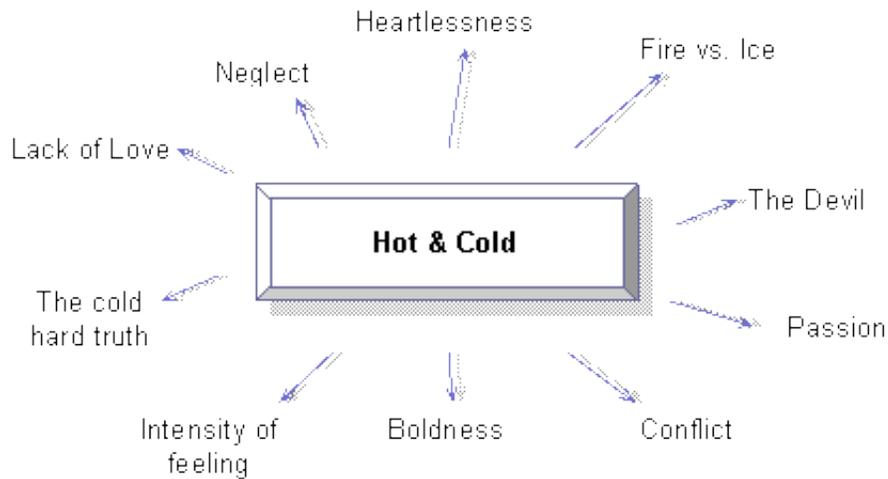


Motif Tracking: The Crucible – Hot & Cold



Summary:

There are several references to the temperature in this play: witchcraft is often associated with a cold temperature, wind, shadows, ice, freezing and shivering. As witchcraft is the main idea surrounding this play, the motif of cold temperature is usually evident in scenes of high points of tension (which are usually scenes to do with witchcraft). The images related to heat and fire are usually associated with the Devil and cursing, although heat is also used to reflect the intensity of Proctor and Abigail's relationship and Abigail's passionately independent nature.

The title of the play itself is important as the crucible is a 'hot' object. The crucible symbolizes a pot placed under intense heat and pressure, which echoes the manner in which Salem is a seething 'melting pot' of hidden desires and trapped enmities waiting to burst free. In the play we see these tensions become so great that the village explodes into a series of accusations and recriminations legitimized by Abigail and the court. Suddenly it has become not only acceptable, but in fact holy for the people of Salem to confess their jealousies, wicked desires and envies in the form of accusations of witchcraft under the religious pretext of a sacred battle against the forces of darkness. Thus the title foreshadows the build up of tension throughout the play and it also reflects the process of purification that Proctor will undergo eventually forgiving himself for his sins and sacrificing himself in order to preserve his own standard of morality.

Quotations.

Page	Quotation	Analysis
20	Parris "I saw Tituba waving her arms over the fire when I came on you... She were swaying like a dumb beast over that fire!"	The use of the simile "swaying like a dumb beast" and the fact that she is carrying out her actions over "fire" indicates how Tituba is associated with the Devil by Parris. The fire obviously suggests witchcraft and Hell but the fact that Tituba is condemned in this way for presumably practising what was a form of her own worship from Barbados reveals how intolerant the people of Salem were to new ideas and also how simple mistakes and differences in point of view can spark a series of events as cataclysmic as the witch trials in Salem. The parallel to the McCarthy witch hunts is clear: small differences in opinion have led to an absurd, hysterical uproar against a 'Red Threat' which is really non-existent.
29	Abigail "I have a sense for heat, John and yours has drawn me to my window, and I have seen you looking up, burning in your loneliness"	Here heat has sexual connotations and the use of heat shows the attraction between them. The fire here might also relate to the rebellious nature of Proctor and how mischievous Abigail is. Heat is thus associated with the

