COMPARE HOW THE TWO TEXTS PRESENT THE MISUSE OF POWER.

"Postponement now speaks a floundering on my part…" The Crucible
"Her husband did not believe in drugs. Addictive, he said." The Dressmaker

The insular communities portrayed in both Arthur Miller's allegorical play *The Crucible* and Rosalie Ham's gothic novel *The Dressmaker* expose the repressive and patriarchal societies of the texts as vengeful and power hungry, and condemn the notion of complete conformity and retribution through the misuse of power. The isolated communities of Dungatar and Salem results in residents who are fearful, ignorant and vicious, and value conformity. This yearning to be included results in a mob mentality, which leads to destruction and tragedy. Power within Salem and Dungatar is be abused and used against outsiders within these insular communities. The characters with the most power in the texts are typically men, who in the patriarchal societies are able to gain the most power. Although outsiders are seen to be powerless, they are able to gain it through vengeance and retribution. Ham and Miller present the ideas of insularity, conformity and power as negative and destructive aspects in the avaricious and strictly controlled communities of Salem and Dungatar.

Through the remote communities of *The Crucible* and *The Dressmaker*, both Miller and Ham expose the societies of the texts as narrow minded and parochial through the strict theocratic laws and social rules that dictate each town. In *The Crucible*, strong theocratic regulations dictate Salem and its inhabitants, whereas in *The Dressmaker*, Dungatar is repressed through the strong social hierarchy that determines the worth of individuals, creating a mob mentality. The use of fear and power as a way to repress individuals drive the residents of both communities into conforming in order to be included and to protect themselves, and results in the abuse of power through laws and social orders within the texts. In *The Crucible*, the idea of mob mentality as a way to pressure people into conformity is presented through the use of "parochial snobbery" and "a predilection for minding other people's business" which creates "many of the suspicions that... feed the oncoming madness." The overpowering Puritan theocracy which rules Salem results in an extreme suppression of free will, that produced children who were permitted to "walk straight, eyes slightly lowered, arms at the sides, and mouths shut until bidden to speak," highlighting the theocratic power in a strictly controlled society that created insular minds. The use of fear as a way to obtain conformity is emphasised through a perilous and tenuous existence with the untamed Indians who Salem failed to "convert" and live surrounded by a feral and barbaric frontier, where the Salem residents believed that "the virgin forest was the devils last preserve." This fear of the devil and of judgement from the community aims to encourage conformity that leads to a rigid and fearful community. The use of fear and strong theocratic laws in *The Crucible* act to create a mob mentality, where conformity is embraced, and divergence is rejected. Similarly, Ham presents the idea of conformity through the power of the mob and pressure from social hierarchy and influential characters, where residents of Dungatar fear rejection and exclusion from the community. The inhabitants of Dungatar face judgement from many powerful people, such as Elsbeth Beaumont, on the pretence of being wealthy. The townspeople use Tilly's gift for dressmaking as a way to compete, pressuring the inhabitants to keep up with trends in order to avoid being excluded and shunned. Conformity is demanded by the mob mentality, where people are judged for their inability to 'fit the mould.' This is seen with Gertrude's breakdown during the Macbeth play, where she stands up to Elsbeth, "You're always telling me what I can't do. I can do anything I want," which leads to her being committed to an asylum. This highlights the demand for conformity and shows the punishment and judgement of being excluded for defying social norms. Ham aims to present the idea that this push for conformity results in narrow-minded individuals who are unable to think for themselves. Both Ham and Miller reject the concept of complete conformity resulting in a mob mentality through the texts, denouncing both the strong theocratic laws of Salem and the overpowering social hierarchy of Dungatar as harmful and

destructive. They both present the idea of power through these ruling systems but contrast the way in which this power is enforced, through the church and social norms in Salem, versus social pressures and fear of exclusion in Dungatar. Both Ham and Miller condemn the act of conforming to the powerful rules and social hierarchies in the texts as it represents an abuse of power of free will of individuals.

