

## *The Crucible Questions*

### **Act One – Introduction on pg. 1234-1237**

1. From the opening of the drama, what do we learn about Reverend Parris? What kind of person is he?
2. Did everyone in Salem possess a strong work ethic and determination? Explain.'
3. What kept those who lived in Salem in line?
4. What was the duty of the "two-man patrol"?
5. In relation, Miller writes that the "predilection for minding other people's business was time-honored among the people of Salem, and it undoubtedly created many of the suspicions which were to feed the coming madness." What can we relate this to today?
6. Miller also writes that the people of Salem "carried about an air of innate resistance, even of persecution." What does this mean, and where did this trait stem from?
7. What comparisons does Miller make between the folks of Salem and those of Jamestown and Massachusetts Bay?
8. Miller writes, "social disorder in any age breeds such mystical suspicions, and when, as in Salem, wonders are brought forth from below the social surface, it is too much to expect people to hold back very long from laying on the victims with all the force of their frustrations." What is he referring to, and how does this compare with situations today?
9. Miller writes, "Evidently the time came in New England when the repressions of order were heavier than seemed warranted by the dangers against which the order was organized. The witch-hunt was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom." What does this mean?
10. Why did the witch-hunts lead to people "express[ing] publicly...guilt and sins, under the cover of accusations against the victims"?

### **Act One – pg. 1237-1263**

1. What is wrong with Betty?
2. Why does Parris suggest calling in Reverend Hale?
3. What do Ann and Thomas Putnam suggest is Betty's problem? What is their motivation for suggesting this?
4. Rev. Parris is worried that Abigail's actions have jeopardized something important-What is jeopardized?
5. What is wrong with Ruth? How do the Putnams tie her problem to Betty's?
6. What does the conversation between Abigail, Mercy Lewis, Mary Warren, and Betty reveal about their recent activities?
7. What will Abigail bring to those who "breathe a word of the truth"?
8. What event transpired between Abigail and John Proctor prior to the beginning of Act One?
9. What does Abigail say about Elizabeth Proctor? How might this affect the outcome of the play?
10. What happens to Betty when she hears the Lord's name?
11. Why don't the Putnams like the Nurses?
12. What does Rebecca say about Betty's condition?
13. Give two examples that Proctor, Putnam, and Corey give for why Parris is an ineffective minister.

14. What is the Putnam's grievance (complaint) over land? What significance might this have?
15. How does Hale confuse Tituba? What is the significance of their conversation?
16. How and by whom are the other villagers accused of witchcraft? What is the motivation of the girls' accusations? How many people are accused on the last page of Act One?

### Act Two – pg. 1267-1287

1. How much time has elapsed between Acts One and Two?
2. What has happened in this time period? What role does Abigail play in the proceedings?
3. Describe the relationship between John and Elizabeth.
4. Why does John hesitate in exposing Abigail as a fraud?
5. Explain what John Proctor means when he says, "Learn charity, woman. I have gone tiptoe in this house all seven month since she is gone. I have not moved from there to there without I think to please you, and still an everlasting funeral marches round your heart" (28).
6. When Proctor says, "An everlasting funeral marches round your heart," what literary technique is being used?
7. Who do you agree with in the discussion, John or Elizabeth?
8. What does Mary give to Elizabeth? Why?
9. On what evidence does the court convict Goody Osburn?
10. Describe Mary's reaction when Proctor forbids her to return to court. What news does she share about his family?
11. Why does Reverend Hale visit the Proctor household?
12. Which accusation shocks Goody Proctor?
13. What does Reverend Hale find in the church records regarding the Proctors? What explanation does John give for the two "issues"?
14. When asked to recite the commandments, John remembers all but one. What is the significance of the forgotten commandment?  
What literary technique is being used?
15. What are John and Elizabeth's feelings on the existence of witches? How does Reverend Hale react to this?
16. Why do Giles Corey and Francis Nurse arrive at the Proctor house?
17. What charge has been brought against Rebecca Nurse?
18. On what charge is Martha Corey arrested?
19. Who is Ezekiel Cheever? For what reason does he arrive at the Proctor household?
20. Why is the presence of the poppet with a needle in it in the Proctor house an important piece of "evidence"? (What happened earlier that evening, and who was involved?) Explain.
21. Who sat next to Mary when she sewed the poppet?
22. Explain, "The girl is murder! She must be ripped out of the world!" Why would Elizabeth say this? What does this reveal about her character?
23. Read what Proctor says on page 36- "If *she* is innocent!...I'll not give my wife to vengeance."  
What point is Proctor making?
24. What does Reverend Hale say about the court?
25. Why doesn't Mary willingly go to court and tell what she knows? (What does she fear?)
26. Does Mary know about the affair between Proctor and Abigail?
27. Proctor plans on bringing Elizabeth home. How is he going to do this? Hint: ("We are only what we always were, but naked now.")

