

Crucible is a word that mixes many feelings and emotions where most words tend to be more vague. Because the word crucible has multiple meanings, Arthur Miller chose *The Crucible* as a title to try to express the many meanings of the play's message.

The usual and most widely used definition for the word crucible, according to the *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, is: "a pot or vessel made of a substance, such as porcelain, that will withstand extreme heat for the use of melting various materials." This definition is easily connected to the play. First off, witches supposedly use cauldrons to brew their magic potions, and a synonym for cauldron is crucible. Not only do witches use cauldrons, but the word crucible also could have some meaning as a metaphor. The actions in Salem were like that in a brewing cauldron, there were many heated arguments, and people were being 'stirred' and 'mixed' around like a vile potion.

A severe test is another definition for crucible that is not quite as distinguished as the first mentioned. This definition is more greatly defined by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as: "a place or situation in which concentrated forces interact to cause or influence change that produces something new." The play can, without a doubt, relate to this definition as well. If you look at the witch trials themselves, while the accused were in the courtroom, they were enduring a test of their character and moral values. The charged had a very hard time getting people to even listen to their point of view, if not even consider it. In addition, courtroom attendees who believed the accused had not really committed any crimes had to suffer through the wild accusations and horrific consequences that arose because of the judgment that was passed.

When mixed, these definitions can undoubtedly be translated into the play. Through the whole ordeal of the Salem Witch Trials, the whole town was morphing and transforming. Salem was a melting pot of different cases and diverse opinions of who wasn't a witch, who was a witch, and what a witch was.

I have come to think that a third definition has taken form because *The Crucible* was chosen as the play's title. When you look at the play from all angles, you find this definition easily. The whole play was a crucible. There are so many viewpoints that are looked at and expressed in the play, and the way they interact with each other makes the play a crucible on a high level.

When people think of the word crucible, they tend to think of something negative. This generalization is totally false. When has a pot or a thing that brings forth change become negative? One reason could be because it was chosen as the title of the play. People associate the play, and the word crucible, with the Salem Witch Trials. To most people, the trials were a very scary and negative time in history, therefore, it is hard to detach the negative images of the Salem Witch Trials from the word crucible.

With all things considered, I think that crucible was a very good choice for the title of the play. The title in a way summarizes the whole play before you even read it. The multiple meanings of crucible help to show the multiple levels of the play, and because this title was chosen, the word crucible will never be looked at in the same light again.