

Act One Questions – *The Crucible*

1. Where and when is the opening scene of the play set?
2. Why is the Reverend Samuel Parris so distraught at the beginning of Act One? What unnerves him about the report that Susanna Walcott brings from Doctor Griggs? Why has Rev. Parris sent for Reverend Hale from Beverly?
3. What do we learn in the exposition (Writer's INC) of the play about the events in the forest? About Abigail Williams' past connections with the Proctor family?
4. What information about Thomas Putnam does Arthur Miller tell us in his expository aside? What does Ann Putnam claim in the play about her dead babies?
5. Before the arrival of John Hale, what are some of the subjects for petty disagreement among John Proctor, Giles Corey, Thomas Putnam and Reverend Samuel Parris?
6. According to the stage directions, how does Reverend John Hale enter for the first time?
7. What happens when Rev. John Hale interrogates Tituba? How does the atmosphere of the scene become hysterical at the end of the act?
8. What is the meaning of *crucible* in the title of the play? What kind of play does this title lead you to expect?
9. In the course of this act, Miller includes a number of commentaries, or expository asides, in the published version of the play. In the first aside, what does Miller say about the Puritans' outlook toward the virgin forest? What does he mean when he characterizes the Puritan community in Salem at this period as a theocracy?
10. Consider the stage directions that describe the physical setting of the play as the curtain rises on Act One. Together with the opening lines of dialogue, what atmosphere or mood (Writer's INC) does this setting create?
11. Miller often foreshadows (Writer's INC) his characterizations with a descriptive phrase in the stage directions just before a character's first entrance. In the stage directions, what does he suggest about each of these characters: Abigail Williams, Ann Putnam and Mercy Lewis? How does the dialogue (Writer's INC) and actions of each character in this act bear out Miller's suggestions?
12. Summarize your impressions of the Reverend Samuel Parris in this act. This means, describe his characterization (Writer's INC). What are his principal flaws or moral weaknesses?
13. One of Miller's major subjects in the play is the nature of authority. Comment on how Reverend Samuel Parris, Thomas Putnam, Reverend John Hale and Rebecca Nurse are linked with the idea of authority in Act One. At this stage, what seems to be the playwright's opinion about each of these character's claims to be possessing authority? Make sure to have at least 1-2 sentences about each character, explaining/analyzing the nature of authority (abused? not abused? misunderstood?)
14. In two long segments of this act, Miller establishes a dominant form for many of the subsequent scenes in the play: the question and answer of interrogation. The playwright implies that both interrogations in this act are flawed in their methods and results. Who questions whom in the interrogation scenes in the act? Why does each interrogation fail?
15. How would you describe the atmosphere or mood at the end of this act? What might this atmosphere foreshadow about future events in the town of Salem?