Study guide for Acts II-IV of *The Crucible*

Act II

1. What can the reader already infer about the relationship between John Proctor and Elizabeth Proctor? They have a tense relationship and Elizabeth knows about the affair, and she is still mad about it

What does Elizabeth encourage John to do? Go to the court and tell them that Abigail is lying

1. How long has Elizabeth and John’s relationship been in jeopardy? 7 months (the same amount of time since Abigail has been fired)
2. What does Mary give Elizabeth? A poppet
3. What information does Mary provide about the trial? (Hint: how many people are accused now?) 37 people are accused now- the mass hysteria is spreading
4. What role is Mary Warren playing in the trial? How does she feel about this? She is an “official” of the court. She feels important and takes pride in her job
5. How does John Proctor feel about this? Why does John forbid her from attending? He hates this because he knows the girls are lying. He doesn’t want her to go to the court anymore because he knows the girls are convicting innocent women.
6. What does Sarah Good confess to? Witchcraft
7. Mary Warren tells Proctor that those accused will not be hanged if they do what? Confess and give someone else up
8. What is “off” about Goody Good’s health condition? She is pregnant
9. Why does Mary Warren think Elizabeth should speak civilly to her? Because Elizabeth’s name was mentioned as a possible witch in court that day.
10. What are Elizabeth’s suspicions regarding Abigail? What does John agree to do regarding her suspicions and suggestion? What will everyone find out if he does this? Elizabeth thinks that Abigail wants to take Elizabeth’s place as John’s wife. Because of this John agrees to go to the court and say that Abigail told him that it was all “pretense”. If he tells the court this, Abigail could tell the court about their affair.
11. What does Elizabeth mean when she says, “Oh, the noose, the noose is up!”? She means that the court is ready to kill people.
12. What news do Giles Corey and Frances Nurse tell John Proctor? These men come to tell Proctor that their wives (Martha and Rebecca) have been arrested on charges of witchcraft.
13. On what basis are the newly arrested being accused? Martha Corey: for casting a spell on Walcot making it impossible for him to keep a pig alive. Rebecca: for the “supernatural” murder of Goody Putnam’s babies.
14. How are these two ideas connected: (1) Walcott buying a pig, and (2) Martha Corey being accused of witchcraft? See answer above
15. What does John mean when he says, “I’ll tell you what’s walking in Salem—vengeance is walking in Salem”? He means that people are using this time to accuse people they don’t like of witchcraft. It is a time when people can get revenge on others and blame it on the devil.
16. What does Proctor want Mary to do after Elizabeth is arrested? What is her response to this? Proctor wants Mary to go and tell the court that all of the girls (including herself) are pretending. She does not want to do this because she fears Abigail and thinks that Abigail and the other girls will turn on her.

Act III

1. How did one accused escape execution? He or she had to confess and then offer up names of other people he or she saw with the devil.
2. What does Mary Warren tell the court about the girls? She tells the court that all of the girls are pretending and that they never saw anyone with the devil. This is important because she tries to tell the truth here.
3. What does Giles Corey tell the court about Thomas Putnam? Giles tells the court that a friend told him, that Thomas Putnam was bragging and saying when his daughter Ruth accused people she was giving him a gift of land. This is important because this is “proof” that Thomas Putnam is just accusing people in order to gain land for himself. It also shows his selfish nature.
4. The reliability of the girls’ testimony is on the line when Elizabeth is summoned to the court. What is the importance of the one lie she ever tells? She says that an affair between Proctor and Abigail never happened. By telling this lie she is essentially condemning herself. If she told the truth about the affair, the court would have seen that Abigail had a motive to kill Elizabeth and the trials would have been stopped there.
5. What vision did the girls see? What is the importance of this? When Mary Warren is telling the court that the girls are lying about seeing spirits, the girls then advert the attention off of them and tell the court they see a yellow bird. The yellow symbolizes the yellow hammer in the communistic flag. Miller is showing that the girls are pulling “evidence” out of thin air just like McCarthy is doing. McCarthy is calling people communists without any evidence and the girls are calling people witches without any evidence as well. In both cases these accusations have the ability to ruin the accused’s reputation and life.
6. Who tried to stop the trials, but then blamed John Proctor? Mary Warren
7. How does Hale’s attitude change during Act III? He realizes that the girls are tricking the court and that he no longer wants to be a part of these false accusations.
8. Why is Elizabeth’s execution postponed? Because she claims she is pregnant

Act IV

1. Who comes to pray with the prisoners before their hanging? Parris and Hale
2. What has happened in Andover? How does this relate to Salem? There was a rebellion against the court in Andover. The court in Salem is afraid that the people of Salem will hear about the rebellion in Andover and decide to rebel against their own court.
3. At the end of the play where are Abigail and Mercy? They have robbed and fled Reverend Parris. Parris thinks they are on a ship.
4. Who is concerned about “saving face?” Parris, Danforth, and Hathorne
5. How does Giles Corey die? He is pressed to death
6. What does Elizabeth blame herself for? She blames herself for John having an affair because she was so distant towards him.
7. Why does Proctor want to confess? He wants to confess in order to be able to raise his unborn child and care for his family. He also does not think he is worthy to hang with those that are supposed to die with him (Martha and Rebecca) because he knows he is a sinful man.
8. Why does Proctor say that he did not see anyone else with the Devil? Because he does not want to condemn anyone other than himself.
9. What does Hale ask Elizabeth to do? He asks her to get John to confess so that he may save his life.
10. Why does John Proctor recant his confession? He knows that through his confession he is condemning all of the others that are accused. He refuses to lie about another person and thus ruin their reputation. He also realizes that his name/reputation is worth more than his life. If he confessed to save his life, he would have nothing worth living for because his reputation would be ruined.
11. What happens to John Proctor? He rips his confession and is then hanged.
12. Who dies with Proctor? Marth Corey and Rebecca Nurse