

A Journey Toward Truth: John Proctor's Choices in *The Crucible*

<p>John Proctor has an affair with Abigail, violating his marriage vows and entering a life of lies and deceit. [What language does the play use].</p>	<p>In a sense, John Proctor starts all the trouble in Salem by failing to be true. [find quote where he mentions deception early in the play]</p>
<p>John lies to Elizabeth about being alone with Abigail, which feeds her suspicion. "You were alone with her?" she asks.</p>	<p>Lies can't be compartmentalized. They spread through his life.</p>
<p>Abigail begins deceiving everyone, in order to destroy Elizabeth and have John for herself. [look for quote associating her with dishonesty]</p>	<p>John's lie provides fuel to Abigail, who soon involves other girls in her deception. The lying spreads.</p>
<p>John says Abigail is "always honest."</p>	<p>If Abigail represents lies and deception, Elizabeth represents truth and fidelity.</p>
<p>But at a critical point, she lies. John brings Mary to the courtroom to have her tell the court the truth—that the girls never saw any spirit. Abigail and the other girls deny the truth. To determine the truth, Judge Danforth summons Elizabeth into the courtroom. Hoping to save her husband, Elizabeth denies that her husband had ever been with Abigail. Unfortunately, this dooms John Proctor. Mary Warren claims that she too is possessed and that John Proctor is the Devil's Man. Danforth places John under arrest.</p> <p>[This is the climax of the play—the point where the ending becomes unavoidable. It revolves around the conflict between lies and truth.]</p>	<p>The lies win. Elizabeth seems to have no good choices, and she tells a lie in order to protect her husband, which leads to his arrest.</p> <p>Lying has turned the world upside down. Danforth is committed to preserving truth, yet he will not acknowledge truth when he hears it. Proctor, who has spent seven months concealing his affair with Abigail, now tells the truth but is disbelieved. And Elizabeth, who has lived by the truth, lies to keep her husband's secret and condemns them both by doing so. And Mary Warren, who had lied and now is finally telling the truth, lies again to save her life. The only winner here is the chief liar, Abigail Williams, who continues to lie. And the court, which should be an instrument of truth, is in the position of condemning those who tell the truth and believing liars.</p> <p>But the incident "fixes" John's and Elizabeth's marriage. Proctor's admission of adultery and Elizabeth's lie to hide the affair from the court mark a turning point in their marriage. Shame overwhelms Proctor, but he demonstrates his loyalty and love for Elizabeth by revealing the affair in order to save her life. The situation also changes Elizabeth. She knows that Proctor's name is important to him, and that he would not ruin his reputation by admitting an affair unless he truly loved her. She can finally trust him again.</p>
<p>The web of deception started by Abigail keeps growing worse and worse, ensnaring more and more people. Evil becomes more and more powerful. Good people are being destroyed. [look up exactly how many have been hanged]</p>	<p>There is an entire ecology of lies, as more and more people have reason to fear the truth. Danforth and Hathorne become terrified of the truth, after they have hanged several "witches." Parris is terrified that if good people are hanged there might be a violent reaction against him.</p>
<p>John Proctor at the end decides he will die rather than have his name associated with a lie. [quote]</p>	<p>John frees himself of the lies. He is redeemed.</p>
<p>Elizabeth, at the very end of the play, says, "He has his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!"</p>	<p>She had been willing to lie to save him. Now she is willing to lose him so that he can have what he most want: to be restored to goodness and the world of truth.</p>