**Vocabulary List with Definitions**

**Act One**

1. abomination—an object of disgust, shame or dislike

2. conjured—invoked unnatural or supernatural forces

3. contention—disagreement; a claim made in debate

4. deference—respect towards another’s opinion or interests

5. innate—a quality or characteristic you are born with; something integral or important

6. licentious—sexually immoral; lacking moral or ethical restraint

7. manifestation—a sign; an indication of the existence of something

8. paradox—a statement or situation which is contradictory

9. prodigious—impressive in size or amount

10. vindictive—purposely hurtful or hateful

**Act Two**

1. ameliorate—to improve or make better

2. avid—eager for; dedicated to

3. blasphemy—disrespect for God or other sacred things

4. crone—a derogatory term referring to a woman’s age or appearance

5. flailing—hitting or swinging violently

6. indignant—annoyance or anger over an unfairness towards someone or something

7. pallor—paleness in complexion

8. poppet—a rag doll

9. vengeance—punishment in return for a wrongdoing

10. wily—clever; deceitful

**Act Three**

1. abundant—an excess amount

2. auger—a hand tool used to make holes

3. deposition—a witness’s testimony given under oath

4. effrontery—shameless or arrogant behavior

5. gait—a way of walking, trotting like a horse

6. imperceptible—unable to be perceived; tiny or insignificant

7. incredulously—unbelievably

8. plaintiff—a person who brings a lawsuit against another

9. vestry—a room in a church where sacred objects are kept

10. wrath—extreme anger; God’s punishment for sin

**Act Four**

1. agape—with mouth open in astonishment

2. beguile—to charm or deceive

3. cleave—to faithfully cling to

4. disputation—a verbal disagreement; argument

5. excommunication—exclusion from a church or group

6. gaunt—excessively thin or withered

7. gibbet—a hanging post; gallows

8. indictment—a formal accusation before a jury

9. reprieve—delay of punishment

10. sibilance—a hissing sound

**Anticipatory Discussion Questions**

Respond thoughtfully on the following using complete sentences. Please type your responses.

1. If given a choice between confessing to a crime you did not commit and facing capital punishment, what would you choose?

2. Would you lie in court to save someone you love from the death penalty?

3. To what extent do someone’s actions indicate what type of person one is?

4. Is it possible to forgive and forget? Why or why not?

5. One’s reputation is not important; therefore, going against the crowd should be an easy thing to do. Agree or disagree and explain your response.

6. The powerless in any given society will always strive to seek power in one way or another. Once they have any power they will abuse it to their own advantage. Agree or disagree and explain your response.

7. Marital infidelity can never be forgiven. Agree or disagree and explain your response.

8. Define what your concepts of courage and integrity are.

9. React and respond to the following: “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”—Abraham Lincoln

10. React and respond to the following: “There can be no fifty-fifty Americanism in this country. There is room here for only 100 percent Americanism, only for those who are Americans and nothing else.”—Theodore Roosevelt

11. React and respond to the following: “Short is the road that leads from fear to hate.”—Giambattista Casti

12. React and respond to the following: “The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone.”—Henrick Ibsen

13. React and respond to the following: “The welfare of the people is the chief law.”—Marcus Tullius Cicero

14. React and respond to the following: “A cloth is stronger than the threads from which it is made.”—Richard Nixon

15. React and respond to the following: Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.”—Ralph Waldo Emerson

16. React and respond to the following: “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” Martin Luther King, Jr.

17. React and respond to the following: “Remember always that you not only have the right to be an individual, you have an obligation to be one.”—Eleanor Roosevelt

18. React and respond to the following: “The person who loses their conscience has nothing left worth keeping.”—Izaak Walton

19. React and respond to the following: “Never be bullied into silence. Never allow yourself to be made a victim. Accept no one’s definition of your life; define yourself.”—Harvey Fierstein

**Study/Discussion Questions**

The following questions are to help you gauge your reading comprehension and to inspire class discussion. You are not required to write a response to these questions, though you may see some of these on quizzes. A good study and comprehension strategy is to read and refer to these questions before, during, and after each act of the play.

