

The Crucible, Act III, by Arthur Miller
Literary Analysis: Dramatic and Verbal Irony

In real life, things are often different from what they seem. When this occurs—both in life and in literature—it is called **irony**. Writers and playwrights make use of two forms of irony to surprise and entertain their readers and viewers.

In **dramatic irony**, the characters think one thing to be true, but the audience knows something else to be true. This creates interest and tension in a story or play. In **verbal irony**, words seem to say one thing but mean something quite different.

DIRECTIONS: *Explain the verbal or dramatic irony that exists in the following passages.*

1. Upon hearing Proctor's and Mary's statements, Danforth is shaken by the idea that Abigail and the girls could be frauds. Danforth challenges Proctor with this: "Now, Mr. Proctor, before I decide whether I shall hear you or not, it is my duty to tell you this. We burn a hot fire here; it melts down all concealment."

2. Parris, to save his own reputation, is eager to support Abigail's claims and the court's decisions. He accuses several people of making attacks upon the court. Hale's response is this: "Is every defense an attack upon the court? Can no one—?"

3. Proctor reminds Mary of a biblical story about the angel Raphael and a boy named Tobias. In the story, the boy frees a woman from the devil and cures his father of blindness.

4. Proctor is informed that Elizabeth has said she is pregnant. Proctor says he knows nothing of it but states that his wife does not lie. Later, when questioned about her husband's fidelity, Elizabeth lies, thinking she is protecting her husband and his reputation.

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Reading Strategy: Evaluate Arguments

Evaluate arguments in the court scene in Act III by determining if the evidence used to support the accusation is believable and logical. Watch for **logical fallacies**, which are ideas or arguments that appear logical even though they are based on completely incorrect assumptions. For example, Judge Danforth explains his reasoning for believing the accusations of witchcraft. Though his thoughts seem logical, all of them are based on a mistaken premise.

DIRECTIONS: Fill in the chart to help you evaluate the arguments of each character in the trial scene.

Character	Argument	Logical?	Believable Evidence?
1. Judge Danforth			
2. John Proctor			
3. Reverend Parris			
4. Reverend Hale			
5. Giles Corey			

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Vocabulary Builder

Using Legal Terms

Scenes that take place in courtrooms are usually full of special words and phrases that have particular meaning for the judges, lawyers, and others present. This is true of Act III of *The Crucible*.

A. DIRECTIONS: Find out what the following words mean. Then use each in a sentence about the action in Act III.

1. affidavit _____
2. deposition _____
3. prosecutor _____
4. warrant _____

Using the Word List

anonymity contentious deposition effrontery imperceptible incredulously

B. DIRECTIONS: Choose the word or phrase that is most nearly opposite in meaning to the Word List word. Circle the letter of your choice.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. anonymity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. obscurity B. fame 2. contentious: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. competitive B. agreeable 3. deposition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. shifting B. trial 4. effrontery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. decoration B. rearward 5. imperceptible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. obvious B. untouchable 6. incredulously: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. contemptuously B. dismissively | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C. solitude D. recklessness
 C. inclusive D. smoldering
 C. putting in place D. informal chat
 C. politeness D. lying
 C. understandable D. off track
 C. skeptically D. trustfully |
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