

LA CHASSE AUX SORCIÈRES

de Nicholas HYTNER

FICHE TECHNIQUE

Titre original : The Crucible

Pays : USA

Durée : 2h

Année : 1996

Genre : Drame

Scénario : Arthur MILLER based on his play

Directeur de la photographie : Andrew DUNN

Musique : George Fenton

Production : 20th Century Fox

Distribution : UFD

Interprètes : Daniel DAY-LEWIS (John Proctor), Winona RYDER (Abigail Williams), KARRON GRAVES (Mary Warren), Joan ALLEN (Elizabeth Proctor), Paul SCOFIELD (Judge Thomas Danforth), Rob CAMPBELL (Reverend Hale), Bruce DAVISON (Reverend Parris)

Sortie : 26 février 1997

SYNOPSIS

The film opens with a seemingly-harmless event – Abigail Williams (Winona Ryder), Mary Warren (Karron Graves), Mercy Lewis (Kali Rocha), and several other Salem village girls attend a secret voodoo ritual in the woods. Tituba (Charlayne Woodard), a native of Barbados, presides over the ceremony, which involves drinking chicken blood, dancing naked, and casting charms to ensnare boys. However, when the local preacher, Reverend Parris (Bruce Davison), stumbles upon the proceedings, and two of the girls subsequently fall into coma-like states, witchcraft is suspected, and an expert in the field, Reverend Hale (Rob Campbell), is brought in to investigate.

AUTOUR DU FILM

The characters

- Reverend Parris



He is the father of one of the girls who falls into a coma and the uncle of Abigail, the girl because of whom everything unfolds the way it does. He stands for a corrupted and money attracted churchman. Right at the beginning we realize Parris is more afraid for his reputation than about his daughter's health (see « Pistes pédagogiques »). Only at the end will he question the hangings when he sees everything has gone too far.

- Abigail Williams



The young attractive niece of reverend Parris is madly in love with John Proctor who "**put knowledge into her**" and is ready to do anything to get him back. She met with John Proctor as she worked for his wife in his very home and where they had an affair which resulted in her dismissing from Goodie Proctor's service. Indeed she is ready to do anything even ready to condemn herself to hell as John Proctor reminds her ("**It's not on a boat we'll meet again Abigail but in hell.**") while she tries to free him to escape with her on a boat bound for the Barbados.

- John Proctor



A tragic hero. The central character of the film. He is put through many life-changing decisions. In many cases, a decision he made in one situation led to another problem. John Proctor is the tragic hero of this story. He is honest, hard-working and very sensible but most of all he is human with his qualities and faults. He will pay the price for his faults. What faults? He committed adultery with Abigail Williams. It happened in "the proper place where [his] beasts are bedded" as he confesses. He criticizes Reverend Parris' way of running the church and his taste for money because as he says, seeing gold candlesticks in church "affects his prayers". He refuses to believe in supernatural things such as witchcraft. He refuses to soil his name to save his life but in so doing saves his soul and goodness.

- Judge Danforth



He is the judge at the witch trials. He is dedicated to removing all witches. He rules by the law and will not allow exceptions or anyone to try to undermine his court. He represents justice but is blinded by the testimonies of the girls and only listens to them. As he quotes rather ironically "only the victims of witchcraft can be expected to talk for the witches can not be expected to accuse themselves". This sums it all up. How can people defend themselves when accused?

- Elizabeth Proctor



A very religious and righteous woman and a conscientious, faithful wife. She possesses dignity, honesty, and wisdom. She will be the victim of Abigail's passionate love for her husband and will reproach herself for not loving her husband well enough though she forgives him for having had an affair with Abigail.

- Reverend Hale

He is the minister who is called in to investigate the witch trials. At first he believes them, but later he returns to the town to try and stop the trials. At the end he represents the link between religious considerations and human aspects of life. When Goodie Proctor condemns herself by lying to save her husband, Hale cries out: **"This is a natural lie to tell"**. He is the only one who really understands what is going on in Salem but his desperate attempts to save the situation will be useless.

