

Do characters repress thoughts/emotions and how prevalent is this, is it important to the meaning of the text?

Act four introduces the discussion between Reverend Parris, Judge Hawthorne and Danforth over the absence of Abigail Williams and Mercy Lewis. The dialogue exposes Parris' fear when facing Danforth "in fear of him", it can be inferred that Parris' terror arises from the power the church yields. As a result, he suppresses his thoughts "he dares not say" and often trails off when speaking "I hope you will not—". The lack of expression and confrontation against the governing class perhaps is used as a tool by the author to reflect the silencing of inferior powers and embedding parallels regarding political imbalances; McCarthyism.

Act four expresses the dichotomy shared between power and morals in the hierarchy class. With the commotion and distress encapsulated in Salem from witch trials: Reverend Parris and Reverend Hale experience personal conflicts on the matters of whether or not to postpone or pardon the hangings of John Proctor, Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey in spite of the possible uprising of a revolt over the possible false executions.

Who has the power in the text - men or women? How are the female characters portrayed in terms of their appearance?

How does the underlying culture of the text allow for gender oppressions?

Abigail is portrayed as the seductress mistress of John Proctor but his own character is sympathised and illustrated as simply a man who made a mistake by cheating on his wife. Abigail's character is moulded into an image to reflect that of a witch; the evil persona linked with the seduction which almost mimics that of a witches spell. This unforgiving culture which is still seen in modern society of villainizing the woman but empathising the man because he loves his wife and that mistakes happen is still widely occurring. In spite of John's final efforts in saving his wife's life through his confession of adultery, it doesn't excuse the silence he projected and how he allowed his wife's life to hang in the balance from Abigail's actions of accusing her of witchcraft. John's wife's position in the text allows for views of the innocent and how she was just a casualty in the crossfire. The love triangle allows for the portrayal of the views and values of the characters from the evil mistress to the cheating husband and even the innocent wife.

Ishara Kiriella