

PROMPT: “The play starts on an ominous note with Parris in a state of frenzy. From the very beginning the atmosphere of the play is tense and sinister. Nevertheless, the playwright succeeds in raising the level of tension ever higher throughout the four acts of the drama. Analyze and evaluate the role of suspense in the play.”

THESIS: Suspense plays a critical role in The Crucible in its role in the plot, its effects on the characters, and the way Miller uses it to set the mood of the play.

- I. Introduction
- II. Suspense plays a central role in the plot of The Crucible.
 - A. The suspense among the people at the beginning of the play causes the witch hunting in the first place.
 - B. The building suspense through the play dictates the direction of the characters' actions.
 - C. There is great suspense throughout the novel surrounding the outcome of the trials.
- III. Suspense is a major influence on the characters in The Crucible and shapes their actions in several ways.
 - A. Suspense pushes Abigail to do horrible things to protect herself and sway John Proctor's actions.
 - B. Suspense over the possibility of witchcraft leads to the arrest of figures like Rebecca Nurse by the townsfolk.
 - C. Suspense is the driving force behind the actions of the townsfolk through the entire play.
- IV. Suspense is one of the main aspects of the play's mood, setting the tone throughout the whole story.
 - A. The play opens to a nervous, suspenseful scene of conversation.
 - B. Suspense is intense at the scene set in the Proctors' house, being the defining characteristic.
 - C. The trial scene is very suspenseful.
 - i. This is further compounded by the stage direction in the scene.
- V. Conclusion