

ENGLISH: *THE CRUCIBLE*

'Fear is the prime instigator of conflict.'

Statement of Explanation

Audience

People who feel directly upset and/or angry about a conflict

Purpose

I hope that through this piece I can enlighten people's perspectives on conflict, and to allow them to feel empathy for others who go through conflict. If I can get people to understand not only the role of fear in any conflict, but its role in the human design, then hopefully they can learn to forgive their fellow man.

Examples

I chose to open my examples with a discussion of the notion of 'fight or flight', because I wanted to use a commonly known term to engage readers of all varieties. It is an ideology that most people would encounter at some point, and could relate to their own lives.

For my examples from *The Crucible*, I chose to explore Elizabeth and Abigail because they are two polar opposites. On surface level, the audience is encouraged by Miller to feel sorry for Elizabeth, and to feel anger towards Abigail. Yet as two humans, they in one sense have similar reactions with similar motivations. By highlighting the subtle goodness within Abigail, I hope to demonstrate that there can be goodness in anyone, but fear can be all encapsulating.

I chose also to use the example of gay marriage rights, for a number of reasons. For one, it is a well-known issue that is often in the media. As a bill, it came to its head in parliament, one of the most morally conflicting places. I have always been concerned with the role of free will and choice within the Australian Parliament, as strong party lines and a separation of powers that is not on par with that of the USA. The fact that one party allowed a conscience vote, and another did not, struck me as a great way to parallel the roles of choice.

Form and Style

I felt that the best way to be informative on this topic would be through an essay, which could be open to a variety of readers. By taking a reasonable tone, I hope to aptly present the points and examples in an interesting and yet logical way. Miller's play uses complex ideologies through somewhat simple characters to portray his philosophical viewpoints. I hope to do the same in the way that I hone in heavy ideas through common terms and examples.

Piece

House of Un Pakistani Activities Committee Trial

ACT THREE

The court room of the Islamabad meeting house, now serving as a central room of the Federal Shariat Court.

As the curtain rises, it becomes clear that the usually vacant room has now been filled to its brim. Where sunlight once swam in through the high windows, a harsh fluorescent light pulses down, the blinds now drawn tightly shut. The room is divided; on one side a small gathering of no more than

ten, hoping anxiously for an acquittal for accused. A bloodthirsty mob hoping for her death on the other.

There stands a small, feeble table before the representatives of each side. In contrast, a tall polished maple bench stands forebodingly afore JUSTICE KHAN.

The room is silent, except for the small sobs escaping from Rimsha's mother SHRADDHA MASIH, who tries wholeheartedly to stifle them and appear strong. KHAN rises, and the room follows. Attention is drawn to the unnerving gavel in his hand. He sits, and hits the block with the full weight of his authority. The court is now in session.

KHAN: Rimsha Masih, we have the testimonies of your neighbours and passersby that you were seen burning pages of Islam's holy book, the Qur'an, out the front of your house last month. Is this true?

RIMSHA: I... I... uh.. n... no

KHAN: Rimsha, you know lying is wrong, right? Do not lie to me in this court!

RIMSHA: I just... I just played

SHRADDHA: Please your honour, she doesn't understand! She is a child, a child!

KHAN: Shraddha Masih, to your knowledge has your daughter been doing the work of Iblis

SHRADDHA: What?

KHAN: Has your daughter been communing with the world of Jinn, and plotting to overturn the Muslim base in this government?

SHRADDHA: She has mental problems! She means no harm in any actions, your honour she cannot think for herself!

KHAN: So you're telling me, Mrs Masih, that your daughter has another spirit thinking on her behalf?

[At this, the crowd seated behind the plaintiffs begin to jeer. Calls can be heard such as 'Allah will condemn her for this!', and 'She is possessed! The Girl is possessed!']

SHRADDHA: *[Now becoming overcome by her sobs]* No! ... no...

KHAN: Zabiullah, please call your witnesses to the stand

[ZABIULLAH walks SABA to the witness stand. SABA appears excited, the support base seated behind her has raised her hopes, and her ego]

ZABIULLAH: Saba Abida, did you see Rimsha Masih burning pages of the Qur'an?

SABA: Yes your honour, she was burning it and dancing and screea...

ZABIULLAH: *[gently interjecting]* Saba, do you believe that this girl was working on behalf of Iblis to bring down the all mighty Allah?

SABA: Yes! She wants to bring down Pakistan, and have our people blamed for terrorism!

ABDUL: *[enraged, rises fearfully but with force]* LIES!

KHAN: *[angry yet intrigued]* Silence! Who is this man?

ABDUL: Abdul Masih, and that is my daughter that they are accusing!

KHAN: Mr. Masih, is it true that your daughter wants to bring down Pakistan and Islam?

ABDUL: Of course not! She wished only to play in our yard, like other children. There was no burning or...

KHAN: Might I remind you Abdul, that we have an eyewitness to the events?

ABDUL: And what, must the eyewitness be innocent? Does the light of truth shine through their eyes for they choose to point the finger at others? The Abidas have always wanted us gone from the community, ever since our malpighiales plant grew over the fence into their yard!

KHAN: This talk of plants is irrelevant to the court!

ZABIULLAH: Your honour I do wonder if perhaps he has a poi...

