***The Crucible* Summary of Act One**

The play is set in Salem, Massachusetts in the spring of 1692, and the first act begins in a small upper bedroom of the home of [Reverend Samuel Parris](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#reverend-samuel-parris), who kneels in prayer at the bed of his daughter, Betty.

[Tituba](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#tituba), Rev. Parris' slave from Barbados, enters the room. She is concerned for Betty's welfare, but Parris makes her leave. [Abigail Williams](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#abigail-williams), the niece of Rev. Parris, also enters, along with [Susanna Walcott](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#susanna-walcott), who tells Rev. Parris that Dr. Griggs can find no cure for Betty's ailment. Parris has sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly, who will confirm the possibility of an unnatural cause of Betty's illness, but he orders Susanna to say nothing of unnatural causes to others. Abigail warns Parris that there are rumors of witchcraft and that the parlor is packed with people. Parris tells her that he cannot reveal that he found his daughter and niece dancing in the forest like heathens. Abigail admits to dancing and is willing to accept the punishment, but will not admit to witchcraft. Parris warns Abigail that he has enemies who will use this situation against him, and claims that, the night he saw Abigail and the girls dancing in the woods, he also saw a dress lying on the grass and someone running naked through the trees. He thinks that Tituba was screeching gibberish when he found the girls, but Abigail says she was only singing Barbados songs. Parris demands to know whether Abigail has a good reputation, following up on rumors that her former employee, Goody Proctor, thinks Abigail is corrupt, but Abigail calls Goody Proctor a gossiping liar.

[Mrs. Ann Putnam](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#mrs-ann-putnam) and Mr. [Thomas Putnam](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#thomas-putnam) enter; Mrs. Putnam claims that Betty's illness is a sure sign of witchcraft. There are rumors that Betty was flying over the Ingersoll's barn, according to Mrs. Putnam. Their daughter Ruth is also sick, and they assume witchcraft to be the cause. Mrs. Putnam admits that she sent Ruth to Tituba. She believes that Tituba knows how to speak to the dead. She had seven children who dies the same day they were born; she believes that they were murdered by a witch, and she sent her surviving daughter to ask Tituba to conjure their spirits and ask who murdered them.

The Putnams' servant, [Mercy Lewis](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#mercy-lewis), arrives and visits Betty. She discusses Ruth's sickness with Abigail, and suggests beating Betty to snap her out of her illness. Abigail tells Ruth that Rev. Parris knows that Tituba conjured Ruth's sisters, and that Parris saw Mercy naked. [Mary Warren](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#mary-warren), the Proctors' current servant, enters in a panic because the town is talking witchcraft. Betty suddenly sits up and cries that Abigail drank blood to kill Goody Proctor. Abigail threatens the other girls: if they say anything other than that they danced and Tituba conjured Ruth Putnam's sisters, Abigail will make their lives difficult.

[John Proctor](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#john-proctor) arrives and orders Mary Warren to go home. Abigail speaks tenderly to him and references an affair between them, but Proctor states that he will cut off his hand before he ever touches her again. As they hear the people downstairs sing a hymn downstairs, Abigail insists that Proctor loves her yet. He fends her off, firmly but not without sympathy. Betty sits up and screams. Reverend Parris runs into the room with Mr. and Mrs. Putnam. Mrs. Putnam believes that Betty must have heard the hymn being sung downstairs and that Betty cannot bear to hear the Lord's name. She declares that as a sure sign of witchcraft.

The elderly [Giles Corey](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#giles-corey) enters with [Rebecca Nurse](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#rebecca-nurse), wife of [Francis Nurse](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#francis-nurse). Rebecca, who has eleven children and twenty-six grandchildren, examines Betty and claims that Betty's illness is nothing but child’s play – that Betty is faking her illness. She is skeptical of the claims of witchcraft. She is, however, able to easily calm Betty just by standing near her, and Mrs. Putnam, again, implies that Rebecca Nurse used supernatural powers to control Betty’s behavior.

[Reverend John Hale](http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list#reverend-john-hale) of Beverly then arrives, bringing with him half a dozen heavy books. He introduces himself to Rebecca Nurse, and admits that he has heard of her great charity. Giles Corey tells Hale that Proctor does not believe in witches, but Proctor says he did not speak one way or another. Mrs. Putnam attempts, once again, to persuade all present that Betty’s behavior is a sure sign of witchcraft, but Reverend Hale says that they cannot look to superstition in issues of witchcraft, because the Devil is precise. Mrs. Putnam claims that witchcraft must be the cause of death for her seven children, and she notifies Revered Hale that she knows beyond a shadow of doubt that Tituba knows how to conjure spirits and speak to the dead, because she sent Ruth to ask Tituba to conjure the spirits of her own dead children. Giles Corey asks Hale what the reading of strange books signifies. He says that he often awakes to find Martha reading in a corner and cannot say his prayers, but Hale dismisses his concerns for the moment.

Hale asks Abigail what happened in the forest. Parris claims he saw a kettle, but Abigail says it contained only soup, although a frog may have jumped in it. Parris asks whether they drank anything in it, and Hale asks Abigail if she has sold her soul to Lucifer.

Finally Abigail blames Tituba, claiming that Tituba made her and Betty drink chicken blood. Abigail says that Tituba sends her spirit on her in church and makes her laugh at prayer. Putnam declares that Tituba must be hanged. Hale confronts Tituba. He says that if she loves these children she must let God's light shine on her. Hale asks if the Devil comes to her with anybody else. Tituba admits that the devil has come to her, and that the devil promises to return her to Barbados. Furthermore, she shows how he has white people working for her, including Goody Good and Goody Osburn. Betty claims that she saw George Jacobs with the Devil, while Abigail claims she saw several others with the devil, and the curtain falls on a rising chorus of accusations.