

Name _____



Fear Spreads

In a small town called Salem, people once lived simple lives, growing crops and going to church. But in the year 1692, something strange happened. A group of girls claimed they had seen witches working with the devil. They said these witches were casting spells and causing harm. At first, the townspeople were unsure, but soon, fear spread like wildfire.

Neighbors accused each other of being witches, and many innocent people were put on trial. If someone was accused, they had to prove they were not a witch—something that was almost impossible to do. If they refused to confess, they could be hanged. To save themselves, some people made false accusations against their own friends.

John Proctor, a farmer, saw how dangerous these lies were. He tried to stop the madness, but the judges believed the girls. They thought John was working with witches too. Even though he told the truth, he was still punished. Many people like John suffered, all because fear took over logic and fairness.

This story, told in Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*, shows the dangers of mass hysteria. When people act out of fear instead of thinking carefully, they can make terrible mistakes. Similar things have happened in history. In the 1950s, people in America were accused of being communists without proof. Just like in Salem, fear made people turn against their friends. Even today, rumors on the internet can spread false stories, making people believe things that aren't true.

The Crucible teaches us to be careful before believing everything we hear. It reminds us that fear can make people do terrible things, and that standing up for the truth is always important—even when it's hard.