The Mac McCarthyism Period

Much can be said about the reasons why Miller wrote *the Crucible*: to denounce the witch hunt that took place in the 50's in America and especially among intellectuals (writers and film makers).

But who else than Miller himself could explain it? "Why I wrote *the Crucible*?" by Arthur Miller (an artist's answer to Politics by Arthur Miller):

"As I watched *the Crucible* taking shape as a movie over much of the past year, the sheer depth of time that it represents for me kept returning to mind. As those powerful actors blossomed on the screen, and the children and the horses, the crowds and the wagons, I thought again about how I came to cook all this up nearly fifty years ago, in an America almost nobody I know seems to remember clearly. In a way, there is a biting irony in this film's having been made by a Hollywood studio, something unimaginable in the fifties. But there they are: Daniel Day-Lewis (John Proctor) scything his sea-bordered field, Joan Allen (Elizabeth) lying pregnant in the frigid jail, Winona Ryder (Abigail) stealing her minister-uncle's money,

majestic Paul Scofield (Judge Danforth) and his righteous empathy with the Devil-possessed children, and all of them looking as inevitable as rain.”

PISTES PÉDAGOGIQUES

The people in Salem

Identifier les personnages : utilisation du génitif, be accused of, présent do + bv) :

Give as many details as possible about the characters: (genitive) Betty, Tituba, Abigail, Rev Parris, John and Elizabeth Proctor.

Reverend Parris: middle aged man, Reverend of Salem Massachusetts, Betty's father and Abigail's uncle. He is a Puritan.

Betty Parris: aged about 10, Reverend's daughter, accused of witchcraft, hasn't woken up since she was discovered dancing in the forest with the other girl of the village.

Abigail: aged 17, Reverend's niece, first suspected of witchcraft and then will accuse several people.

Tituba: she comes from the Barbados, she's black, she's the maid and must be the reverend's slave. She was in the forest with the other girls.

John Proctor: married to Elizabeth, had an affair with Abigail, is accused of witchcraft with many friends of his.

Elizabeth Proctor: John's wife. Accused of witchcraft by Abigail.

The Church in Salem

- L'autorité religieuse de Salem est représentée par le révérend Parris ; une autorité sérieusement mise en cause par la famille Proctor en raison du goût très prononcé pour l'argent du révérend (ils n'assistent plus à la messe). Cet aspect financier apparaît à plusieurs reprises dans le film.

Ex : on surprend une dispute en raison des émoluments que réclame Parris. Lorsqu'Abigail s'enfuit, Parris est effondré, non parce que sa nièce est partie, mais parce qu'elle est partie avec son argent et qu'ainsi il se retrouve ruiné.

La position sociale de Parris lui importe énormément. On s'en rend compte dès le début du film lors de la scène entre Abigail et Parris, lorsque ce dernier la questionne sur les événements de la nuit précédente (sa propre fille et sa nièce sont impliquées). Parris est plus concerné par sa réputation que par la santé de sa fille qui gît inerte.

Ref: *The Crucible* (acte 1, scène 1 de la pièce), ainsi qu'un résumé titré *The witches of Salem*, extrait du manuel de terminales *Ways and Means*. On voit dans l'écriture une omniprésence des mots "I", "my" and "me" dans la bouche de Parris.

On remarque aussi que Parris méprise les gens de Salem, ce qui est surprenant pour un personnage qui représente l'autorité religieuse.

- Une fois ces anomalies répertoriées, on peut faire travailler la modalité : should + bv, be expected to + bv, be supposed to + bv.

What can we expect from a man of church?

Supposed to / should help people

Supposed to / should love people

Supposed to / should advise people

Supposed to / should care about his people

Not supposed to / shouldn't despise, to hate, to like luxury

- On peut aussi y voir une critique d'une certaine pratique de la religion. On pourra ainsi travailler les expressions de critique : blame someone for + ing, criticize someone for + ing.

