

Cast of Characters

in order of appearance

BETTY PARRIS	Mezzo
REVEREND SAMUEL PARRIS	Tenor
TITUBA	Contralto
ABIGAIL WILLIAMS	Soprano
ANN PUTNAM	Soprano
THOMAS PUTNAM	Baritone
REBECCA NURSE	Contralto
FRANCIS NURSE	Bass
GILES COREY	Tenor
JOHN PROCTOR	Baritone
REVEREND JOHN HALE	Bass
ELIZABETH PROCTOR	Mezzo
MARY WARREN	Soprano
EZEKIEL CHEEVER	Tenor
JUDGE DANFORTH	Soprano
SARAH GOOD	
Chorus of Girls: BETTY PARRIS (mezzo), RUTH PUTNAM (coloratura), SUSANNA WALCOTT (contralto), MERCY LEWIS (contralto), MARTHA SHELDON (soprano), BRIDGET BOOTH (soprano).	
CHORUS AD LIB.	

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Salem, Massachusetts, in the spring of the year 1692.

ACT I. Left, the parlor of the Reverend Parris's house; extreme left upstage, door to the outside; upstage center, a fireplace and a door to the kitchen. Bookcases, chairs, a small table or two, one resembling a lectern. Right, downstage, a shallow stairway to a large upper landing which serves as Betty's bedroom. Bed and small table or dry sink; wall and window right and upstage.

ACT II. The kitchen of John Proctor's farmhouse; appropriate furnishings. Doors upstage center and left. Fireplace, right; mantel somewhat cluttered but with a rag poppet visible; a musket above the mantel.

ACT III, scene 1: Backdrop of a small woods; a corner of Parris's house is visible, extreme left. Moonlight.

ACT III, scene 2: The town meetinghouse transformed into a courtroom. Right, benches with a center aisle, coming forward at an angle. Left, a low railing separating the benches from a table for the court officials and from a dais for the judge. Downstage, left of center, a witness box. Extreme left, wall and door.

ACT IV: A great dank inner hall, vaguely circular, within the town blockhouse and jail. Flambeaux on the walls, casting a murky light. A number of barred doors: to the outside, to the rooms serving as offices, to the corridor leading to Proctor's cell, to the corridor leading to the women's cells.

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Time: ACT I: A spring morning, 1692.

ACT II: Eight days later.

ACT III, scene 1: Early morning, two days later.
scene 2: The same afternoon.

ACT IV: Fall of the same year.

ACT I

The curtain rises on the Reverend Samuel Parris kneeling distraught at the bed of his daughter Betty. She lies immobile and scarcely breathing, as she has lain since Parris came upon her and her cousin Abigail dancing in the woods the night before. Tituba comes to ask about Betty but is angrily sent away.

Abigail enters to say that the town is whispering of witchcraft and that Parris should go out to make denial. He bitterly turns on her to question her about the dancing and about her mysterious dismissal from the service of the Proctors. As she vehemently denies any wrongdoing, attributing her dismissal to Goodwife Proctor's arrogant desire for a slave, the Putnams enter to tell that their Ruth was stricken at the same time as Betty Parris and that they have sent to Beverly for the Reverend Hale, known for his skill in discovering witches.

While Parris, fearful of any suspicion of witchcraft in his own household, is anxiously doubting the need for Hale, Rebecca and Francis Nurse enter with Giles Corey. Rebecca is comforting, old Giles is flippant about the illness of the girls. When Putnam insists that witches are at work in Salem, Giles accuses him of using a witch scare to defraud his neighbors of their land. John Proctor's entrance only brings this quarrel to a higher peak. (Abigail, though silent in the upper room, visibly reacts with excitement to John's entrance.) Rebecca reprimands the men for this untimely squabble in a house of illness, and calls them back to their senses. Giles departs with John.

They sing a psalm to beseech God's help. As the psalm proceeds, Betty begins to writhe on the bed and then with an unearthly shriek tries to fly out of the window. They rush to her side. In the midst of the commotion the Reverend Hale enters. He calms them with his air of authority and then methodically sets an inquiry under way. He soon learns that Tituba has played an important role in what has been happening, having also been present at the dancing. Ann Putnam asserts that Tituba knows conjuring. Tituba is sent for; at her entrance, Abigail, who has been under severe inquisition by Hale, lashes out to accuse Tituba of compacting with the Devil. Tituba, overwhelmed by the sternness of Hale and the malevolent intensity of Parris and the Putnams, finally confesses that she has been visited by the Devil, but denies that he has persuaded her into any wrongdoing—for a few moments she frightens Parris and the Putnams with a heartfelt fantasy of the hellish power to bring them harm that the Devil had offered her.

With Tituba's confession the spell over Betty is broken. All return to the psalm in great thanksgiving, while Abby envies the attention now being given to Tituba, hysterically repents her own compact with the Devil, and visibly receives an answer to her prayer for forgiveness and for a call to mark out others of the Devil's crew.

