

The Crucible

Part I: Overview

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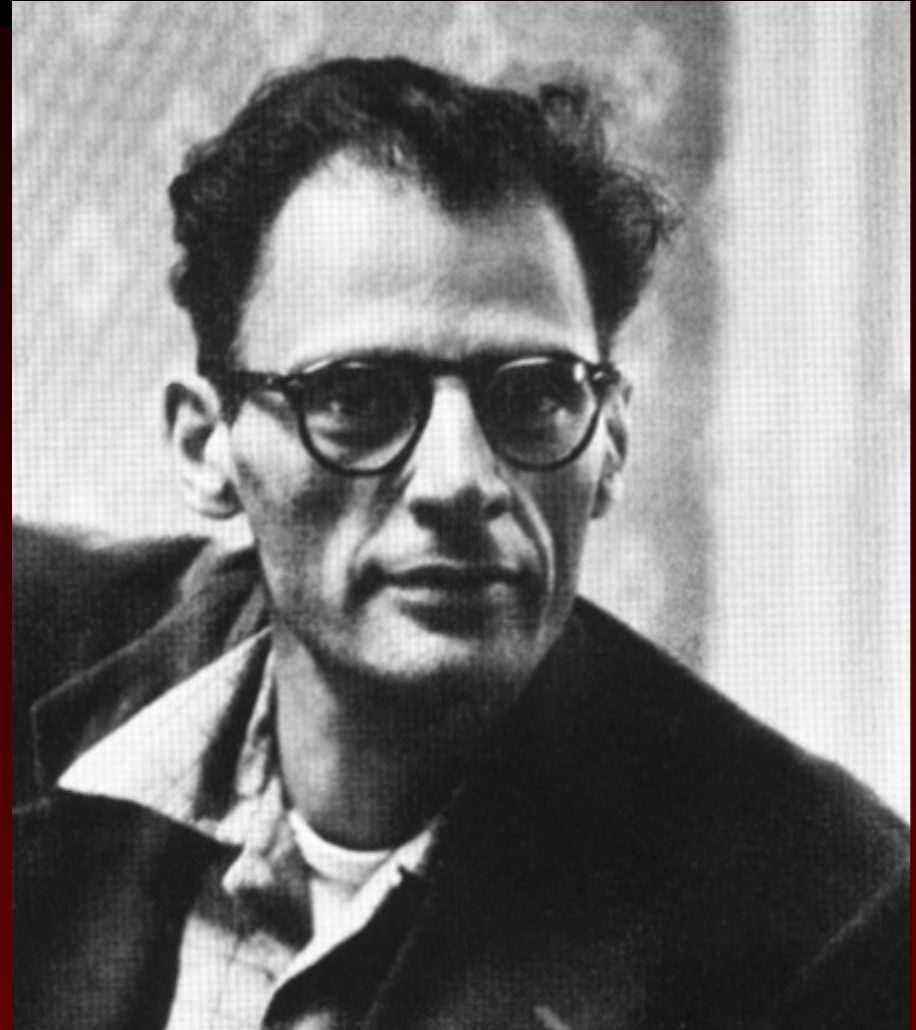
- American play
- Written in the 1950s
- Playwright: Arthur Miller
- Focuses on residents of Salem, Massachusetts
- Issues: greed, guilt, motivation, morality

Overview: American Drama

- 1950s drama was heavily influenced by:
 - World War II just ending
 - The desire for *change*
 - Feelings of guilt and exploration of identity
- *The Crucible* premiered in January 1953 in New York City.

