

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The Crucible

by Arthur Miller

Copyright © 2002 by Prestwick House, Inc., P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938.
1-800-932-4593. www.prestwickhouse.com Permission to copy this unit for
classroom use is extended to purchaser for his or her personal use. *This material,
in whole or part, may not be copied for resale.*

ISBN: 978-1-60389-527-9

Item No. 201490

The Crucible

Act I

1. The play begins with Reverend Parris praying. In the Act One “Overture,” Miller writes that Parris “cut a villainous path, and there is very little good to be said for him.” Write a “Help Wanted” ad that expresses the qualities you think are valuable in a spiritual leader. Compare and contrast those qualities with Parris’ description.
2. When Miller describes the two-man patrol, he comments that the people of Salem have a tendency to mind other people’s business. Even now, over three hundred years later, we find ways throughout our country to do the same. One of these ways is with well-concealed cameras that film people in public places. The persons being filmed are generally unaware that they are being watched and filmed. Think about whether you feel this is a good idea or not. Complete the following dialogue you might have with the Mayor of your town about cameras in operation where you live:

You: It’s good of you to see me, Mayor. I’m concerned about the hidden cameras in our town. I feel that...

3. Arthur Miller writes of the differences between the settlers of Jamestown in Virginia and the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts. He states that the main difference in the ability to survive the harsh conditions in 1600’s America was that the Jamestown settlers were individualists looking for financial profit, and the Puritans acted as a community and with a spiritual motivation. Think about your own life. Are you an individualist, or are you a person who is more comfortable as part of a group? Imagine that this question is part of a test requiring you to write an essay about that subject. Write an answer to that essay question in no less than ten complete sentences, giving details of why you feel that way. Begin your answer as follows:

Regarding my preference to be an individualist or a member of a group, I’d have to say...

Response Journal

4. Betty is so sick that she is “inert” and “does not stir on the bed.” Think back to a time when you were sick enough to have to stay in bed. Make a list of ten things you wish someone had done for you during your stay in bed. The items on your list should be in complete sentences and should explain why you would wish for that item. Below is an example:

Example: I wish someone would have bought me a bent straw so that when I drank from the glass I wouldn't get all wet.

5. Abigail threatens Mercy, Betty, and Mary not to “breathe a word, or the edge of a word.” There are many other examples of archaic speech in this play. Make a list of ten sentences in the play you think are definitely archaic. The first one is done for you as an example:
“Aye, sir. He bid me tell you.”
6. Abigail is desperately in love with John Proctor. Write a love letter from Abigail to John using some of the archaic language you listed in question 5 above. Your love letter should be not less than eight complete sentences.
7. John Proctor, because he knows that adultery is wrong, feels guilty about his relationship with Abigail. Write a letter he might have written to her, which tells of his guilty feelings, why he feels the way he does, and what he wants Abigail to do.
8. Tituba's discussion with Hale and Parris is entirely a lie. Write a short story where everything that you write is a lie. You can write about school, home, your friends, your classes, or anything you wish, but it all must be lies.

The Crucible

9. We know that the greatest fear among the characters in *The Crucible* is to be accused of witchcraft. In this first act, Reverend Hale feels that Betty may be “truly in the Devil’s grip.” Abigail and Tituba are also under suspicion. From pages 42 through 48, Betty, Abigail and Tituba try to defend themselves against the accusations that they are tools of the Devil. Complete the following conversation you might have with a classmate who is also reading *The Crucible* about whether it was right for Betty, Abigail, and Tituba to lie to save themselves:

Classmate: There is no reason for them to lie. They just should have kept repeating the truth of what they were doing in the forest until they were believed.

You: You cannot be serious!

10. Many rumors are flying around Salem by the end of Act I. Write a two-paragraph newspaper article reporting on these rumors. Make sure you include the **why, where, when, who, and how** so that readers will understand all that is happening.
11. Act I has introduced you to several main characters: Abigail, Reverend Parris, John Proctor, and Reverend Hale. Each is a good candidate for a character study. Imagine that you are the casting director for a film version of *The Crucible*. Write a detailed description of what these characters in the film would be like and what actor you might want to portray each in the movie. You should include:
- appearance
 - type of voice
 - temperament
 - age
 - faults
 - strong points

Act II

12. Elizabeth and John Proctor's conversation over dinner seems to show that he is trying hard to please her, but he becomes angry when Elizabeth wants him to go to the Court in Salem and tell the truth about Abigail's lying accusations. Imagine you are Elizabeth's best friend. Recount the conversation that Elizabeth might have had with you in which she unburdened herself about her worries and her marriage to John. Begin the conversation as follows:

Elizabeth: Thank Providence that I have you for a friend whom I trust utterly. I just have to tell ...

13. Proctor says, "Lilac is the smell of nightfall, I think." Our sense of smell has a powerful effect on our memories. Make a list of eight different smells you associate with different places, season, events, etc., in your past. Two examples are supplied for you:

chalk dust – the first day of school

salty air – summer at the beach

14. John gets into trouble with his wife when she catches him lying about being alone with Abigail. Write a paragraph of no less than eight sentences about a time when you or someone you know was caught in a lie and how you felt when it happened. It is not necessary to use any real names in your paragraph.
15. John is angry that Mary disobeyed Elizabeth and went to town. Who makes decisions about when you can go out, how late you can stay out, where you go, and who you can go with? What factors determine whether you're allowed to go?

The Crucible

16. Obeying the rules in one's home is a problem even in the present day, so most young people may sympathize with Mary's situation. It should be kept in mind that there are real dangers for young people today, and that people watching over teenagers are primarily trying to keep them safe. Imagine you are the parent of a teenager. Complete the following conversation you might have with your child in which you ask him or her to behave in a certain manner and why you feel that way.

Parent: For starters, I love you. And because I love you, there are some things I'm going to ask you to do...

17. Mary, who works for John and Elizabeth, complains, "I'll not be ordered to bed no more, Mr. Proctor! I am eighteen and a woman." What kinds of rules should Mary—as their employee—have to follow? Make a list of "House Rules" for Mary.
18. Mary is "dissatisfied, uncertain of herself," perhaps because she has so few rights. What rights should teenagers have? Write an editorial that would be published in your school paper discussing your feelings about the current age requirement for driving, voting, and drinking alcohol.
19. Elizabeth says, "I am no Goody Good that sleeps in ditches, nor Osburn, drunk and half-witted." Elizabeth feels that these two women are easier to accuse of witchcraft because of their low social and economic status. Do all people truly have equal rights in a court of law? What seems to give some citizens the edge over the others in court? Even today, many feel that not all people receive equal treatment in courts of law. Complete the following with six sentences each, which give your true thoughts about the subject of equality or inequality under the law:

I think the people in our country who are the most likely to receive unfair treatment under the law are...

I think the people in our country who are most likely not to suffer harshly in our courts are...