

2. Discuss how conflict and resolution are treated in two works you have studied.

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Thesis

Although the different narrative structures influence the way Atwood and Miller present conflicts in their works, both authors present similar trajectories and patterns in the way conflicts are resolved. These choices help both works create tension and convey hope.

A. First Point of Comparison

For instance, **marital conflicts** are at the center of both The Handmaid's Tale and The Crucible.

1. Atwood's novel, told from Offred's perspective, gives readers a privileged but one-sided look into the relationship between her and Luke.
 - Conflict: Offred loses job, Luke not outraged – leads to questioning (“Unfair, unjust, untrue. But Luke:....”) after the fact that only readers but not Luke are ever aware of
 - Resolution: POV buries and internalizes the conflict, Offred can only question
 - Conflict: separated and captured, Offred's forced relationship with Commander, voluntary relationship with Nick
 - Resolution: due to structure, left open ended, due to POV see Offred's guilt but don't know how it would ever effect Luke
2. As seen in The Handmaid's Tale, husbands and wives also deal with conflicts in The Crucible. And once more, it is the protagonist and their spouse who is the central concern. However, unlike Offred and Luke, the Proctor's romantic spat reaches a meaningful resolution.
 - Conflict: John's affair leads him to “go tiptoe around this house for seven month” / “walk on eggshells”
 - Resolution: cold indifference turns to heated arguments
 - Conflict: The trials, John turning on Abby and fighting for Elizabeth
 - Resolution: find their love for each other in the trials (John passionately defends his wife, Elizabeth breaks character and lies for John); John lays down his life for his own integrity, finds his goodness (peaceful resolution to the marital conflict despite tragic end to central witchcraft plot)
 - Genre makes all conflicts are visible, spoken and external

Second Point of Comparison

While the conflicts among protagonists obviously drive the narratives in both works, interesting **conflicts** can also be seen **among the supporting cast of characters**.

1. In Atwood's novel, Moira is a striking example of a minor character who has several meaningful conflicts with members of the regime.
 - Conflict: Moira caught trying to escape, attacks Aunt Elizabeth with toilet seat

- Resolution: torturous punishment to make an example of her to other Handmaids (tension, foreboding)
- Conflict: second escape
 - Resolution: Succeeds, initially inspiring other Handmaids (hope)
 - Readers see Jezebels as a bad alternative; Moira is fine with it, highlighting the depravity of Gilead she escaped
- 2. Much in the same way, Mary Warren's conflicts with the courts in Salem demonstrate their formidable power. However, her ultimate failure and weakness, contrasted with Moira's success and strength, lead readers to a more tragic reading of this minor character and more despair than hope.
 - Conflict: Mary emboldened by her role in the court, challenges John Proctor (tension)
 - Resolution: Proctor overpowers her and forces her to testify to save Elizabeth
 - Conflict: Mary takes on the courts and accuses the girls
 - Resolution: caves under weight of Danforth's authority and Abby's power, turns on Proctor and accuses witchcraft ("you are the devil's man") to avoid her conflict (despair)

Third Point of Comparison

Finally, although these character conflicts are a rich source of tension, it is important to remember that they exist within the broader **institutional conflicts** of both works. The way these are resolved helps convey important themes.

1. In The Handmaid's Tale, the imposing structures of Gilead are eventually toppled thanks to resistance movements and flawed leadership.
 - Conflict: Mayday has infiltrators promoting resistance and escape; Commanders are hypocrites (Jezebels, affair w/Offred, manipulating religious texts)
 - Resolution: individual uncertainty remains (what happened with Offred, Nick, others?), but historical notes document the eventual collapse of Gilead, offering some hope that such regimes cannot last
2. Just as the historical notes provide a sense of hope that oppressive theocratic regimes are not sustainable in Atwood's novel, the epilogue in Miller's play also sends a thematic message about the fall of corrupt and overreaching power structures.
 - Conflict: witchcraft accusations start with low-hanging fruit (Tituba, Sarah Good) and move up (Elizabeth, Nurse)
 - Resolution: once it reaches the governor's wife, Echoes down the corridor tells us, the whole witchhunt is dissolved
 - This reinforces themes of social injustice (only wrong when accusing a certain type of person) but also shows hope in that a overreaching government eventually collapses
 - Resolution: Abby, antagonist, being made a prostitute after her escape also sends a message about karmic punishment for the deceitful and bad characters