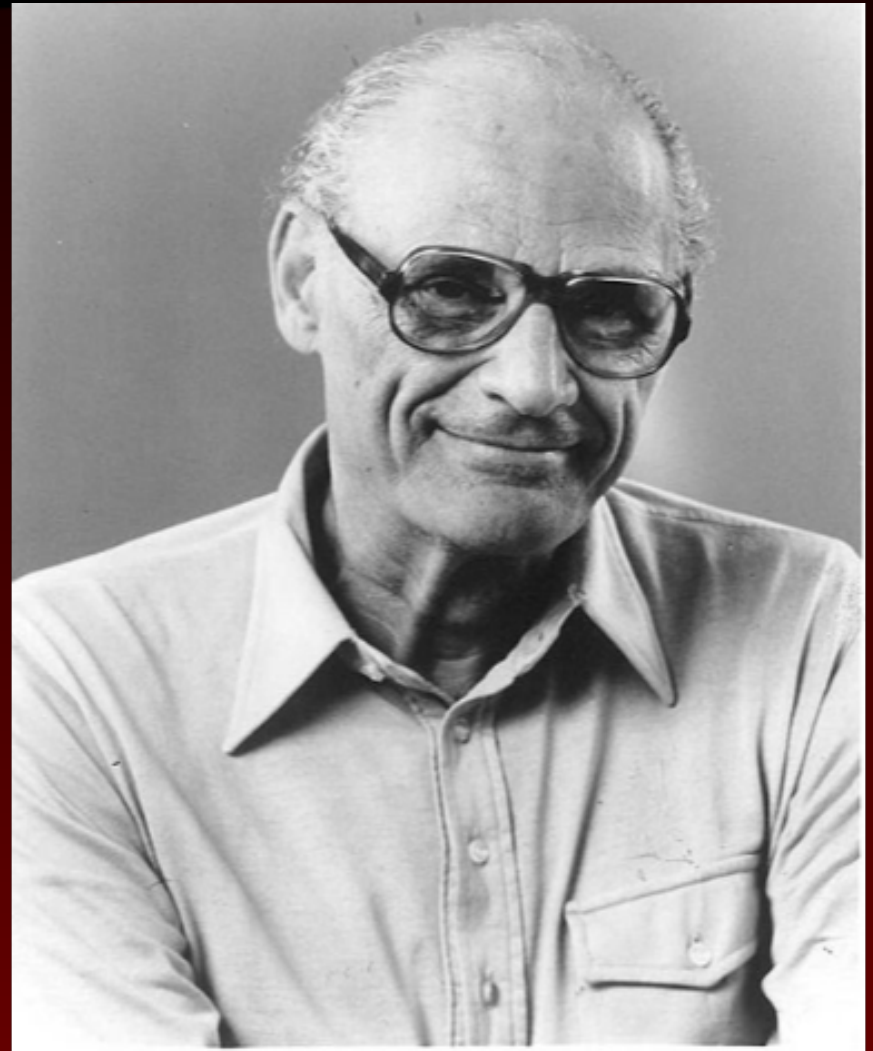
Overview: Arthur Miller

- Born in 1915 in New York City
- His father's business failed because of the Depression
- Family moved around a lot because of poverty
- Attended the University of Michigan



Overview: Arthur Miller

- Returned to NYC after graduating college
 - No luck with writing!
- Finally had a play of his on Broadway
 - “All My Sons” (1947)
- In 1949, wrote “Death of a Salesman”



Overview: Arthur Miller

- Married Marilyn Monroe (lucky guy!)
 - Divorced after a few years
 - Had three wives altogether
- Wrote “The Crucible” in the early 1950s
 - Was accused of being a Communist
- Died in 2005



Overview: Salem, Massachusetts

- Located on the coast of Massachusetts
- Settled mainly by Puritans in 1626
 - A group of people who left England so they could practice religious freedom
 - Often let their religious beliefs guide their daily lives
- Most known for the Salem Witch Trials of 1692
 - Nickname: “The Witch City”

