

ENGLISH: *THE CRUCIBLE*

The clash between reason and emotion lies behind many conflicts.

F: Creative expository piece describing an interrogation.

L: Evocative language that draws on ideas from *The Crucible* and Arthur Miller.

A: Directed at an audience engaged in the issue around American use of torture on Taliban suspects. Appeals to readership with a capacity to reflect and consider different perspectives of the debate.

P: To explore the moral challenge of using torture to extrapolate a confession, and the factors of reason and emotion that are inherent such moral dilemmas; and to also reveal the similarities of this in relation to the Salem conflict.

C: Guantanamo bay interrogation following 9/11 attacks.

Staggering in, his excessively heavy chains snaked behind him, a constant reminder of his inescapable environment. His eyes fluttered, adjusting to the forceful glare of the fluorescent bulb from his three months in darkness. The briefing read 20 years of age, wife and two children, spotted in Afghanistan in the vicinity of a Taliban operation. 'After this many interrogations, it should have become easier,' thought John as he watched the next suspect approach. Nonetheless his reasoning allowed him to continue and suppress the growing threat of emotional volatility that brewed inside of him. He glanced at the soldier on his left who waited mindlessly at John's command. His shorts were crimson stained and he carried a bag with seemingly benign tools; he was just doing his job, at least that's what John told himself.

"Before we continue, you must know we burn a hot fire here, it melts down all concealment. Now, tell me Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who was involved in the bombing of the World Trade Centre?" Avoiding any contact with the Americans, Khalid sat with a proudness that tore up John's heart. Rule number one: wait twelve seconds. With a meek nod to the soldier, John could turn this man's world upside down and rattle him until he spoke or until he could no longer speak. Twenty seconds passed, he gave the signal.

Another soldier emerged from outside the door to restrain Khalid, and John turned away trying not to look at the expression on Khalid's face as it became smothered in a rag. A stream of consciousness swam in John's head: did these soldiers truly believe that gaining information on the culprits of 9/11 or the heads of the Taliban could justify the suffering that they administered, and whether or not they felt any emotion when copiously striking suspects until the blood under their eyes swelled so much, eventually bursting on impact.

As reason clashed with the growing voice of his emotion, John recalled rule number two: always remain detached from the suspect. "This is for your country. Think about the thousands of innocent American they killed." He continued in his attempt to resolve his moral struggle, playing the words over in his mind like a broken record; they were starting to become redundant. "You will be a hero for this," echoed the voices of his instructors.

Then the screams started, muffled by the water that gushed onto his face, and John's spine froze and his skin became red hot with a fiery anguish. He looked away but couldn't escape the writhing body thumping against the relentless concrete floor and the heightening sense of emotion within him. The two soldiers glanced at him with naïve urgency, waiting for the next question, but when he saw them he saw himself; a man blinded by a rationality that had become so tainted that it justified

torture, and to what avail? In the hysteria after 9/11, John had embodied the very values he was fighting against. Where was freedom in the compounds of Guantanamo Bay? Where was the fair trial in assuming Khalid's guilt upon accusation? And even then, the major question that he had to ask himself was who the terrorists were now? John was overcome with immense doubt that advanced upon his senses from every direction, mounting an attack for control of his mind.

"You will confess or you will hang! Why do you work for the Taliban? What did you do in the 9/11 attacks?"

Reason returned, and with it, a man of purpose and structure. This was his job; he went to University and studied the mind to join the noble battle against tyranny and oppression. How could he doubt himself when his reputation was at stake?

"Please... Please... I am no Taliban," He was broken; all matter of pride and dignity stripped away. He spoke between hopeless sobs.

"Please sir, my conscience will not permit me to use the name of another person."

John felt Khalid's words travel through his veins and resonate in the core of his bones. The soldiers proceeded to beat him.

Now when he imagined the gleaming faces of his family and a nation proud of his battle against terrorism, they appeared shrouded in a dark cloud of controversy. He gripped the arms of his chair and scanned the room as it spun around, layers of reality overlapping with layers of falsity. A raw sense of doubt returned, suddenly taking over his cognition. In all conflicts, reason battles with emotion; like two wolves inside all of us. The one that wins depends on the one we feed. 'This man was a husband and a father just like me.' John knew he was probably a farmer and even if he was a terrorist, he would be only fighting for a cause that he was born into and brought up to believe was right. The beating intensified, reducing Khalid's bold screams to merciful whimpers, and an overwhelming sentiment for his suffering built inside of John.

"Stop! I denounce these proceedings."

In an emotional fury of disdain, John grasped the soldiers by the arms and with ferocious vehemence, flung them out the door. A silence drew over the room as he met the gawking gaze of the man once considered the unconditional enemy. The look of his sullen eyes said thank you better than any words could. Just as Hale quit the court in the face of the moral corruption of the church that ruled Salem, John turned his back on what all matter of reason told him was the wrong thing to do. In the battle against reason, emotion had won but his rationale had evolved into a higher state. The power of humanity not only prevailed, but in its struggle against terrorism, it brought forth a new reasoning that revelled in the light of truth. Khalid – along with most others held here at Guantanamo – had been condemned for merely existing in an area of a minority terrorist activity; it was clear who the terrorists were now. John took a moment to wholly comprehend the hypocrisy; and only after this, did his reasoning and emotion unite as one, and an inner peace put his moral conflict to rest.