

Act Four Questions – *The Crucible*

1. What is the setting of this act? How much time has elapsed since the end of Act Three?

2a. Where do Tituba and Sarah Good tell Marshal Herrick they are going?

2b. The scene in the jail with Marshal Herrick, Sarah Good, and Tituba can be seen as comic relief – for a moment the tension and seriousness of the play is reduced. Do you think there might also be a serious purpose in this scene? If so, what is it?

3. Immediately after his entrance, Deputy Governor Danforth remarks on a “prodigious stench.” What is the apparent cause of the odor in the jail?

4a. What does Reverend Samuel Parris report about Abigail Williams and Mercy Lewis?

4b. Why is Parris afraid for his personal safety?

4c. What is Deputy Governor Danforth’s reaction?

4d. Why do you think Deputy Governor Danforth is said to be alarmed at the news that Abigail Williams and Mercy Lewis have fled?

4e. What inner conflict may this news rouse in him? How does this conflict affect the course of his decisions in this act?

5a. Why is Deputy Governor Danforth especially nervous about rumors concerning events in the city of Andover?

5b. What are his reasons for receiving no pleas for pardon or postponement of the executions?

6a. According to Reverend John Hale, what is the present condition of the countryside?

6b. Why does Reverend Hale work so hard to get the prisoners to confess to lies about their witchery?

6c. What has Reverend Hale finally figured out? Why doesn’t the court believe him?

6d. How might Reverend Hale’s description of the countryside be regarded as symbolic of the moral and spiritual desolation that has afflicted Salem?

7a. According to Elizabeth Proctor, how did Giles Corey die?

7b. Why does Giles Corey choose to do this? Who(m) is he protecting?

8a. For what does Elizabeth Proctor ask John Proctor to forgive her?

8b. For what does John Proctor ask Elizabeth Proctor to provide for him?

8c. In the critical scene between Elizabeth and John Proctor, we gain insight into John’s actions at the climax of the play. How are Elizabeth and John both tortured by guilt?

8d. Why does Elizabeth refuse to influence John Proctor’s decision?

9a. Why does John Proctor confess and then retract his confession?

9b. What is the importance regarding the structure of the play of the appearance of Rebecca Nurse just when John Proctor is struggling to make the most important decision of his life?

9c. What structural parallel in Act II is recalled by John Proctor’s tearing up of his confession near the end of this act?

9d. How does this parallel relate to a theme of the play?

10. At the end of the play, when Reverend John Hale urges Elizabeth Proctor to make a last-minute appeal to her husband, how does she respond?

11a. In what ways is the subject of identity raised in the final scene?

11b. Did John Proctor reach the right decision at the end of the play? Explain.