

Sophia Fortner

Mrs. McCune

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The Obscure Puzzle Piece

There existed a dark jagged piece of a beautiful puzzle, and though attempted at every angle, the piece did not seem to fit. This piece remained alone; tossed to the side and forgotten in the darkness of disuse. In "Alone," Edgar Allan Poe illustrates the way his childhood orchestrated his secluded life and scarred his discernment deeply.

Poe had a markedly rough childhood. Before the age of three, he had lost both his mother and his father. This traumatic event in his life tainted him. From the way he saw life, to his differing emotions, he was dissociated from society. He demonstrates this in the poem when he states, "I could not bring / My passions from a common spring" (Poe 3, 4). He symbolizes the fact that he did not receive enjoyment in what others normally found joy in. When distress was evoked in others, he was numb, and "[his] sorrow [he] could not awaken" (6). Not only was he not experiencing the same pain, but his "heart to joy [was] at the same tone" (7). He did not feel the equivalent sorrow of others, and these emotional differences initiated his isolation.

Furthermore, Poe lost his siblings shortly after losing his parents. He was adopted by the Allens. However, John Allen had not been fond of Poe. To avoid Poe's receipt of inheritance, he never entirely adopted him. The wife, Frances Allen, was involved in a charity that aided the unfortunate. His brother and sister had been taken in by two other families. Poe never truly had a family. He was alone, and his differences pushed him further into segregation. He had "not been

Anita Ann Hamp

Mrs. McCune

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The Crucible: Theme

Reputation is a wonderful yet terrible fixation that could potentially lead to the death of an unfortunate soul. When one's reputation is possibly endangered some will stop at nothing to make sure that theirs isn't ruined. Some, on the other hand, will let it get destroyed as long as their conscience is clear. In *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller demonstrates the unusual and somewhat disturbed behavior that humans may gain when their reputation is endangered.

Miller demonstrates this with every character in *The Crucible*. Some will go to both sides of the extremes and some will be everywhere in between. Examples of those who will stop at nothing are Reverend Parris and Abigail Williams. Both are tremendously self-absorbed and willing to kill anyone that could get in the way of what they want. Reverend Parris is obsessed with the idea of being the perfect person he believes he is. He wants to be thought of as better than everyone else and longs to be praised for simply being him. In the play he jumps straight into the girls' act accusing others just to make himself look better in the society. "You will confess yourself or I will take you out and whip you to your death, Tituba!" (44) Parris yells this to his slave when the accusations begin. This is where Parris starts to unravel and becomes extremely paranoid. He threatens Tituba even though she is really close to him and his family and has been a part of his life for quite sometime.

Sadly Parris doesn't stop there; throughout the play he constantly jumps on people that are being looked down upon displaying his power. Further along in this story a man named John Procter comes into play. He, like Parris, is looked up on in the town of Salem. This of course makes him a threat in Parris's eyes. "They've come to overthrow the court, sir! This man is – (88) Parris yells this attempting to persuade the court that Procter is not a good man. Because of Parris's actions and Procter losing the battle he came to end, the community begins to look down on Procter and will soon lead to his death. Abigail is just as twisted in the safety of her reputation as Parris, but she takes a different approach in protecting it.

The best way to explain Abigail is alone and deeply scared. In her early childhood she witnessed her parents being murdered. This most likely is the cause for her way of thinking and her long to be loved by John Procter. She is the leader of the girls and all the accusations. Abigail plays the people of Salem in hopes that at the end of her game John's wife Elizabeth will perish and she will claim her spot next to John as his wife. At the beginning of *The Crucible* one of the girls thinks to tell what they all were doing. In response to this Abigail tells all the girls "--Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word, about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it; I saw Indians smash my dear parents' heads on the pillow next to mine, and I have seen some reddish work done at night, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down!"(20) This comment scares the girls so much that they fallow along with her the entire time, knowing very well that what they were doing is wrong and is killing innocent people.

Abigail uses this power she has gained from people's fears to make sure that no one can destroy her. She even uses it in order to get the court to fallow her in her charade. "Let you

beware, Mr. Danforth. Think you to be so mighty that the power of Hell may not turn your wits? Beware of it!”(108) Abigail says this to Judge Danforth to scare him. She lets him know that she is not afraid to accuse him along with everyone else if he doesn't lean her way. He knows that an accusation made towards him would work due to her popularity in the town. People are looking up to her since she is pushing the said 'devil' out of Salem.

Unlike Abigail and Reverend Parris, Rebecca Nurse and John Procter are willing to give up their reputation and their lives because they refuse to give into a lie. Rebecca is an elderly woman who has seen a lot in her life. She shows a love and warmth to anyone she meets. She was accused of using witch craft to kill Mrs. Putnam's infant children. It's terrible to think that such a wonderful person would be accused of terrifying actions such as the murder of children. But Rebecca refuses to give into these childish games. When Judge Danforth tries to convince Rebecca to confess to performing the crime of witchery she responds “Why, it is a lie, it is a lie; how may I damn myself? I cannot, I cannot.”(140) Rebecca is hooked on honesty. She knows that by doing this she will be hanged but she's an extraordinary woman. She would rather die a saint than live as a sinner.

John is much the same as Rebecca. He thinks to confess and even goes as far as signing the confession paper. John soon realizes that it is a mistake. He rips up his confession and decides that it is better to tell the truth. Before he tears the paper he says “Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!”(143) this quote shows the importance of ones name during this time. If his name is blackened he will not be the only one that is shunned, his family will as well. It also shows how strongly Procter feels about signing himself to lies. He knows that he did not

commit this crime but he also would rather be hanged and his reputation be destroyed, then confess to witch craft and live knowing not only himself but his sons and their children will be forever shunned from the society.

Reputation is a very frightening part of life. It can make people do unspeakable things. Some become so fixed on the idea of seeming perfect that they will be willing to go as far as taking the lives of innocent people and destroying families. Others are willing to give up their good image to be an honest saint or even to protect your family's name. These behaviors are well explained in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*.