ACT II

John Proctor returns from a day's planting to find Elizabeth listless and moody. In her mind the witch trials have become an aggravation of her domestic troubles, with Abby at the center of both. She insists that John expose Abby's fraud to Judge Danforth; his reluctance to do this convinces her that he still has a warm spot in his heart for Abby. John's self-defense is double: that he has no witness to what Abby told him, and that she will avenge herself by revealing John's adultery with her. And he is fed up with Elizabeth's sitting in condemnatory judgment upon him. She gently denies this but regrets the vanished sweetness of their love. Abby, she says, will not confess the lechery lest she damn herself. And what of those who suffer in jail because of John's silence? No, John *must* tear the last feeling for Abby out of his heart, or she will never give up hope of some day having him for her own.

Mary Warren enters furtively from her day at court as one of Abby's crew of witchfinders. She tells, breaking into tears, that the number of those arrested has tripled—and that Goody Osburn has been condemned to hang! She is truly troubled by this, and by her own part in it, but demonstrates how the mob excitement of the courtroom procedure turns her into an hysterical accuser even against her will. When John threatens to whip her if she ever returns to that court she blurts out that Goody Proctor herself has been mentioned in court and that only Mary's defence of her prevented an outright accusation.

Elizabeth is sure that Abby is behind this and is once more pleading with John to go to the court when Reverend Hale and John Cheever enter with a war-

rant for her arrest: that very evening Abby has charged Elizabeth with employing a witch's poppet to kill her. John makes Mary acknowledge it is *her* poppet, but Hale, although deeply troubled by these new directions of the witch hunts, feels that he must arrest Elizabeth for examination.

John is about to burst out wildly to prevent their taking Elizabeth away, but instead turns with intense but controlled passion upon Mary: she will tell her story in court even though it may provoke a charge of adultery from Abby and ruin both Abby and John completely—anything rather than that Elizabeth should be in danger for his sake.

ACT III

Scene 1. Abby, with a mixture of scheming but passionate love for John and a mystical belief in her mission, tries to persuade John to abandon Elizabeth and to join her in the holy work of cleansing the puritanically corrupt town. He will not listen to this, but instead pleads that she free the town from the curse of her foolish wickedness, and then threatens to expose her fraud. She defies him: now any dire fate that descends on Elizabeth will be of his doing.

Scene 2. Judge Danforth's invocation in court reveals the strength and fervor of his conviction that God's will is working through him to cleanse the land of a plague of witches.

As court opens, Giles Corey accuses Thomas Putnam, in his greed for his neighbors' land, of having bragged of his role in the charges of witchcraft. Judge Danforth sends Corey to jail and torture for refusing to name his witnesses for this accusation. There is a great hubbub as Giles leaps at Putnam as the man responsible for the arrest of his wife and himself, and of Rebecca Nurse as well.

John Proctor presents Mary Warren's deposition that the entire crying-out against witches started only as an exciting game for the girls—and is a complete pretense and fraud. But Abby, he says, has continued the game in an effort to dispose of Elizabeth. Her encouragement to this arose from the adultery that took place between Abby and himself, which he is now confessing. When Elizabeth, ordinarily incapable of a lie, is brought in and fails to confirm John's confession; Abigail counterattacks, charging that Mary herself has turned witch. Mary, helpless and then hysterical, turns on John Proctor—accusing him of being the Devil's man who has forced her into trying to confuse and overthrow the court. All but the Reverend Hale close in on John Proctor with sadistic vindictiveness.

ACT IV

Tituba and Sarah Good, crazed by the rigors of imprisonment, sing of the Devil and his broken promises to them. Abby comes into the prison courtyard; she has bribed the jailer to permit Proctor to escape. John, although broken by the months of prison and torture, scornfully rejects the freedom and love she offers him. Abby runs off weeping.

Hale, and then Parris, try to persuade Judge Danforth to postpone the executions of Proctor and Rebecca Nurse scheduled for that morning: Salem may break into open rebellion at the execution of such respected citizens. Danforth indignantly refuses, but agrees to ask Elizabeth to persuade her husband to confess.

John is brought in and left alone with Elizabeth. She tells him that Giles Corey has died, pressed to death rather than say aye or nay to the charge of witchcraft, but that many have confessed in order to save their lives. John reluctantly brings out his own wish to confess—if it will not make her think ill of him for lying. Passionately she answers that it was her lie that doomed him—and that she wants him alive. Exultant, he shouts that he will confess to the charge of witchcraft.

Danforth, Hale, and Parris rejoice—for their various reasons—over John's confession, and Parris tries to persuade Rebecca, who has been brought in on the way to the gallows, also to confess. She refuses to damn herself with the lie. John is asked to sign his confession, that it may be exhibited before the town. But this is too much: he has deeply shamed himself by confessing, but he will not set his hand to the destruction of his own name—and the eternal shame of his sons. He tears up the document. In fury Danforth orders John and Rebecca to be led out to execution. Hale pleads with Elizabeth that she change John's decision while there is yet time. She refuses: "He has found his name and his goodness now—God forbid I take it from him."