Mary Warren Essay, Research Paper

Mary Warren is an important character in Arthur Miller s play, THE CRUCIBLE. Much of the action in Act III revolves around Mary s testimony in court. She is a kind and basically honest girl who tries to do the right thing, saving her friends from harm. However, throughout Acts I and II, Mary is a follower who allows Abigail Williams to negatively influence her good judgment. To make matters worse, Mary is terrified of Abigail s threats. Because of her weak will, the reader isn t certain if Mary will maintain the courage to help John Proctor to win his court case in Act III.

Mary Warren s basic goodness is demonstrated on many occasions. She has been hired by John Proctor to help his wife Elizabeth with household chores. Mary proves to be a kind girl who gets along well with Mrs. Proctor. Although Mary has become a court official in Salem, she still gets up early in the morning to clean the Proctors house. While in court, Mary passes the time by making Goody Proctor a present of a small rag doll called a poppet. Upset by the court proceedings, Mary tells Mr. Proctor that she is all shuddery inside because Goody Osburn will hang. When the poppet becomes false proof of witchcraft against Elizabeth, Mary willingly explains that the poppet is hers. She also makes a vain attempt to comfort John Proctor as the court officials drag his wife away in chains.

A basic sense of honesty is another of Mary Warren s traits. In Act I she goes to Salem to convince Abigail to tell the truth about what really happened in the woods. When the witchcraft scare gets out of hand, Mary joins Abigail and the other girls in falsely accusing women of being witches. These false accusations are motivated by hysteria. There is evidence that Mary really believes that the women in court are bewitching her. She tells the judge that she thought she saw spirits. The other girls were screaming, and before she knew it, Mary was screaming with them. When she realizes that there are no spirits, Mary is willing to be truthful. After Elizabeth Proctor s name is brought up in court, Mary Warren defends her against the accusation. At the end of Act II, the reader hopes that the basic sense of honesty will remain strong enough to allow Mary to testify on behalf of the accused women in Act III.

Mary s dominant character trait is her weak will. She is easily influenced and allows herself to be intimidated by Abigail. In Act I Mary knows that Betty is not really sick. When Abigail threatens to kill anyone who tells the truth about Betty s condition, Mary remains silent. She is terrified of Abigail. She also fears John Proctor because she has gone to Salem against his orders. For a time, Mary becomes more assertive in Act II because she has gained attention as an official of the court and feels important. She demonstrates her new forcefulness by telling John Proctor that he cannot stop her from going to Salem each day. By the end of Act II, however, she is reduced to tears again, crying I cannot, I cannot when Proctor asks her to testify against Abigail.

Mary Warren is one of the major characters in The Crucible. In the first two Acts, Mary joins Abigail in accusing innocent people of witchcraft. In Act III, however, Mary may have a change of heart. If she can remain strong, Mary s testimony in court may save the lives of Elizabeth Proctor and her friends