		characters who do not conform to the expectations of society.
30	Abigail "She is telling lies about me! She is a cold, sniveling woman, and you bend to her!"	Cold here is used to show the hatred between Abigail and Elizabeth. Abigail's use of words such as "sniveling" show how she in fact is cold at heart and not Elizabeth.
34	Parris "Where is my wood? My contract provides I be supplied with all my firewood...even in November I had to show my frost bitten hands like some London beggar!"	Miller uses Parris frost bitten hands to show his lack of power and status. In this case the "firewood" is a representation of a higher status when compared to the poor "London beggars" whom are left in the cold streets and Parris' concern with these worldly and materialistic details gives us an early insight into the selfish and egotistical nature of his character.
52	It's winter in here yet.	Proctor is trying to make conversation with Elizabeth. The image of winter can be associated with the lack of passion and love in their marriage situation, a result of the mistrust created following Proctor's affair with Abigail.
55	<i>[laughing bitterly]</i> : Oh, Elizabeth, your justice would freeze beer!	Proctor criticizes Elizabeth harshly here, reinforcing the tension between the two which is emphasised by his laughing bitterly, while she is trying to defend herself.
57	And I feel a misty coldness climbin' up my back	Mary is describing how Sarah Good was bewitching her as she refused to confess to the court that she was a witch. The somewhat clichéd nature of the cold imagery helps mock Mary, her belief in witches and the gullibility of the members of the court. The extensive use of alliteration in this quotation also further emphasizes the point Miller is making that society feels a pressure to believe in the hysteria and that it affects the sane so much that they begin to believe the false to be real.
67	Believe me, Mr. Nurse, if Rebecca Nurse be tainted, then nothing's left to stop the whole green world from burning.	Rebecca Nurse has been taken to court, and here, Hale is reassuring Mr. Nurse that he believes Rebecca is a good woman. Here, burning (fire/heat) is associated with defeat and the fact that it is the 'whole world' that will burn suggests the magnitude of the error that the court has committed by arresting Rebecca Nurse.
68	You'll burn for this, do you know it?	Giles condemns Cheever because he is siding with the girls and acting as a puppet of the court. Burning (fire) is once again associated with punishment but in contrast to the above here Cheever's punishment is individual and justified. Unlike the world above Cheever is not 'green' and deserves to burn.
75	And the wind, God's icy wind, will blow!	Here the motif of coldness is associated with God and it suggests that God's judgment will be merciless and cut through all pretence to the core truth, much like an icy wind would do. There is a sense, however, that Proctor welcomes this judgment as he himself is unable to

		accept the fact of his own infidelity and it seems he almost wishes for a chance to embrace his own destruction as he cannot bear to carry on living the lie of his honourable life.
77	Stage Directions: As the curtain rises, the room is empty, but for sunlight pouring through two high windows in the back wall	This initially sets the atmosphere for the opening of the scene: 'sunlight pouring' through the high windows suggests hope; however the height of the windows implies that this hope is beyond the reach of those who are about to enter the courtroom.
81	We burn a hot fire here; it melts down all concealment.	Danforth is warning Proctor that he (Danforth) will not be deceived and although the trials in Salem have served to reveal a truth, it is not the truth that Danforth suspects. Miller has used the absurdity of the trials to mock the events in Salem and, by extension, the events of the McCarthy Witch Hunt of his own time. The "hot fire" can also be portrayed here as purifying as it is through his failed attack on the courts and struggle over whether or not to lie in order to save his life that Proctor proves to himself that there is some goodness left in him despite his affair with Abigail.
87	Giles: I will not give you no name. I mentioned my wife's name once and I'll burn in hell long enough for that. I stand mute.	Reference to 'hell' suggests how Giles feels he is damned for bringing about the arrest of his wife. The sense of burning also suggests the tension and conflict that exists in Salem and the short sentence of 'I will give you no name' implies an assertive tone whereby Giles is refusing to release his sources. Giles' challenge to the court foreshadows Proctors equally unsuccessful challenge later in the play.
95	But you did turn cold, did you not? I myself picked you up many times and your skin were icy. So let turn herself cold now, let her pretend she is attacked now, let her faint.	Parris is trying to prove that Mary was really bewitched. Here, the coldness is associated once again with witchcraft and this is also a point of increasing tension.
96	A wind, a cold wind, has come. [<i>Her eyes fall on Mary Warren.</i>] Your Honor, I freeze! She is cold, You Honor, touch her!	Abi is pretending that a cold wind has suddenly fallen upon her and the girls. It is obvious that she is going to accuse Mary of witchcraft from the stage directions. Once again coldness is associated with witchcraft and once again the clichéd nature of the imagery and the patently see-through nature of Abigail's attempt to regain control of the situation serve to ridicule the characters in the court who believe such flimsy accusations, this in turn ridicules the members of Miller's own society who are equally as convinced of the existence of the 'Red Threat'
105	PROCTOR [laughs insanely, then]: A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer,	The fire here may suggest insanity as Proctor laughs insanely. However it is more likely to represent the degree of damnation which Salem has bought upon its own head and Proctor's and his tone of exultation