Puritans arriving in Massachusetts

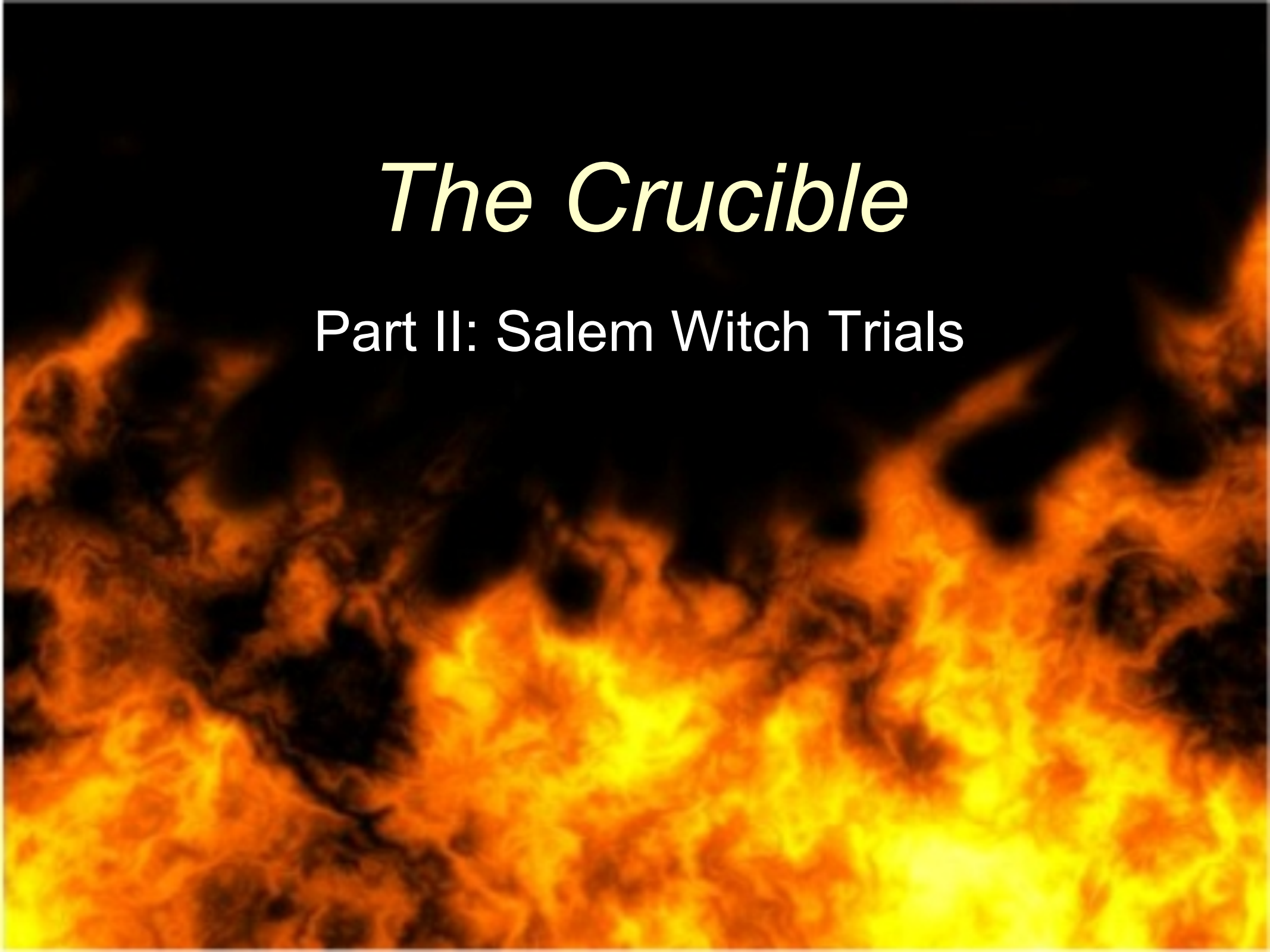


Salem Witch Trials Memorial



Overview: Issues

- Greed: How do you define greed? Is greed ever a good thing?
 - Guilt: What leads people to feel guilt?
 - Motivation: What is the biggest motivator in your life?
 - Morality: List your top three “moral rules.”
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- How do these fit into our ideas of America?
Remember, this class is about American literature as much as possible! Be thinking about this question every time we read a text.