**Act One:**

1. Why would Miller include the note on historical accuracy? What would have been the result had he not included this note?

2. Who are the Reverend Parris, Betty, and Abigail? What is their relationship to each other?

3. What is wrong with Betty Parris?

4. Who is Tituba? How does she react to Betty’s condition?

5. What news does Susanna bring from the doctor? What rumor is circulating about Betty? Why is Rev. Parris so worried about his reputation?

6. Why does Parris suggest calling in Reverend Hale?

7. Who are Ann and Thomas Putnam? Briefly describe them. What is their suggestion as to Betty’s problem? In what condition is their own daughter? What is their motivation for their suggestion?

8. Why did Mrs. Putnam enlist Tituba’s help?

9. Why did Abigail drink blood? How did Abigail threaten the other girls? What does the conversation between Abigail, Mercy Lewis, Mary Warren, and Betty reveal about their recent activities?

10. Rev. Parris is worried that Abigail’s actions may have jeopardized something important. What is it?

11. Describe John Proctor. Antecedent action is action that happened before the play. What events transpired between John Proctor and Abigail prior to the beginning of Act One? What happens when John and Abigail are left alone?

12. What does Abigail say about Elizabeth Proctor? How might this affect the outcome of the play?

13. Who is Rebecca Nurse? What does she say about Betty’s and Ruth’s sickness? Why didn’t the Putnams like the Nurses?

14. Why is Rev. Parris dissatisfied with his job in Salem?

15. Describe Giles Corey. What is his complaint about his wife?

16. Give two examples that Proctor, Putnam, and Corey give for why Parris is an ineffective minister.

17. What is the Putnam’s grievance over land? What significance might this have?

18. Describe Rev. Hale. What is Miller’s tone towards this character?

19. How does Hale confuse Tituba? Why does she “confess”? What do you think of her actions?’

20. What is the motivation behind the girls’ accusations? Why do they begin their accusations when they could have let Tituba take the blame for everything? How many people are accused at the end of Act One? What does the girls’ behavior tell you about the youth in Salem?

21. What were the purposes of the Salem theocracy?

22. What are your reactions to the end of Act One? What questions do you have? Can you connect the situation in the play with anything else you’ve seen, read about, or experienced? What are your predictions for Act Two?

**Act Two:**

1. What is the mood at the beginning of Act Two? How is this mood established?

2. What is significant about the scene between John and Elizabeth Proctor? What does it reveal about their relationship? And their characters? Why does Miller include this conversation?

3. What does Elizabeth encourage John to do?

4. What is learned about the action antecedent to this part of the play through Mary Warren? At this point, what are the purposes of handling the events of the court through narration rather than through dramatic presentation?

5. What does Mary give Elizabeth? What information does Mary provide about the trial? What role is she playing in the trial? How does she feel about this? How does John Proctor feel about this? Why does John forbid her from attending?

6. How many have been arrested for witchcraft at this point?

7. Mary Warren tells Proctor that those accused will not be hanged if they do what? Why does Mary Warren think Elizabeth should speak civilly to her?

8. 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? The agreement paves the way for the deleted scene in the appendix. Why do you think this scene was deleted? Why include it as an appendix?

9. What does Elizabeth mean when she says, “Oh, the noose, the noose is up!”?

10. Why has Rev. Hale come to Proctor’s house? What does this scene reveal about Hale’s role in the trial?

11. To what is John referring when he says the following: “…it tells me that a minister may pray to God without he have golden candlesticks upon the altar”?

12. What does Proctor tell Hale about why the children were ill? How does he claim to know?

13. What is the point of the discussion between Hale and Proctor about whether or not they believe in witches?

14. What is Proctor’s reaction to Hale’s interpretation that personal acts of sin are bringing on a wrathful retribution?

