



The Opening

Symbolic Settings in The Crucible

How does the description of the setting at the opening of The Crucible reflect the ideology of the people of Salem?

Main Task

Write a PEA paragraph to explain how one aspect of the setting is symbolic of the ideology of Salem.

Begin writing your PEA paragraph using as your opening sentence:

Arthur Miller uses detailed descriptions of the setting to make symbolic connections between place and the traditional ideologies held within it.

The Extract

A small upper bedroom in the home of Reverend Samuel Parris, Salem, Massachusetts, in the spring of the year 1692. There is a narrow window at the left. Through its leaded panes the morning sunlight streams. A candle still burns near the bed, which is at the right. A chest, a chair, and a small table are the other furnishings. At the back a door opens on the landing of the stairway to the ground floor. The room gives off an air of clean spareness. The roof rafters are exposed, and the wood colors are raw and unmellowed. As the curtain rises, Reverend Parris is discovered kneeling beside the bed, evidently in prayer. His daughter, Betty Parris, aged ten, is lying on the bed, inert.

Preparation Tasks

- 1) Read the introduction to *The Crucible* and make notes on:
 - McCarthyism
 - Witchcraft in Salem
 - Historical Parallels
- 2) Read the 'Overture' and make a spider diagram that details what Salem was like.
- 3) Read the extract above and chose one symbolic feature that represents the views of Salem.

Constructing your answer:

When answering an extended essay question such as this, each paragraph within your answer should be written using a Point - Evidence - Analysis (PEA) style.

Point - What is the point you are trying to make?

This section of your answer should seek to answer the question directly. It should never really be longer than 2 sentences and should identify the effect of a feature on a character or theme explored within the text.

For example:

Arthur Miller uses **detailed descriptions** of the setting to make **symbolic connections** between place and the **traditional ideologies** held within it.

Evidence - Where have you noticed the affect taking place?

Whether commenting on language, structure or form, you must always use a quotation to support your point. Ideally, this quotation will also be embedded within your answer rather than isolated within a sentence by itself. This will make your answer read more fluidly and convince the reader of the quality of your analysis.

For example:

For example, he describes the 'roof rafters' as being 'exposed, and the wood colors ... raw and unmellowed'.

Analysis - Why does the chosen feature effect the reader's understanding? Why might the author have constructed the text in this way?

This is the most important component of your answer. The detail contained within your answer is a key indicator of the depth of your thinking. It is an opportunity for you to develop an unique and original interpretation of the effect. You must demonstrate not only how the chosen feature communicates meaning, but also consider why an author might be using language/structure/form in this way.

The image of bare 'roof rafters' gives the room a feeling of simplicity. The supporting structures that keep the building standing are clearly visible and are not trying to be hidden. In fact, they become a central feature of the room itself. The fact that they are 'raw and unmellowed' gives the impression that they are harsh and unrefined. It gives the sense that this is a pragmatic structure. This setting almost appears symbolic of the ideology of the people of Salem. The simplistic pragmatism of the setting reflects the simple and traditional ideologies of the inhabitants. While these ideologies may appear unrefined, like the rafters, they still hold up the structure of the community of which they serve.