KHAN: *[again smacking his gavel, not impressed by a slight assertion of opposition from ZABIULLAH]* Silence! I will not have such contempt in this court! You are either with this court and this country, or you stand against it. Mr. Masih, do you hate Allah?

ABDUL: This is absurd!

KHAN: Do you believe the words of Allah in the holy Qur'an?

ABDUL: Well.. I.. uh... yes!

KHAN: *[unconvinced]* And you, Mrs. Masih. Do you believe in the Islam gospel?

SHRADDHA: I.. I...

KHAN: *[with increasing fervor]* Do you practice prayer and animal slaughter? and fasting during Ramadan?

SHRADDHA: *[swallowing her tears as she finds her conviction]* I.. no I do not

[At this calls again erupt from the crowd. There is much hissing, and one tall, unshaven man stands up to spit in her direction. KHAN allows this, and sits smugly as he attentively watches the reactions around him. SHRADDHA falls nimbly to her seat, and clutches RIMSHA wholeheartedly. The commotion is suddenly silenced, as RABAR MASTIF bursts through the far doors, and marches to the judge's podium]

RABAR: You have the wrong person! *[turning and pointing sharply at AHKIB MOHAMMED]* Ahkib is your man!

[The crowd all slowly turn their heads towards AHKIB, who sits stunned, as a pained red colouring spreads across his face]

KHAN: *[Shocked by this turn of events. Intrigued, yet feels his authority is threatened]* Mr. Mastif this is unacceptable behaviour! Sit down immediately!

RABAR: Ahkib may be a Muslim Cleric, but he is the least holy man I know!

KHAN: Mr. Mastif, need I remind you of the dangerous situation our country is encountering? Day by day we are accused of acts of terrorism, in the name of our religion. People fear us, because they do not understand the meaning, the hope and prosperity of our Qur'an. Do you realise the danger in us now doubting ourselves? To begin doubting the very people who do the work of Allah? We have fought for years in India, to protect our Indian Islamic followers from the threats of non-believers. I hope you realise the magnitude of your accusation!

KABAR: Indeed I do, and I hope you do the same. For years, men and women have been jailed for blasphemy. As you point out, it is clear that we work hard in this country to protect the ideals, reputation and customs of the Islamic religion. However over times we have faced many conflicts and grown as a result. Yet our fellow nations do not see this. To jail a young girl, a girl with mental disability, is to remain living in the distant past; to say that in Pakistan we are not open to change, that we fear it. Your honour we must demonstrate that we are not afraid to admit that we are wrong, if it is to do what is right. Please, question Mr. Mohammed, for he planted the burnt pages at Rimsha's house!

[There is a collective gasp from the crowd, who are no longer rowdy, now attentive instead]

KHAN: Mr. Mohammed, please rise and take the stand!

[Mohammed walks to the stand, and looks nervously at his feet]

KHAN: Kabar, how long have you known Ahkib?

KABAR: Since I was a child, we always went to his prayers at the mosque

KHAN: Have you listened carefully to his telling of Islam?

KABAR: Yes, I always listen attentively

KHAN: In the years that you have known him, have you known him to be a member of Joomla?

KABAR: What? Well... no.. I...

KHAN: Have you known Ahkib to be working against Pakistan and Islam? Perhaps siding with Indians or hate groups like Joomla, to destroy the future of our people?

KABAR: No, I just... well... sometimes he does things but... I don't mean to... I just saw him plant the pages!

KHAN: I hope you realise that threats to Pakistan must be stopped, Mr. Mastif. Whether it is Ahkib, or the little girl, one of them must rot in prison for this monstrosity!

[Until this point AHKIB has remained silent, as he wrestles internally with his conscience. The frightening mental image of life in prison for Rimsha finally gets the better of him. He speaks up]

AHKIB: Okay it was me!!

[A deafening silence fills the room for a long moment. KHAN, concerned about the repercussions of corruption found in a cleric, attempts to change his mind, only escalating the conflict further]

KHAN: What you mean to say, Mr. Ahkib, is that you tried to help this distressed girl, is that correct?

AHKIB: *[fearing damnation]* No! This girl is Christian, she is a threat to our community and we needed to push her out! I put the Qur'an into the ashes she was carrying, but only in the good name of Islam!

[The crowd is now on its feet. Some members shout religious statements in AHKIB's defence. Others move determinedly to the other side of the room, changing their support. The room is suffocated with noise, which is now only broken by the third of three loud bangs of KHAN's cavil]

KHAN: *[angered, not wanting to make this call, yet also aware of the huge media attention of this case, decides at last to make a slightly more just decision]* Upon the discovery of new evidence, I grant bail to Rimsha Masih at the price of 1 million Pakistani Rupees. Further investigations will be made into the blasphemy accusations surrounding Mr. Ahkib Mohammed. Court adjourned!

[As the curtain slowly falls, the majority, who now sit behind the Masih Family, applaud and cheer loudly. At the same time, the few remaining on the side of the plaintiffs hurl angry insults and make obscene gestures. The moral victory is clear, and yet there is still unrest evident in the atmosphere, as the characters and audience wonder what will be in store next for both Rimsha and Ahkib, and indeed the court of Pakistan, following this landmark case]