

Crucial Crucible questions

Act 1

1. What suggestions about witchcraft, its nature and where it might have been seen are made in this Act? By whom? About whom?
2. Who 'confesses'? What do they confess? Why do they confess?
3. How does the suggestion that witchcraft might be taking place turn into mass hysteria? Why?

Act 2

1. What has changed in the Salem community? Are people still close? Why?
2. Mass hysteria was evident at the end of Act One. How has this affected people?
3. What is the role of the court? Who is in charge of administering justice?
4. How important is the Devil in this act?
5. Choose the part of the act which you think is the most significant in relation to the question, and write about how Miller creates a sense of fear and terror in your chosen section.

Act 3

1. This act is interesting for the way in which the power shifts. Look at who has the power, and when. Then look at how the next person gains power.
2. Miller is well known for his use of stage directions. Look at the stage directions in this act – what is their significance?
3. What more do we learn about Abigail by the end of the act?
4. What more do we learn about the other girls by the end of the act?
5. What more do we learn about John Proctor in this act?

Act 4

1. What fears become evident in this act?
2. Do you think that John Proctor is believable?
3. What does Miller teach us about truth and justice in this act?
4. What feelings are you left with at the end of the play?

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After reading

After reading and/or performing the play, write an extended answer to the following essay question:

Miller believed 'that the reader [would] discover [in *The Crucible*] the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history'. By what means, and to what extent does he achieve this?

Focus on:

- character
- action
- language, ideas and themes
- social and historical context
- literary tradition.