15. What event begins to change Hale’s mind about the arrests? How does he feel about the court?

16. Who accused Elizabeth and why?

17. Which of the commandments does Proctor forget? Isn’t this revealing?!

18. What news do Giles Corey and Frances Nurse tell John Proctor? On what basis are the newly arrested being accused?

19. How are these two ideas connected: (1) Walcott buying a pig, and (2) Martha Corey being accused of witchcraft?

20. Explain the allusion that Proctor makes to Pontius Pilate.

21. What is the significance of the poppet? How does this serve as “proof” for the accusations against Elizabeth?

22. What does John mean when he says, “I’ll tell you what’s walking in Salem—vengeance is walking in Salem”?

23. What does Proctor want Mary to do after Elizabeth is arrested? What is her response to this?

24. What do we learn about Mary Warren’s motives at the end of Act Two? Why did she give the poppet to Elizabeth?

25. What are your reactions to Act Two? What are your predictions for Act Three? Will Mary Warren be truthful or will she protect herself and Abigail?

**Act Three:**

1. When the act begins, who is not on the stand and why? Of what is she accused?

2. Who bursts into the courtroom and why? What does Proctor bring into the court with him?

3. What does Mary Warren tell Judge Danforth?

4. What are your impressions of Danforth? How many people has he sent to jail by this time? What is his basic attitude toward the proceedings? How does his philosophy influence the trials?

5. What does Cheever say that Proctor did when they came to arrest Elizabeth? What do we learn about Elizabeth? What arrangements or accommodations does Danforth make for Elizabeth and why?

6. What document does Proctor present to Danforth? What does it say and who else has signed it (how many names)? What does Danforth do with the document?

7. What does Rev. Parris want to do with those who have signed the petition?

8. Why is Giles Corey arrested? What accusations does he make about Thomas Putnam? What information does he withhold from the court?

9. Compare Danforth, Hathorne, and Rev. Hale. How do these three men differ in their reaction to the evidence presented here?

10. Who does Danforth say can best identify a witch? What two things make him believe this? Why is this significant to the plot?

11. How many death warrants does Rev. Hale sign? What change of opinion occurs for Rev. Hale?

12. Does Mary Warren testify to the truth? What does she refuse to do when in court? How does Hathorne respond to this?

13. What secret does Proctor openly admit to Danforth? What does Elizabeth do to protect her husband’s name?

14. What does Mary Warren say to reestablish her credibility? Why? What does this say about her character?

15. What evidence is there that Rev. Hale no longer believes the testimony and the crying out of the girls?

16. Who is taken to jail at the end of Act Three?

17. What is the significance of John Proctor’s plowing on Sundays?

18. Why is it that Proctor does not back down after Elizabeth has been given one more year to live?

19. Would you have signed the petition for the Proctor’s? Remember the social/religious context in which the play takes place.

20. Explain Danforth’s statement: “A person is either with this court or he or she must be counted against it, there be no road between.”

21. Do you believe that Elizabeth is an honest and godly woman after this act? What would you have done in her situation?

**Act Four:**

1. Why do you think Parris has a “mad look about him these days”?

2. Whose presence in the jail upsets Danforth? Why does Parris bring Rev. Hale to the jail?

3. What is the significance of the fact that Abigail and Mercy Lewis have fled Salem?

4. What are Parris’ and Hale’s personal reasons for wanting to obtain a confession?

5. How many people have already been hanged? Why does Danforth refuse to postpone any hearings or executions?

6. Why is Elizabeth brought o see John Proctor?

7. What are the four reasons Rev. Hale provides for why the town is being ruined?

8. Who shall be hanged at sunrise? Does Rebecca Nurse confess to witchcraft? Why or why not? Why won’t Proctor name her even though others have already?

9. Why was Giles Corey smart for not admitting or denying the charges against him? How does Corey die and what are his last words?