- Les remarques faites au sujet de Parris pourront être appliquées aux puritains présents dans le film en comparant ce qu'ils sont censés prôner et vivre, et la triste réalité de Salem. Les accusations de sorcellerie sont souvent des visées sur la propriété du voisin ou purement financières.

L'ironie

- L'accusation de Proctor, l'histoire bascule.

Le moment où John Proctor accuse Abigail d'être une trainée, et donc, de se déshonorer, est un élément-clé du film. Jusqu'à ce moment, John Proctor n'avait eu de cesse d'essayer de sauver sa femme mais sans révéler l'adultère, sans se salir.

Proctor avoue l'adultère en disant : "I have known her, Sir. I have known her". This is a whore's vengeance.

Les expressions d'accusation pourront alors être utilisées : (be) accuse(d) someone of + ing.

He accuses her of being a whore, of lying, seeking vengeance, etc.

Avouer sa relation avec Abigail en salissant son nom et son honneur, c'est là sa dernière chance de sauver Elizabeth.

- Elizabeth détient la clé.

Si Elizabeth Proctor confirme ce que vient d'avouer son mari, elle se sauvera, elle et son mari, même si lui devra être condamné pour adultère et ainsi perdre son honneur, mais aussi elle se débarrassera de sa pire ennemie Abigail Williams, qui nie farouchement sa relation avec Proctor. Le suspense tient au fait que c'est Elizabeth qui détient la clé du problème, selon qu'elle confirme l'adultère (elle ne sait pas que son mari a avoué), ou qu'elle essaie au contraire de sauver l'honneur de son mari en mentant pour la première fois de sa vie. En effet, Proctor affirme que sa femme, en vraie puritaine, n'a jamais menti de sa vie, et qu'elle est incapable de mentir : **"In her life, Sir, she have never lied. There are them that cannot sing, and them that cannot weep – my wife cannot lie."**

A la question du juge Danforth : "Is your husband an adulterer?", Elizabeth ne doit répondre que par oui ou par non ; sa réponse scellera le sort de plusieurs personnes.

Elizabeth répondra par la négative, condamnant ainsi son mari en voulant sauver son honneur.

3 ironies apparaissent dans la réponse d'Elizabeth Proctor :

- John affirme que sa femme n'a jamais menti, et pour la première fois, elle ment en ne reconnaissant pas l'adultère de son mari,
- elle ment pour sauver l'honneur de son mari et celui de la famille Proctor, et son mensonge n'aura d'autres effets de condamner son mari à la pendaison, et en même temps de la condamner elle-même,
- en mentant, Elizabeth non seulement se condamne, mais sauve sa pire ennemie Abigail Williams, qui a nié sa relation avec Proctor.

NB : si vous disposez de la vidéo, il est intéressant de travailler cette scène avant de voir le film en entier, car le suspense est assez bien mené dans le film et les élèves se prennent facilement au jeu. What will she say? Why?

Travailler sur ces ironies permet d'utiliser **"will"**, ainsi que **"would"** et **"would have + EN"** en posant les questions : **what will happen if she says "no" or if she says "yes"?** Ou encore : "Imagine the situation if Elizabeth **answered** or **had answered** **"yes"**."

She **will save** her husband, she **would save** her husband, ou She **would have saved** her husband.

Liste de verbes possibles :

- save her husband from death
- condemn Abigail
- put an end to the hunt
- prove she couldn't lie
- confirm her husband's confession
- prove the innocence of dozens of people, etc.

A partir de là, on peut extrapoler et travailler **should have + en** ou **could have + en**.

She should have told the truth and thus she could have, etc.

SITOGRAFIE

- <http://www.socialstudies.com/c/@kKOFuNPuR8foU/Pages/crucibleindex.html>
- <http://www.bellmore-merrick.k12.ny.us/crucible.html>