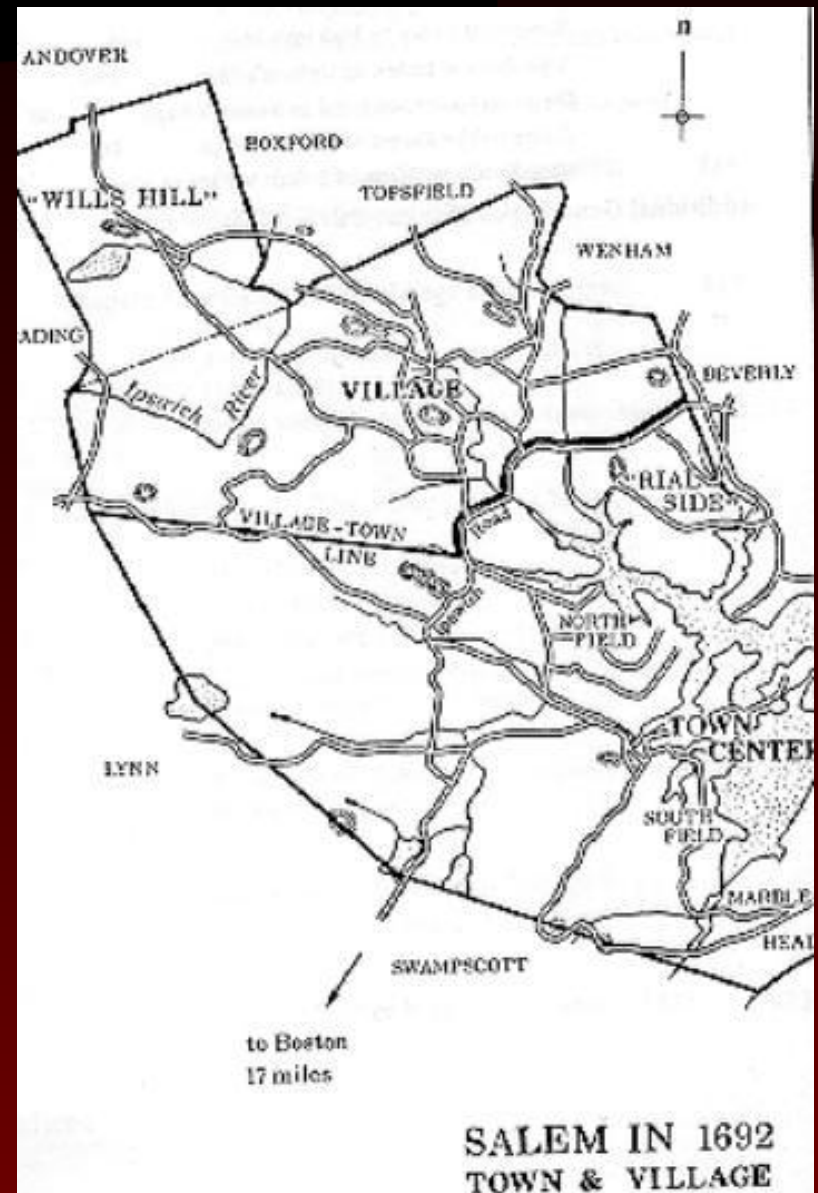


The Crucible

Part II: Salem Witch Trials

Salem Witch Trials

- Occurred from June through September of 1692 in Salem
- Puritan group of people was involved
- Townspeople were in a state of *hysteria* about witches/evil



The Facts

- Young girl named Betty Parris became ill
 - Fever, extreme pain, running around the house
- More children in Salem became ill
 - Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, Mary Walcott
- Doctors were called in to find the reason for this sickness

But...

- Doctors couldn't explain illness, so they defaulted to "witchcraft"
 - Townspeople were easily convinced
 - A servant in town was suspected of witchcraft
- Townspeople decided to arrest the servant, Tituba, and an older woman for witchcraft

It continues...

- More and more people were arrested and charged with witchcraft
 - The punishment for witchcraft was DEATH by HANGING
 - In order to live, some people “confessed” to practicing witchcraft.

The Casualties

- Nineteen men and women were put to death for witchcraft.
- One man, Giles Corey, was also pressed to death.



Why did this happen?

