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Conquering Evil with Good

“To ignore evil is to become accomplice to it.” (HOOK) The words of Martin Luther King, Jr. leave quite an impact on the reader. But what is evil? What constitutes injustice? The dictionary definition of the word is “an unjust act or occurrence.” But I would personally take it even further. Anywhere that a person or a group of persons is being made to feel a lack of dignity or worth, anywhere that an individual suffers or pays the price for something they are not guilty of…that to me is injustice. Often times we turn the other way or refuse to acknowledge when something terrible is happening around us. As long as it doesn’t affect us, we are willing to remain quiet. But this is not enough. There are multiple examples from history where individuals refused to participate in injustice, but did nothing to actually stop it, and so it continued.

Injustice ends only when individuals are willing to do the right thing. It is not enough to merely stand by and refuse to join in. (THESIS) As MLK states, inaction is the same as being an “accomplice” to injustice. We all have a conscience. We are all familiar with, in those moments when we are not doing the right thing, that little nagging feeling in our gut, reminding us that this is a moment of choice…that our guilt comes from us knowingly and willingly either doing the wrong thing or not stepping in to stop the wrong thing from occurring. We all too often keep from doing the right thing because we assume it is somebody else’s job. Someone else will do the work for us. But passing the responsibility off to somebody else is irresponsible and could ultimately damage society. We have to be willing to step in and STOP injustice, for the sake of our communities, for the sake of our future. Even if it comes at the cost of our own lives. This theme is one of Arthur Miller’s key ideas in *The Crucible*.

Nowhere can this theme be seen more easily than in the actions of Abigail Williams and John Proctor. In the play, Abigail is arguably the character most responsible for the injustices that occurred during the Salem Witch Trials. Abigail, in order to avoid punishment, accused innocent people of witchcraft, ultimately causing their deaths. Her actions created mass hysteria, panic, suspicion, and fear. In contrast, John Proctor, the protagonist in the play, helps bring an end to Abigail’s reign of terror by choosing to act with integrity. He willingly sacrificed his name and reputation when he admitted to his affair with Abigail, all in the hopes of showing that she was a bad person. He also refused to sign his name to a lie because he knew it would only continue the cycle of death and injustice in his town. Ultimately, John’s choice to do the right thing in both situations was one of the reasons the witch trials came to an end.