10. What does Elizabeth confess to John? What does John admit to? What is his dilemma about signing the confession? What are your reactions to this final scene between them?

11. What makes Proctor believe that Danforth is using him? What finally happens to Proctor’s confession?

12. Why does the act begin in madness? What is Arthur Miller accomplishing through this?

13. Throughout the play, what significant changes has Rev. Hale undergone?

14. Why does John ultimately choose death? Is Elizabeth awful in “letting him die”? What is the significance of her final line?

15. What are your reactions to the resolution of this play? How does this play speak to the human experience? How does this play reflect the time and conflicts of both the late 1600s in America, but the 1950s and contemporary times as well?

**Post-Reading Analysis Questions**

Respond to the following questions with thoughtful analysis on a separate piece of paper. Please type your responses.

1. A crucible is defined as “a severe test; a vessel used for refinement and purifying some material (gold, for example) under intense heat.” What is the significance of the title of this play.

2. Compare and contrast the play script and the 1996 film version we viewed in class. Why is the deleted scene from Act Two included in the film? The stage version ends with Elizabeth’s line, “He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him!” The film version takes the audience one scene further—to the gallows. The film ends with Rebecca Nurse, Martha Corey, and John Proctor reciting the Lord’s Prayer. Proctor finishes with the last line: “For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever.” Why is this included? Which ending do you prefer and why?

3. In drama and literature, a foil is a character written to contrast with another and therefore emphasizes both character’s opposite traits. Comparing two foils will often clarify the motives of both. Who is John Proctor’s foil in your opinion? What other pairs of characters might be seen as foils in this play?

4. Do you think John made the right decision in choosing to die rather than to sign a false confession? Is it ever permissible to lie to save your own life? Isn’t a survivor a hero, too? What if you have a child? Does a parent have an obligation to stay alive in order to take care of his/her child(ren)? What are your final impressions of Elizabeth? What do you think of her last line in the play? What does their final meeting reveal about their relationship, as well as who they are as individuals?

5. “In a recent speech, Robert Brunstein said, ‘I defy you to name a single work of art that has ever changed anything.’ In response, Mr. Miller said, ‘I think works of art change the consciousness of people and their estimate of who they are and what they stand for.’ He pointed to John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* and to Mark Twain, ‘who gave America an image of itself, the idea of the innocent American, with his simple-minded appreciation of reality as against the complications of life.’” Can a work of art change anything? Defend your response. What works of art (visual, literary, musical, performance) have changed your life? How has this play changed your life?

6. One critic notes that when it came to producing a filmed version of this play Hollywood wouldn’t touch [it] with a ten-foot broomstick” (Jeff Gordinier, “Casting a Spell,” *Entertainment Weekly*, 12/6/96). The play opened in 1953. Why do you think an American film of this play was not made until 1996?

7. Read and respond to the following opinions about *The Crucible*:

A. “The way *The Crucible* speaks to us today has less to do with any specific instance of collective

indictment than it does with the relentless group-think mentality of modern America, where people, crushed under by a bureaucratic/consumerist/media culture, rely more and more on forces outside themselves to determine what to like, what to say, what to believe” (Owen Gleiberman, “Bewitching

Hour,” *Entertainment Weekly*, 11/29/96).

B. *The Crucible* “still speaks to weaknesses of the human character, but stretch as you will, there is simply nothing in today’s society to match the paranoia that Sen. McCarthy and others exploited. So we’re left with a story about a community of people so ignorant and superstitious, you’d probably look up the village idiot for advice” (Jack Matthews, “It’s a Different Era for Miller’s Salem,” www.newsday.com

1996).

C. “And so the final irony may well be that the movie it was thought impossible to make during the McCarthy years because it was about McCarthyism…turns out not to have been about that particular

social deformation at all. Rather, it was about something more universal—fear of forces one can’t understand and control” (Victor Navasky, “The Demons of Salem, With Us Still,” *New York Times*,

9/8/96).