- People were suspicious/fearful
 - A book about witchcraft had just been published by Cotton Mather
 - People were at war with Native Americans
 - Death/evil were on the mind of many (because of fighting and disease)
 - Puritan culture easily accepted the devil as the source of evil/wrong in life

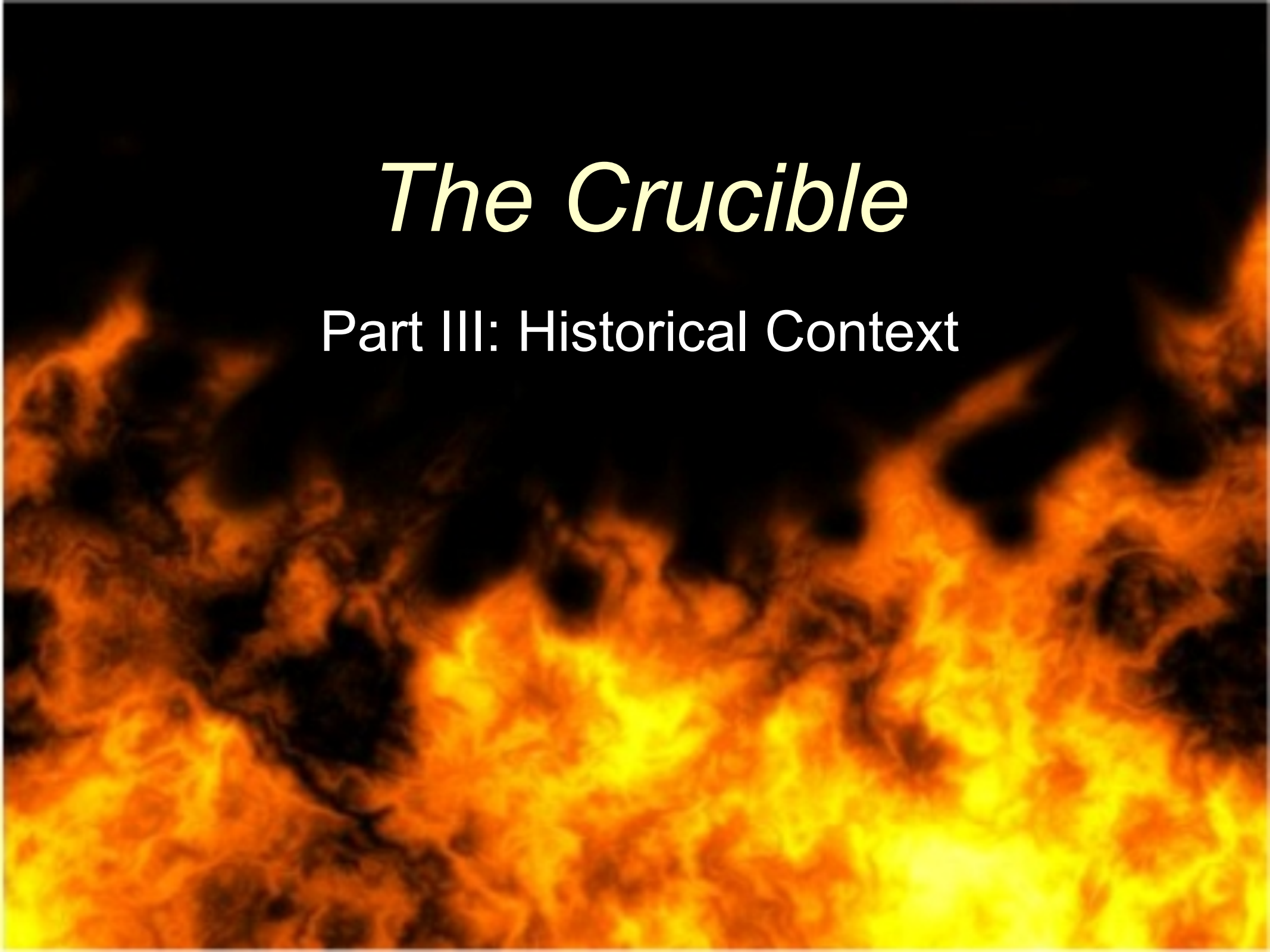


Other Explanations

- Teenagers in town were bored and got carried away
 - Dancing, flirting, etc. not allowed at all!
 - All of the accusers were teenage girls
- Some of the accusers were jealous people
 - An easy way to get rid of people they didn't like!
- General sense of depression in town
 - Not a lot of wealth/happiness/freedom

