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## Quotes about john proctor and abigail's affair

I look for John Proctor that took me from my sleep and put knowledge in my heart! I never knew what pretense Salem was, I never knew the lying lessons I was taught by all these Christian women and their covenanted men! And now you bid me tear the light out of my eyes? I will not, I cannot! You loved me, John Proctor, and whatever sin it is, you love me yet! Abigail Williams utters these words in an Act I conversation with John Proctor, clueing the audience in to her past affair with him.

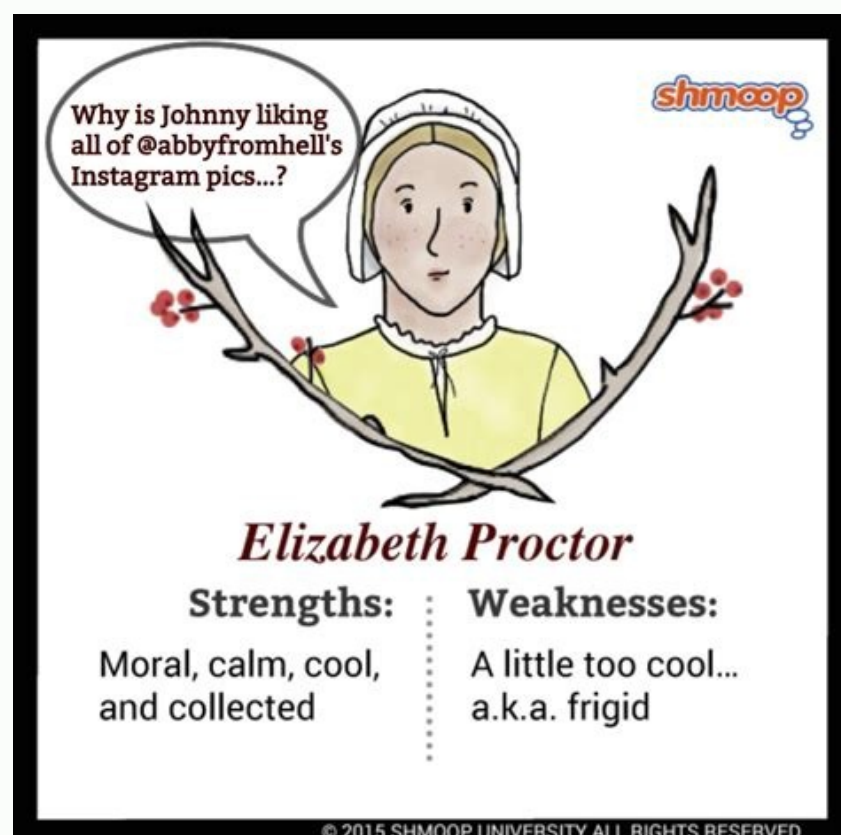
For Proctor, we quickly realize, their relationship belongs to the past—while he may still be attracted to her, he is desperately trying to put the incident behind him. Abigail, on the other hand, has no such sense of closure, as this quote makes clear. As she begs him to come back to her, her anger overflows, and we see the roots of what becomes her targeted, destructive romp through Salem. First, there is her jealousy of Elizabeth Proctor and her fantasy that if she could only dispose of Elizabeth, John would be hers. But second, and perhaps more important, we see in this quotation a fierce loathing of the entire town—“I never knew what pretense Salem was, I never knew the lying lessons. . . .” Abigail hates Salem, and in the course of *The Crucible*, she makes Salem pay. Did you know you can highlight text to take a note? x John Proctor suddenly and dramatically reveals his adultery to the court in Act III of *The Crucible* with the words: I have known her, sir. I have known her. This rather euphemistic way of describing sexual intercourse is Biblical in origin and therefore doubly appropriate for the Puritans. Arthur Miller says that Proctor is “trembling, his life collapsing about him” as he utters the confession. Proctor has to confess to substantiate the charge he has just made against Abigail. When she cries aloud to God to “take away this shadow!” Proctor responds: How do you call Heaven! Whore! Whore! Having called Abigail a whore, Proctor has to justify himself. Of course, she is not technically a whore (as Miller’s Epilogue suggests she may go on to be), but she is a woman guilty of fornication, and Proctor can best charge her with this by indicting himself. Once he has made his initial confession, Proctor goes into some detail. He says that they had sex “in the proper place—where my beasts are bedded.” He then asks Danforth for forgiveness, though this is surely not in the Deputy Governor’s power to give. He concludes his confession with the words: God help me, I lusted, and there is a promise in such sweat. But it is a whore’s vengeance, and you must see it; I set myself entirely in your hands. I know you must see it now. Though he shows true contrition, particularly for the pain he has caused Elizabeth, Proctor’s continual abuse of Abigail as a whore shows that his desire to blacken her name and take away her power is the primary motivation behind his words. Approved by eNotes Editorial Team In act three, John Proctor sacrifices his positive reputation and good name by publicly admitting that he had an affair with Abigail Williams in hopes of undermining her authority and proving that the girls are frauds. After Abigail begins to act like Mary Warren’s spirit is attacking her, John Proctor calls her a whore and admits his infidelity by telling Deputy Governor Danforth, “I have known her, sir. I have known her” (Miller, 110). Danforth responds by directly asking Proctor if he is a lecher and Francis Nurse is astonished by John’s confession. Proctor then proceeds to elaborate on his affair with Abigail Williams by giving specific details about their sexual encounter. He tells the court officials that the affair took place about eight months ago and that he slept with Abigail in his barn, where his “beasts are bedded.” Proctor goes on to explain that Elizabeth kicked Abigail out of their home following the affair and Abigail wishes to dance on her grave, which is why she falsely accused Elizabeth of witchcraft. Approved by eNotes Editorial Team In Act Three, John Proctor goes to the court with his friends Giles Corey and Francis Nurse in order to provide evidence to prove their wives’ innocence. He has not revealed his affair with Abigail Williams publicly because he knows the terribly detrimental effect this news will have on his reputation. However, he knows that there is a good chance he will have to confess to the affair in order to prove that Abigail has ulterior motives for accusing his wife of witchcraft. He yells—in sheer desperation and frustration because the magistrates so clearly believe Abigail’s lies—“It is a whore!” Danforth doubts him and Abigail denies it. Proctor says, by way of explanation, “I have known her, sir. I have known her.” Although the meaning of this language might not be immediately obvious to us, Proctor means that he has known Abigail in the biblical sense, and Danforth understands this meaning. Approved by eNotes Editorial Team I would think that you want to turn to the last section of the Third Act. It is here where Proctor has to admit to adultery, if nothing else to try to blunt Abigail’s meteoric rise to power. Proctor admits to adultery as he recognizes that Mary Warren’s testimony is not going to be effective. John recognizes that coming forth in this forum about his adultery is the last refuge he has: Excellency, forgive me, forgive me. She thinks to dance with me on my wife’s grave! And well she might!