28. The protagonist of the story is the central character who drives the action, and is usually considered the hero or heroine. The antagonist is the character who struggles against the protagonist, often with cruel or destructive intent. By the end of Act Two, which character seems to be the protagonist? Which character is the antagonist? Explain your answer.

### Act Three – pg. 1291-1315

1. Describe the questioning of Martha Corey. Does this seem like a fair process? Explain.
2. How does Giles Corey feel about the situation with Martha?
3. Who does Proctor bring into court with him?
4. What does Mary Warren tell Judge Danforth?
5. What is the significance of Proctor plowing on Sunday?
6. What does Judge Danforth tell Proctor about Elizabeth?
7. Why might Miller (the author) keep stressing Elizabeth's truthfulness?
8. What arrangement does Danforth make for Elizabeth regarding the date of her hanging?
9. Danforth assumes Proctor would drop his fight once Elizabeth's arrangement is made -- why does Proctor refuse to back down?
10. What document does Proctor present to Danforth, and what does the document say? How many people have signed the document?
11. What does Danforth do to those who signed the document presented by Proctor?
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? Why won't he tell?
15. Describe Reverend Hale's reaction to these events. In what ways has his opinion changed since Act Two?
16. Who does Danforth say can best identify a witch?
17. Does Mary Warren actually admit that she lied even when she knew innocent people would hang by her evidence? What does it mean when she says, "I am with God, I am with God" (46).
18. What is revealed about Abigail's character as she is questioned?
19. What can Mary Warren not do when requested? What point does Hawthorne make about it? What is really lacking this time?
20. What secret does John openly admit to Danforth?
21. Why does Miller have John admit his guilt this way rather than through a letter or petition?
22. What does Proctor mean by "the last night of my joy"? What is he saying about the last eight months?
23. Explain, "I have made a bell of my honor! I have rung the doom of my good name—you will believe me, Mr. Danforth! My wife is innocent, except she knew a whore when she saw one!" (49).
24. When John states, "I have made a bell of my honor! I have rung the doom of my good name," what literary technique is being demonstrated?
25. What does Elizabeth tell the court? Why?
26. Explain what the girls "see". Who is causing it? What does Abigail accuse Mary of?
27. What does Mary Warren say to reverse her prior testimony? How do we know (and how should they know) that she is lying?
28. What evidence is there that Rev. Hale no longer believes the testimony and crying out of the girls?
29. At what point does Proctor give up? How can we tell?
30. With which character do you most sympathize in this Act? Why? Explain your answer.

#### Act Four – pg. 1319-1334

1. What time of day is it when Act IV opens?
2. Explain the significance of the scene with Tituba and Sarah Good. What state of mind are they in?
3. Whose presence in the jail makes Danforth upset? What is the purpose of this person being in the jail?
4. Cheever says that cows are running freely in the streets. Why are they roaming?
5. What has Abigail done to further incriminate herself?
6. What object did Parris see as an intentional threat to his life?
7. How many people have hanged already, and why does Danforth refuse to postpone any hangings?
8. Who has been arrested and detained in the dungeon?
9. Rev. Hale offers four signs that the town is being ruined because of the trials. Please list them.
10. Who is planning to hang when the sun rises in a few hours?
11. What does Hale say about life? What is his argument to Goody Proctor?
12. What do Hale and Danforth want Elizabeth to do?
13. What information is confirmed about Elizabeth?
14. Does Rebecca confess to witchcraft?
15. Was Giles Corey smart for not admitting or denying the charges against him? Explain.
16. What were Giles Corey's dying words, and how did he die?
17. How has John and Elizabeth's relationship changed?
18. What is Elizabeth's response when John asks her what he should do?
19. Explain what Elizabeth is saying, "John, I counted myself so plain, so poorly made, no honest love could come to me! Suspicion kissed you when I did; I never knew how I should say my love. It were a cold house I kept!" (60).
20. John Proctor says, "Good then. It is evil and I do it" (60). Why does Proctor decide to confess? Explain using the text.
21. At first, Danforth is not satisfied with Proctor's confession. What other information does he want Proctor to give? Why does Proctor refuse to cooperate with this wish?
22. Describe Rebecca's reaction to John's confession. What keeps Rebecca from confessing? What does this reveal about her character?
23. John doesn't want his confession posted on the church door. Why?
24. What does Proctor do to the confession? What does this act signify?
25. Why is Parris frantic at the end of the play? What does he fear?
26. Explain the importance of the following metaphor, "...for now I do think I see some goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to weave a banner with, but white enough to keep it with such dogs" (62).
27. What do Parris and Hale urge Elizabeth to do?
28. Explain her response: "He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him."
29. What is the simile used at the very end of the play? Explain its significance.