The Crucible

Part III: Historical Context

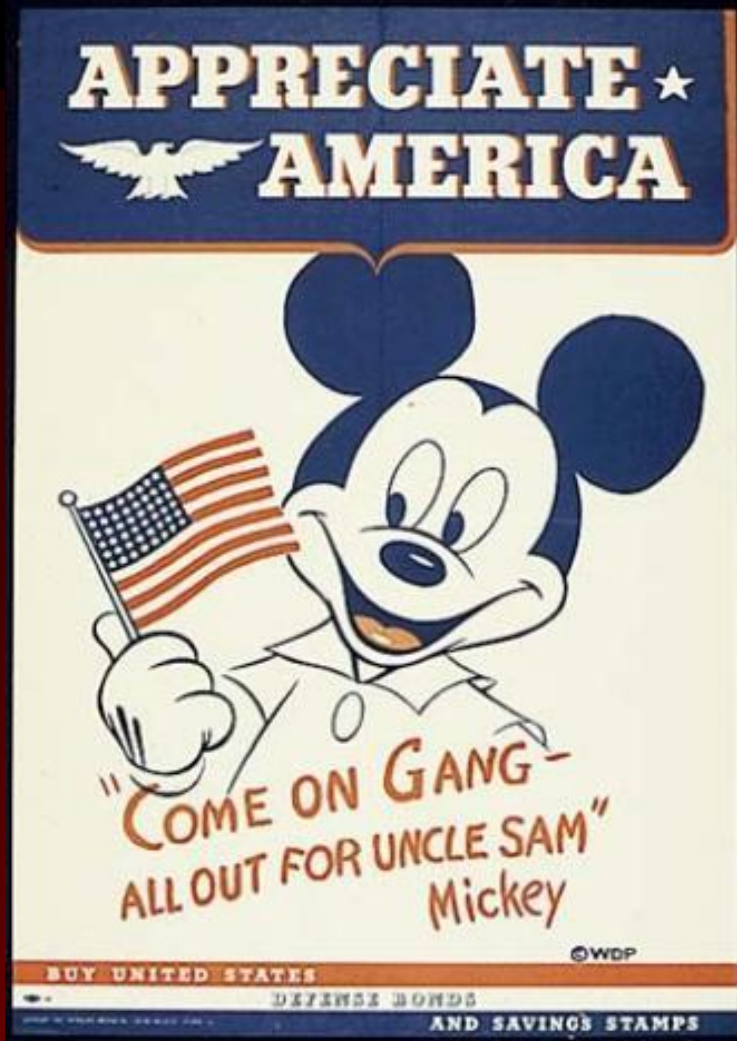


The Appeals of Communism

- America's Great Depression left people upset about the American government
 - Everyone deserves basics (food, clothing)
 - Communism offers that promise
- 1939: 50,000 Americans were members of the Communist party.



Then, World War II Begins



- 1941: America begins fighting against Germany (and others)
- Communism was seen as “un-American” because of the surge in patriotism
- 1945: America won World War II
 - Defeated the German government of *fascism*
 - *Fascism: government led by a dictator that suppressed opposition of any kind*

America vs. The Soviet Union



- America was emerging as a world power, but:
 - The Soviet Union was its main competition
- And:
 - The Soviet Union was Communist
- America and The Soviet Union competed against each other for world power in:
 - Space travel
 - Nuclear weapon development
 - In effect, government style

Communism came to be seen as “evil”

- 1950: Julius and Ethel Rosenberg arrested
 - Charged with supplying atomic bomb secrets to the Soviet Union
- Soviet Union developed the atomic bomb (from the secrets provided)
- Communism became the opposite of everything America represented!



The Effects of Hysteria:



The “Red Scare” Begins

- Red: color of Communism
- Symbol of Communism:
Hammer and Sickle
 - Why is this the symbol of communism?



Enter: Joseph McCarthy and the HUAC



**COMMITTEE ON
UNAMERICAN
ACTIVITIES**

HUAC

- HUAC: House Committee of Un-American Activities
 - This committee questioned Americans who were suspected of being Communists
 - They summoned thousands of people to testify
 - Goal: to get as many names of “Communists” as possible

Joseph McCarthy

- The ruthless head of the HUAC
- Claimed he had a list of 205 Communists who worked for the US Government
- Was the ringleader of the Red Scare

Who Was Suspected of Being a Communist?