—for I thought of her softly, God help me, I lusted, and there is a promise in such sweat! But it is a whore’s vengeance, and you must see it; I set myself entirely in your hands, I know you must see it now. My wife is innocent, except she know a whore when she see one. Another moment in the scene where he confesses to the sin of adultery happens at the end when Elizabeth is brought in for questioning. She lies in thinking to defend her husband and before she leaves, he cries out, “Elizabeth, I have confessed it.” In this, one sees a clear revelation of adultery. In confessing, Proctor is operating on the level of self-awareness and full disclosure being the only way to remedy the hidden demons that are holding the people of Salem hostage to speaking the truth. 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All Rights Reserved We cannot possibly know for certain what happened between two people several hundred years ago, especially when surviving testimony has been coloured with such fevered speculation as surrounds the witch trials. However, it seems extremely unlikely that Proctor and Williams had an affair. The accusation stems from the court records, which show the testimony of Abigail Williams against John Proctor. She accused his then wife, Elizabeth, of being a witch, and Proctor stepped up to defend her, whereupon Williams also accused him of witchcraft. As her story expanded, it became more and more lurid, until it included the suggestion the two were lovers. However, there is no evidence to support the affair beyond Abigail’s testimony, and plenty to suggest that she was lying. Consider the following circumstantial evidence. The age difference: Proctor was 60 and Williams was 11. Although it is commonly presumed that such an age difference was tolerated in this era, that is largely false. Although noblewomen married young, the relationships were not consummated until mid to late teens. And for common folk, parish records suggest that the average marriage age for a woman was 25. This suggests a consensual relationship with such a huge age gap was extremely unlikely. Proctor had been married twice before, having many children, including daughters. At his trial 32 neighbours signed a petition attesting to his good character. There is no evidence he had an interest in underage girls. According to this site on the history of Massachusetts, there is no evidence that they two actually knew one another prior to the trials. The estimated population of the area at the time varies between 500-2000 individuals, so this is entirely plausible. Abigail Williams made a huge variety of accusations against people in Salem - 57 in total according to court records. We cannot, therefore, be sure there was anything special to inspire her accusation against Proctor, such as an affair. In fact, Proctor was a critic of the trials in general and accused several of the witnesses of lying, including Williams, stating they deserved to be whipped. That would seem a more likely motivation for Williams than an affair. Presuming that witches don’t, in fact, exist, it seems that almost all of Williams’ testimony consisted of lies.

There is no reason to suppose the affair was any different. None of this seems to have stopped Miller from imagining that the affair was real. He seems to have believed this whole-heartedly and not merely used it as an inspiration for the play.

He stated: “Elizabeth Proctor had been the orphaned Abigail’s mistress, and they had lived together in the same small house until Elizabeth fired the girl. By this time, I was sure, John Proctor had bedded Abigail, who had to be dismissed most likely to appease Elizabeth. There was bad blood between the two women now. That Abigail started, in effect, to condemn Elizabeth to death with her touch, then stopped her hand, then went through with it, was quite suddenly the human center of all this turmoil.” It is interesting that he refers to “two women” even though Abigail was, in fact, a young girl. Perhaps when he said this he was unaware, or simply not thinking of, Abigail’s age which of course does make the story more plausible. References: - Hill, Frances (2009) *The Salem Witch Trials Reader*. Da Capo Press.