

The Crucible

Discussion Packet, Act 1

Act 1 (p. 169 – 189)

- 1) In the opening stage directions of the play, Arthur Miller writes that Tituba “is very frightened because her slave sense has warned her that, as always, trouble in this house eventually lands on her back.” The term “slave sense” most likely refers to what? (p. 169)

- 2) When Abigail enters, she is described as “a strikingly beautiful girl...with an endless capacity for dissembling.” What does the phrase an “endless capacity for dissembling” suggest? (p. 169)

- 3) When Susanna tells Abigail and Parris that the doctor who examined Betty couldn’t find a natural cause for her illness in his books, why do both Abigail and Parris warn Susanna to “go directly home and speak nothing of unnatural causes?” (p.170)

- 4) Why did the girls dance in the woods instead of in Salem?

- 5) Parris says to Abigail: “It must come out – my enemies will bring it out. Let me know what you done there. Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies.” What does this tell us about Parris? (p. 170)

- 6) What does Parris mean when he asks Abigail if her name is “not entirely white”? (p. 171)

- 7) When Parris asks Abigail if there is another reason why she was dismissed as the Proctor servant, how did Abigail respond? (p. 171)

8) Abigail claims that the Proctors “want slaves, not such as I. Let them send to Barbados for that. I will not black my face for any of them.” What does this tell us about Abigail? (p. 171)

9) We find out that the Putnams and Parris have something in common; what is it? (p. 172)

10) What could be some of the motivations for Putnam wanting Parris to announce that there is witchcraft in the town? (p. 172 – 173).

11) Why did Mrs. Putnam send her daughter Ruth to contact Tituba? (p. 173)

12) In anger, Parris shouts to Abigail: “What proper payment for my charity!” Why do you think Parris feels that Abigail is indebted to him? (p. 173)

13) The girls have a conversation about other events that took place the night before.

A) What did Abigail do in the forest that she wants to hide from her uncle and others? (p. 175)

B) What threat does Abigail make to the other girls if they tell what Abigail did? (p. 175)

C) What does this tell us about Abigail?

14) We know that John and Abigail had an affair that ended seven months ago. (p. 176 – 177)

A) What are some of the things that John says to explain that he doesn't want Abby to keep pursuing him?

B) What are some things that John says that still give Abby hope?

15) How do Abigail's past actions with John Proctor go against Puritan values?

16) What could Abby be symbolic of?

17) What do Mr. and Mrs. Putnam say is a sign that Betty has practiced witchcraft? (p. 177 – 178).

18) What is the rumor going around about Betty that the Putnams mentioned earlier and now Giles Corey mentions? (p. 178)

19) Rebecca Nurse quiets Betty, and Parris asks Rebecca what she makes of the situation (p. 178 – 179)

A) What does Rebecca Nurse seem to think is going on with these “sick” girls?

B) Why does Rebecca Nurse believe this?

C) What does Rebecca advise?

D) Considering your answers to the above questions, what do you believe to be the function of Rebecca Nurse in the play?

20) Why does Rebecca Nurse tell Parris: “I think you’d best send Reverend Hale back as soon as he come”? (p. 180)

21) What seems to be the source of tension between the Putnams and Rebecca Nurse? (p. 180)

22) Why does John Proctor dislike Reverend Parris? (p. 180)

23) Parris lists various frustrations that he has. What are they? (p. 180 – 181).

24) Why do you think that Parris so concerned with obtaining the deed to his home? (p. 181)

25) What animosities between Proctor and Putnam are revealed in this scene? (p. 181 – 182)

26) There are several arguments and resentments between the citizens of Salem that are seen at this point. Why would the author break away from the discussion of witchcraft to show the resentments between the different citizens?

27) Reverend Hale's past experience with the supernatural (when a woman in his community was accused of being bewitched but then recovered after a few days rest) "never raised a doubt in his mind as to the reality of the underworld or the existence of Lucifer" (182). What impact do you think this will have on how he proceeds during the play?

28) What does Hale warn the others of? (Hint: He says he will leave Salem if this happens). (p. 185)

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29) In the stage directions it is revealed that the others feel resentful towards Rebecca's note of moral superiority. What does she say that leads the people to feel this way? (p. 185)

30) What does Giles Corey reveal to Reverend Hale about his wife? (p. 186)

31) Even though Reverend Hale first says that there may not be witchcraft in Salem, what has he seen that could point to witchcraft? List five of these.

32) Why does Abigail accuse Tituba of witchery? (p. 187)

33) Why would Abigail have chosen to accuse Tituba instead of one of the other girls?

34) What specific things does Abigail say that Tituba makes her do? (p. 187)

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- 35) Although Tituba is shocked when Abigail accuses her of witchcraft, why does she eventually admit to it? (p. 188)
- 36) Why would Tituba claim that that Devil tells her to kill Parris? (p. 189)
- 37) Why does Tituba eventually name others (Sarah Good & Sarah Osbourn) of being with the devil? (p. 189)
- 38) Why is Mrs. Putnam so quick to believe that Goody Osburn is a witch? (p. 189)
- 39) Why would Abigail suddenly admit that she “danced with the Devil”? (p. 189)
- 40) What might motivate Abigail, Tituba, and Betty to name various people that they “saw with the Devil?” (p. 189)

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41) What event in the play seems to be the source or root of all of the hysteria that is starting to take place?