- Filmmakers, directors, actors were accused of attending communist meetings
- Certain politicians were also targeted
- These people had two options:
 - Admit to being a Communist and tell McCarthy names of other people who attended Communist meetings
 - OR
 - Refuse to admit anything (or rat out others) and be blacklisted
 - Can't get work if blacklisted!



Walt Disney

Why would
Disney be
targeted?

Ronald Reagan



Martin Luther King, Jr.



Arthur Miller



“The Crucible” and Communism

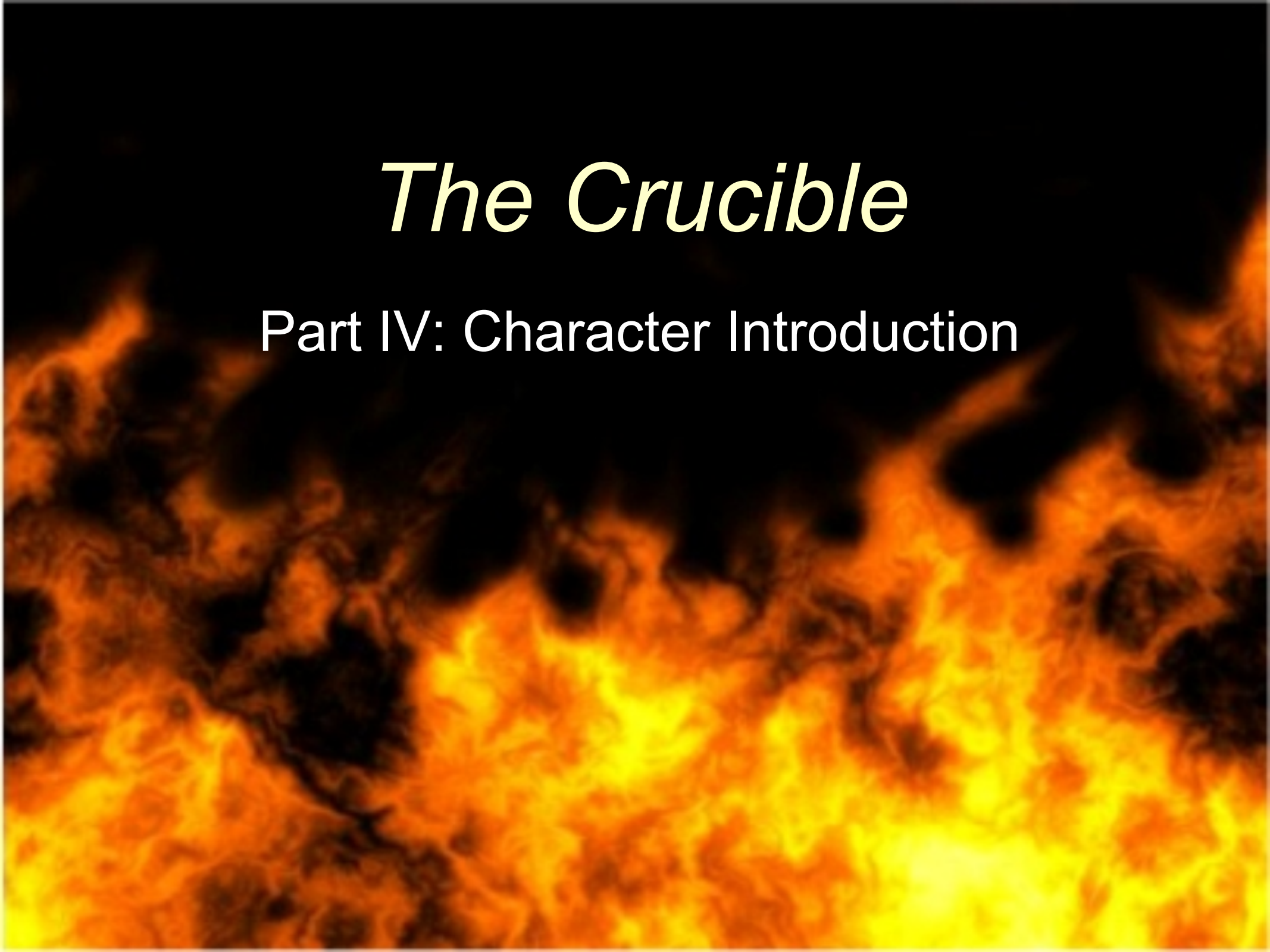
- Allegory: work of literature that tells one story on the surface while referring to another sub textually
 - Comparing the play to the Red Scare
- Can you see how these historical events are similar to those of the Salem Witch Trials?

