

*The Crucible* by Arthur Miller – Study Guide

Directions: Write on your own piece of paper. Answer as completely as you can.

**ACT I**

1. Define the word crucible and explain why the play is named this.
2. Like people in real life, characters in plays are not always what they seem. Often, we must question the characters' motives – their reasons for behaving as they do. Fear, greed, guilt, love, loyalty, pride and revenge are some of the driving forces behind human behavior. Use the following chart to examine the motives of each character in Act I. Fill this chart in after reading ACT I.

<b>Character</b>	<b>Words and Actions</b>	<b>Motive</b>
1.Reverend Parris	“Go directly home and speak nothing of unnatural causes.” Scene 1	fear/pride
2.Betty Parris		
3.Abigail Williams		
4.Mrs. Putnam		
5.Thomas Putnam		
6.John Proctor		
7.Rebecca Nurse		

3. Before the play begins, Miller gives an extensive setting explaining reasons for actions taken by the characters. Answer the following about this set-up that Miller gives:
  - a. Describe Parris.
  - b. How long had the village of Salem been established?
  - c. How did the Europeans view Salem at this time?
  - d. What was life like in Salem?
  - e. What was the function of the 2-man patrol?
  - f. Ahhhh, the wilderness or forest. What is the Puritan view on the forest? View of the Indians?
  - g. The Puritan beliefs were what compared to the Jamestown settlement? Why?
  - h. Describe the people of Salem in 1692.
  - i. What is the paradox that brought about the Salem tragedy?
  - j. Besides a repression, the witch-hunt was also an opportunity. What were the opportunities?
4. What does Abigail say that she and Betty were doing in the forest?
  - a. What seems to be the main motivation for Reverend Parris's concern about the girls' behavior in the forest?
5. What do Abigail, Betty, Mercy and Mary discuss after Reverend Parris leaves his daughter's room?
  - a. What events does this scene suggest may occur later in the play?
6. Who is Reverend Hale?
  - a. Why is he contacted?
  - b. Do you think he is being fair and impartial so far? Explain.
7. Summarize Abigail's prior relationship with the Proctors.
  - a. What does Betty's revelation about Abigail's actions in the forest suggest about Abigail's feelings for Goody Proctor?
8. What evidence suggests that sharp divisions exist among the people of Salem Village?
  - a. Name two others who may be accused. Explain your choices
9. What situations, if any, in contemporary life might cause an American town to be afflicted with a general hysteria? Explain.

## **ACT II**

10. What does Mary Warren bring home to Elizabeth Proctor?
  - a. What is the significance of this gift?
11. What evidence is used to support Abigail William's assertion that Elizabeth Proctor is guilty of witchcraft?
  - a. Do you think the evidence is compelling? Why or why not
12. What does Sara Good do to save herself from hanging?
  - a. Why would such an action save her?
13. According to John Proctor, what is "walking Salem" and writing the law in the community?
  - a. What evidence would support Proctor's assertion?
14. Who says the witchcraft trials are "a black mischief"?
  - a. What is ironic about that remark?
15. What is surprising that Rebecca Nurse is charged with witchcraft?

### *The Crucible* Study Guide - Continued

## **ACT III**

16. Which three depositions are presented to the judges and on whose behalf?
  - a. How do the judges discourage defenses of the accused?
17. What does John Proctor confess to Danforth?
  - a. Why does Proctor make this confession?
  - b. What does this confession reveal about his character?
18. What is the lie Elizabeth Proctor tells Danforth?
  - a. What are the consequences of her lie?
19. What truth does Mary Warren reveal about her involvement with "spirits"?
  - a. Why does she change her testimony and turn on John Proctor?
20. Why does Hale denounce at the end of Act III?
  - a. Do you find Hale sympathetic? Why or why not?
21. Who bears the most guilt for the fate of those hanged in the Salem witch trials – the girls who accused innocent people or the judges who sentenced them to death?

## **ACT IV**

22. Who seeks confessions from Rebecca Nurse and other condemned prisoners?
  - a. What motivates this person – or people – to seek these confessions?
23. What unexpected action does Abigail take in this act?
  - a. Why do you think she does this?
24. What decision torments John Proctor?
  - a. What conflict does Elizabeth experience as her husband seeks her guidance?
25. What does John Proctor have "no tongue for"?
  - a. Why does Proctor confess and then retract his confession?
26. Why does Elizabeth say as her husband has "his goodness" as he is about to be hanged?
27. Do you think John Proctor made the right decision? Explain.