

Study Guide: *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller

Act One

1. What causes the first talk of witchcraft?
2. What does the conflict between Reverend Parris and John Proctor reveal about Puritan attitudes toward church authority?
3. How does Miller characterize Parris? How does Parris feel about his parishoners?
4. Why is Thomas Putnam willing to speak of witchcraft? How does Mrs. Putnam know what Ruth was doing in the woods?
5. What did happen in the woods?
6. Why does Abigail "admit" that Tituba and Ruth are conjuring spirits? Why is Abigail afraid the others will confess what they were doing in the woods? How does she treat the other girls? How does she treat her uncle?
7. What are Abigail's feelings towards John Proctor? Contrast the way Abigail and John feel about the affair.
8. Why do Proctor and Rebecca Nurse speak out against Hale's coming to town?
9. Why does Abigail accuse Tituba? Why does Hale believe Abigail rather than Tituba? How does he lead Tituba into naming names? Why do Abigail and Betty name names?
10. Land ownership is frequently discussed in Act One. Why do you think Arthur Miller spent so much time on this topic? Why is it important to the characters? Be specific about which characters are involved in land disputes and how that affects their judgment and opinion of others.

Act Two

1. What is the significance of the scene between Elizabeth and John Proctor? What does it reveal about their relationship and about their characters?
2. Why do you think Miller would include such a conversation?
3. What does Elizabeth encourage John to do on pages 5?
4. Explain Elizabeth's statement: "John, if it were not Abigail that you must go to hurt, would you falter now? I think not?" and explain John's response.
5. What is the gift Mary Warren gives to Elizabeth?
6. What information does Mary Warren provide about the trial? What role is she playing at the trial? Why does John forbid her from attending?
7. How many had been arrested for witchcraft at this point?

8. Mary Warren tells Proctor that those accused will not hang if they do something - what is it that they must do?
9. Explain why Mary Warren thinks Elizabeth should speak civilly to her?
10. Why does Rev. Hale come to the Proctor's home? What does this scene reveal about Hale's role in the trial?
11. What does Proctor tell Hale about why the children were ill? How does he claim to know?
12. What is the point of the discussion between Hale and the Proctors about whether or not they believe in witches?
13. What event begins to change Hale's opinion about the arrests? How does he feel about the court?
14. Who do you think accused Elizabeth and why?
15. Which of the Ten Commandments does Proctor forget?
16. How are these two ideas connected: 1) Walcott buying a pig. 2) Martha Corey being accused of witchcraft.
17. Explain the allusion that Proctor makes to Pontius Pilate.
18. What does Proctor want Mary Warren to do after Elizabeth is arrested? What is her response to this?
19. What do we learn about Mary Warren's motives at the end of the act? Why did she give the poppet to Elizabeth?

Act Three

1. What is the significance of the behind the scenes discussion between Hathorne, Danforth, Martha Corey, and Giles Corey?
2. Who does Proctor bring into court with him?
3. What does Mary Warren tell Judge Danforth?
4. What is the significance of Proctor plowing on Sunday?
5. What does Judge Danforth tell Proctor about Elizabeth?
6. What arrangement does Danforth make for Elizabeth regarding the date of her hanging?
7. Danforth assumes Proctor would drop his fight once Elizabeth's arrangement is made -- why does Proctor refuse to back down?

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8. What document does Proctor present to Danforth, and what does the document say?
9. How many people have signed the document?
10. What does Danforth do to those who signed the document presented by Proctor?
11. Explain the statement made by Danforth: "a person is either with this court or he or she must be counted against it, there be no road between." Is this true?
12. What is meant by Proctor's statement "Do that which is good, and no harm shall come to thee"?
13. What accusation does Giles Corey make against Thomas Putnam?
14. What information does Corey withhold from the court?
15. Who does Danforth say can best identify a witch?
16. What change occurs in the opinion of Rev. Hale?
17. Does Mary Warren actually admit that she lied even when she knew innocent people would hang by her evidence?
18. What can Mary Warren not do when requested? What point does Hathorne make about it?
19. What secret does John openly admit to Danforth?
20. What does Elizabeth do to protect John Proctor's name?
21. What does Mary Warren say to reverse her reversal of prior testimony?
22. What evidence is there that Rev. Hale no longer believes the testimony and crying out of the girls?
23. What do the girls do to convince the men otherwise? Why? How do their actions further befuddle (confuse) Mary?

Act Four

1. What time of day does Act IV open?
2. Whose presence in the jail makes Danforth upset?
3. Cheever says that cows are running freely in the streets. Why are they roaming?
4. Who does Parris say has robbed him and vanished from the town?
5. What object did Parris see as an intentional threat to his life?

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6. How many people have hanged already, and why does Danforth refuse to postpone any hangings?
7. Who has been arrested and detained in the dungeon.
8. Is Elizabeth really pregnant?
9. Rev. Hale offers four signs that the town is being ruined. Please list them.
10. Who is planning to hang when the sun rises in a few hours?
11. Does Rebecca confess to witchcraft?
12. Give two reasons why Giles Corey was smart for not admitting or denying the charges against him.
13. What were Giles Corey's dying words, and how did he die?
14. What does Proctor admit to?
15. What will Proctor not sign?
16. Why would Proctor admit, but not sign, a confession of his guilt?
17. How does Proctor think Danforth is using him?
18. What finally happens to Proctor's confession?
19. What happens to John Proctor?
20. List the fate of these characters:
 - Rev. Parris
 - Tituba
 - Abigail Williams
 - John Proctor
 - Rebecca Nurse
 - Giles Corey
 - Martha Corey
 - Rev. Hale
 - Elizabeth Proctor