Part III: Historical Context

- Complete the Venn diagram in your notes packet. This Venn diagram should make connections between the Salem Witch Trials and the Communist Hunt of the 1950s.

The Crucible

Part IV: Character Introduction



Part IV: Character Introduction

- Protagonist=Main character
- Antagonist=Who/what the protagonist is “fighting”



VS



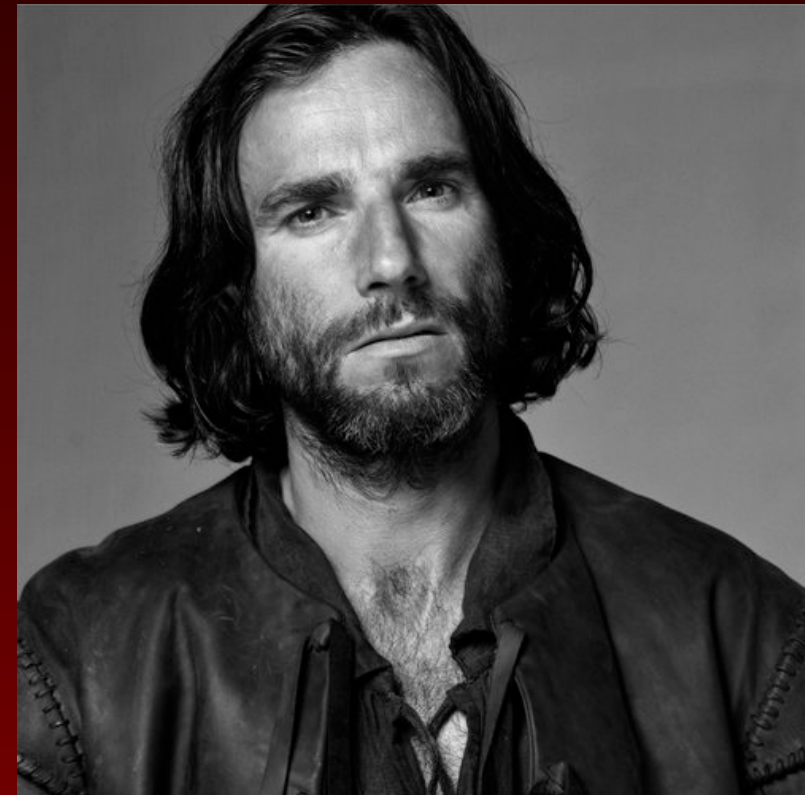
Character Introduction

- Abigail Williams:
 - Leader of the group of girls
 - Having an affair with John Proctor
 - Smart, manipulative, jealous



Character Introduction

- John Proctor:
 - Farmer
 - Married, but having an affair with Abigail
 - Proud and (usually) honest



Character Introduction

- Elizabeth Proctor:
 - John Proctor's wife
 - Moral and honest
 - Sometimes seen as “cold”



Character Introduction

- The Girls:
 - Betty Parris: Daughter of the town minister
 - Ruth Putnam: Daughter of a wealthy, greedy landowner
 - Mary Warren: Servant of the Proctors
 - Mercy Lewis: Servant of the Putnams



Character Introduction

- Reverend Parris:
 - Town minister
 - Paranoid
 - Concerned with what others think of him



Character Introduction

- John Hale:
 - “Expert” on witchcraft
 - Asked to come to Salem for his knowledge
 - Intelligent and logical



Character Introduction

- Tituba:
 - Slave from Barbados
 - Performs voodoo
 - Accused of witchcraft

Other Cool Characters

- Giles Corey (my favorite!):
 - Older man who is pressed to death
 - Outspoken
 - Files lawsuits frequently
- Rebecca Nurse
 - Kind, older woman accused of witchcraft
 - Very moral and sensible

Protagonist/Antagonist

- Which character are YOU most like?
- Who do you think the protagonist is?
- Who/what is the antagonist?