	<p>I see his filthy face! ... God damns our kind especially, and we will burn, we will burn together!</p>	<p>reinforces the idea that he welcomes this destruction and damnation as it means he will no longer have to live the lie of being an honourable man and will at last be punished for his affair with Abigail in the way that he thinks he ought.</p> <p>This also suggests tension is at its peak and possibly a moment of realization.</p>
107	<p>Stage Directions: ... The place is in darkness but for the moonlight seeping through the bars. It appears empty... Marshal Herrick enters with a lantern.</p>	<p>Entering into Act IV, we are set in the prison. Stage directions have been used in order to establish a particular tone and environment for the audience. The sense of 'darkness' implies a cold atmosphere in the prison; the contrast with the fire at the end of Act III creates an ominous stillness and sets the stage for Proctor's struggle with his own conscious and final reconciliation with himself.</p>
108	<p>It's all you folks - you riles him up 'round here; it be too cold 'round here for that old boy. He freeze his soul in Massachusetts, but in Barbados he just as sweet and-</p>	<p>The cold in Salem represents the strictly repressive nature of the society there. Tituba and Sarah Good imply that the Devil's heat is not a destructive force as those in Salem would believe but represents a relaxation of the rules allowing enjoyment. The fact that the Devil is presented as a good time man in contrast to the cold and misguided austerity of God suggests how the members of the court are in turn misguided and how absurdly and tragically mistaken people like Danforth are.</p>
109	<p>No, sir; it is a bitter night, and I have no fire here.</p>	<p>The coldness once again represents the repressive world of Salem but the use of the word bitter is particularly interesting as it perhaps suggests that the 'victory' that Danforth and the court have achieved over the Devil in this town is itself 'bitter' as by now most people are becoming frightened by the destruction being visited upon their village and are becoming aware that the accusations of the girls may be little more than hysterical outbursts.</p>

Key Moments:

One key moment is Proctor's insane speech: *"A fire, a fire is burning! I hear the boot of Lucifer, I see his filthy face! And it is my face, and yours, Danforth! For them that quail to bring men out of ignorance, as I have quailed, and as you quail now when you know in all your black hearts that this be fraud - God damns our kind especially, and we will burn, we will burn together!"*

Fire is used to represent this peak of tension: Danforth has decided to continue to side with the girls and with Parris but Hale denounces the proceedings; this therefore turns the whole situation upside down, as Hale was the first Reverend to be called to Salem to "ascertain witchcraft". He had the strongest beliefs in witchcraft and was very superstitious, more so than the other characters and therefore his denouncing of the proceedings show how unreliable the girls are, and seriously undermines the validity of the witch hunt. This point in the play also signifies the final turning point. Everything gets worse from here on and there is no more hope as the motif of heat, with images such as fire, burning, the devil and hell related closely to it suggests how out of control things have become, like a raging inferno, or a forest fire.

An additional key moment might be when Abigail says "I have a sense for heat, John and yours has drawn me to my window, and I have seen you looking up, burning in your loneliness". This sexual quotation shows how passionate the

relationship between Proctor and Abigail is and how rebellious these two characters are. This is also important quotation as it reveals the basis for Abigail's vengeful accusations against Elizabeth.