carry with them and it is due to this reason that devastating consequences arise. Throughout history, conflict has continued to hurt innocent people, where even in today's society its repetitive nature remains prominent. During the Cold War, in Arthur Miller's play 'The Crucible' and in our modern day society concerning the Islamic culture, innocent people become victims of these tragedies, where rationality is lacking and disagreement fuels the fire where conflict progressively burns out of anyone's control.

During the Cold War when McCarthyism was in full motion, anyone who acted or were even remotely pro-communist, were condemned of being one. No solid evidence was provided in support of these accusations and as a result many innocent people had their good reputations tarnished and all their hard work was forgotten. Senator Joseph McCarthy was the instigator of this tribe where his main ambition was to gain political power. He fed the mass hysteria to his fellow Americans where majority of people would do whatever was necessary to be unaffected by the travesty. People however, such as Arthur Miller, who stood out from the crowd were harshly criticised and labeled a communist, all because of the intense fear McCarthy created and manipulated.

Arthur Miller's allegorical play 'The Crucible' alludes to the time of the Cold War. Much in the same way many innocent people were accused of being a communist, many innocent people within Salem are condemned for practicing witchcraft without regard for firm evidence. 'The Crucible' depicts a tightly bound Puritan community that was led by a strict moral, religious legal system. Little diversity was tolerated which is suggestive my Miller to be the source of the tension and conflict within Salem, unhealthy for a community as a whole. People more or less conformed to the norms of society in attempt to feel security of belonging. People who stood out from the crowd, however, such as Abigail Williams and John Proctor, with their own personal conflicts simmering beneath the surface unearth themselves from the theocracy they live in and develop into a conflict that the community as a whole shares- witchcraft. The innocent are brought into a conflict that otherwise would not have concerned them and are dragged down with the instigators of it. Abigail Williams manipulates the mass hysteria were she leads the pack of innocent 'names' to the death. She cajoles the girls into keeping her secret by threatening them with 'a pointy reckoning' ensuring herself personal safety. This in turn cause the innocent such as Rebecca Nurse, Giles Corey and John Proctor to be hanged for something they did not do.

John Proctor is one of the innocent who is unnecessarily affected by conflict. Having a free mind and strong sense of self are the qualities that are ultimately cause his death to occur. By attempting to do the right thing and have Abigail seen for what she really is, a 'whore', we can also criticise him for the contribution he has had in the exacerbation of the conflict, where innocent people affected within Salem can also be blamed for the development of the conflict. Deputy-Governor Danforth illustrates to us the reason behind why conflict continues to occur and in effect hurt the innocent. He states that 'you are either with this court or must be countered against it, there be no road between', demonstrating that people who are in place of authority at the time, cause the conflict to continue due to their differing opinions. It depicts to us how subjectivity and bias views and lead to conflict and force people to chose between one extreme or the other, inevitably involving themselves into the conflict.

Our modern day society also depicts the increasing prominence of conflict and how the innocent are involved and hurt as a result. Individuals such as Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein demonstrate how differences in opinions can cause conflict and mass destruction to arise. On September 11, hundreds of innocent Americans lives were lost as a result of conflict. Conflict exacerbated from that day forward when former President George Bush declared his war on terrorism. He stated that 'you are [either] with us, or you are with the terrorists', replicating nearly identical words to that of Danforth during the Salem witch trials. The modern day 'devil' transformed from witches to the Islamic culture where fear was generalised upon this ethnicity, which was once seen as harmless individuals. War caused many innocent Americans and Islamic lives to be lost as an outcome of conflict.

Historical events to date are proof that divergence is causing innocent people to become victims of other peoples' problems. The repetitive nature of conflict will continue to result in such destruction until people learn to adopt rationality into their lives, where conflict is dealt with accordingly. This in turn will prevent further casualties to arise from this never ending cycle.