The misuse of power is also presented through the repressive and patriarchal communities of Salem and Dungatar. Both Ham and Miller similarly reject the misuse and abuse of power by men in the texts, who utilise their roles as patriarchs to gain the most control, and subsequently misuse it. This is equally denounced by both Ham and Miller, who present the idea of the misuse of power through men as negative and destructive. In *The Crucible*, men are presented by Miller as authoritative figures, through their powerful roles within Salem. This can be seen through the character of Danforth, who assumes power through the court, and rules by fear and strict rigidness. As Abigail's lies continue to instigate the blame and vengeance in Salem, Danforth views every defence against witchcraft as an "attack upon the court." This displays his lack of benevolence and inability to detect the corruptness that takes place under his authority, signifying an extreme abuse of power. His reputation as a harsh judge, who "burns a hot fire," which "melts down all concealment," is established as more important than the lives lost as a result of his failure to admit his incompetence and demand the truth. Additionally, this dishonest and corrupt representation of power through the patriarchy in Salem is reinforced by Reverend Parris, who relentlessly abuses his position as minister through his avaricious greed in "preach[ing] nothin' but golden candlesticks until he had them," and his desire to own the deed to the minister's house. This determines him as a rapacious and egotistical man, who wields power, yet uses it for his own gain. His extreme focus on his own reputation as a form of power within the community, as seen through the quote "just now when some good respect is rising for me in the parish, you compromise my very character," and the disregard for his daughter Betty in her comatose state, presents him as a desirous and power hungry individual. Through these characters, power is misused and abused, and costs the lives of many in Salem. Similarly, in *The Dressmaker,* Ham establishes a manipulation of power through the character of Evan Pettyman, through his patriarchal role of Councillor of Dungatar. His power over women within Dungatar allows him to abuse them, resulting in the marital rape of his wife, Marigold, and Tilly as a bastard child through his domineering affair with Molly. His reputation as a "man who touched women," causes the women in Dungatar to avoid him in the street, and shows an extreme violation of power against them as they are unable to stand up to him due to his strong influence and authority over the community. The abuse of power in Dungatar is further endorsed through the character of Mr Almanac, who controls the medications in Dungatar and decides punishments for his "sinful" customers. This is realised through Faith O'Brien's remedy for her rash, where Mr Almanac gives her an abrasive cleaning agent as punishment for her 'sinful' actions, instead of giving her the medical care that she requires. His refusal to give his wife Irma the pain medication for her arthritis that she desperately needs presents him as a sadistic and brutal man, who believes that sin is "the cause of all disease," and is unafraid to punish those he deems deserving of retribution. Through these characters, Ham presents a heavily patriarchal and vengeful social hierarchy, where men are able to abuse their power within the rural and isolated community without consequence. Both Ham and Miller condemn the misuse of patriarchal power within *The Crucible* and *The Dressmaker*, denoting it as a repressive and subversively dangerous notion, leading to death and abuse against others.

The idea of misuse of power in the texts is additionally presented by Ham and Miller through the notion of retribution and vengeance, where individuals seek revenge on others. The texts similarly explore the way actions of people within both Salem and Dungatar can have negative effects on a community and those around them, deeming them morally reprehensible trough their actions, yet Ham and Miller present different views on revenge.

Ham suggests that revenge can sometimes be justified within certain situations, whereas Miller condemns vengeance, and argues that tragedy can result from those seeking retribution out of envy and malevolence. The people of Salem wholly believe in the power of witchcraft and the enmity of the devil, which is seen to instigate and encourage the use of blame and vengeance taken out on others. The Crucible highlights the desire to take revenge on others for individual gain, and is strongly criticised by Miller throughout the play. The witch trails are utilised by many in the play in order to seek retribution, as seen through Abigail, who blames Elizabeth for witchcraft as a result of “blackening my name” in the village and reinforces her accusation by jabbing herself with a sewing needle in the same area as a pin that was placed in Mary Warren’s poppet in order to provide proof for the courts of her consortion with the devil. Abigail does this to “take [Elizabeth’s] place” in the Proctor home, and to “dance on [her] grave.” Through this strong desire to blame others in the community for witchcraft, Miller exposes an insular society, where ‘long-held hatreds of neighbours could now be openly expressed, and vengeance taken.’ This emphasises the way anyone in Salem could use the witch trials to enact revenge on enemies. The blame and condemnation of people in the community cause mass hysteria, resulting in a community where neighbours report on each other, and finally “old scores could be settled.” Through this, vengeance is taken on others, and “land lust... could now be elevated to the arena of morality.” Thomas Putnam aims to obtain land through his daughter who prejudicially accuses a man of practicing witchcraft in order to take revenge on his neighbours. Vengeance is also fulfilled through the “marvellous and supernatural murder of Goody Putnam’s babies,” where Rebecca Nurse is accused by Ann Putnam, who seeks to lay blame and take revenge on Goody Nurse through her jealousy Rebecca’ healthy children. Through these accusations, Miller argues that disaster can result from those seeking vengeance out of spite and jealousy for personal profit, and determines it as an extreme abuse of personal power against others. Contrasting this idea, Ham seems to imply that revenge can sometimes be warranted, and that acts of retribution against abusers by those mistreated can be justified. She also shows that outsiders can gain power through retribution, seen through Tilly’s revenge on Dungatar after Molly’s death, stating that “pain will no longer be our curse, Molly... it will be our revenge and our reason.” Tilly seeks revenge for years of abuse by lighting her house on fire and turning off the town water supply, so that when the Dungatar community returns from their theatre performance, their town is ‘black and smoking.’ Additionally, Tilly tells Marigold about Evan’s many affairs, such as the one between Molly and Evan, leading to his murder by Marigold, who suffered marital rape and sought vengeance. Through ‘The Crucible’ and ‘The Dressmaker,’ both Miller and Ham expose the insular and parochial societies of the texts as vengeful and condemning, and present different ideas on the notion of retribution as a way to seek revenge. Ham implies that revenge can sometimes be justified within certain situations, contrasting to Miller’s argument that tragedy can result from those seeking retribution out of envy and malevolence.

Both Ham and Miller reject the misuse of power within the insular societies of the texts through conforming to strong social regulations and religious laws, patriarchal power and retribution.