Act II Reading Questions – ANSWERS

1. What does the reader learn about the Proctors’ marriage through the discrepancy between what John Proctor does before he sees his wife and when he talks to her?
   
   John comes into the house, tastes the stew and adds seasoning. At dinner he compliments her seasoning of the meal. This lie shows how he does find fault with Elizabeth, but also that he will not be open and honest with her. There is an obvious barrier between the two that is demonstrated in the first few pages of this act.

   Some students might argue that this early action of John establishes that he loves his wife and tries to please her, but Elizabeth remains separated from him. She appears somewhat aloof or withdrawn. This distance is obviously due to John’s infidelity.

2. In what ways is Miller’s use of dialogue effective in the first two pages of this scene to show the rift between the couple?
   
   There is no flow to the conversation at first. Each makes statements, and the other responds, but there is no conversation. The coldness they feel toward each other comes across in this forced dinner dialogue.

3. What does Proctor’s hesitation to travel to Salem indicate about his inner conflict?
   
   While he would like to clear up the hysteria about witchcraft, he does not want to attack Abigail. The reason may be that he still has feelings for Abigail and/or the reason may be that he does not want his adultery to come out in court.

4. Whom does Elizabeth call, “A mouse no more”? What does she mean by this metaphor?
   
   Mary Warren is “a mouse no more.” She is subservient in Act I and bold in this scene.

5. Explain the ironic ultimatum the head of the court has given to those who have been arrested.
   
   The accused must confess or die. If they claim to be innocent, they die. If they claim to be guilty, they live. Thus, ironically, they are punished for telling the truth yet rewarded for lying.

6. Explain the metaphor: “The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you.”
   
   It means that your own conscience judges you and is the cause of your guilt.

7. What present does Mary Warren give to Elizabeth? What does her making it and giving it to Elizabeth foreshadow?
   
   Mary Warren gives Elizabeth a poppet that she made while sitting on a bench in court. As poppets, or dolls, were tools used in Voodoo to bewitch others, the presence of a poppet in the Proctors’ house could be used as evidence that one of them is a witch.

8. What does Hale’s motivation for visiting the Proctors tell the audience about his personality?
   
   He explains that he is not there on court business; he is looking to get a clearer picture of those who are accused. This shows he is a free-thinking individual. Though the court and he share a common goal, he is not the court’s servant or messenger. It also suggests to the audience that he will be more careful in what he accepts as “true” and more willing than the court to examine all the sides of the issue.

9. In what ways does Hale question John Proctor’s religious strength?
   
   Hale questions John’s infrequent church attendance, his disrespect for Parris, and his refusal to get his third son baptized.

10. Explain how Hale tests Proctor’s belief in God, as well as the irony in how Proctor fails Hale’s test.
    
    Hale asks Proctor to recite the Ten Commandments. John momentarily forgets the commandment that he has broken: “Thou Shalt not Commit Adultery.”
11. Explain Hale’s quote: “Man, remember until an hour before the Devil fell, God thought him beautiful in Heaven.”
Anyone is capable of evil, despite his or her past good behavior. Even Rebecca, who Hale believes is above suspicion, is conceivably in league with Satan.

12. List and discuss the validity of the evidence by which Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse are jailed.
Martha is accused of bewitching pigs with her strange books, which Giles first mentioned in Act One. Rebecca is charged with the supernatural murder of the Putnams’ babies. Neither of these charges is provable, yet the women are arrested.

13. Explain Francis’ metaphor: “My wife is the very brick and mortar of the church.”
Rebecca is being compared to the foundation of the church; therefore, she is very important to the church community. The “good soul” Hale had heard of in Beverly is well-respected and vital to the congregation in Salem.

14. If Mary contradicts Abigail, how is she “charging cold murder on Abigail”?
If Abigail is lying, the only reason would be that she wants Elizabeth to be found guilty and be sentenced to death. Therefore, Abigail would be trying to murder others with these lies.

15. How is Hale a “broken minister”?
Proctor interprets the lack of support from Hale to mean that he believes the court and is willing to let innocent people be sentenced.

16. Explain Proctor’s quote: “Vengeance is walking Salem.”
Proctor means that everyone in Salem is out to get revenge on one another.

17. How have Hale’s opinions of the accused changed by the end of Act II?
They start to arrest innocent people and Hale starts to realize that the girls are lying and choosing who they want.

18. Explain the demand Proctor makes of Mary Warren at the end of scene one and her significant response to his threat.
Proctor tells Mary she will testify against Abigail, or he will bring her “guts up through her mouth.” Mary replies that Abigail will charge lechery on Proctor if he goes to court, showing that Mary has known about the affair for some time and knows Abigail is prepared to use it against Proctor.

19. Who are the two dynamic characters in this scene and show their changes.
Mary Warren is “a mouse no more.” She is subservient in Act I and bold in this scene. Reverend Hale is confident in his resolution to ferret out the witches in Act I, but by the end of this scene, and most notably the arrest of Rebecca Nurse, he questions the motives of the accusers and suspects that vengeance, not Satan, is controlling the town’s madness.

20. Explain the function of the symbols in this act.
   a. Rabbit: The rabbet in the stew is a symbol of the dysfunction of John and Elizabeth’s relationship. At the beginning of the scene, John tastes it and is dissatisfied; he adds seasoning. When Elizabeth asks him about the flavor, he lies.
   b. How are the golden candlesticks symbolic of Parris’s personality?
Parris is not satisfied with lead candlesticks, which would symbolize the Puritan proscription against vanity. He wants golden candlesticks just as he wants more money and a finer church. As a former businessman, Parris is more concerned with monetary issues than with religious ones.
   c. How is the poppet a symbol of Abigail’s control of the society?
Abigail has been able to bend and control the town as she could a doll. The idea that the doll is a sort of voodoo doll further adds to the comparison, since voodoo dolls curse the intended victim, as she has done in court.
**Questions for Act Two of *The Crucible***

1. What duty has Mary Warren been performing in Salem?
   She is an “official of the court,” which means that she is involved in the accusations and corroboration of evidence.

2. What does Elizabeth Proctor report to her husband about the trials in Salem? What does she urge John to do?
   She tells him that fourteen people have been accused and that four judges have been called in from Boston to preside over the trials.

3. What gift does Mary Warren present to Elizabeth?
   A poppet – rag doll

4. What ominous revelation does Mary Warren make about Elizabeth’s reputation? How does this disclosure serve to make the quarrel between Elizabeth and John even more heated?
   Mary Warren informs the Proctor’s that Elizabeth’s name was mentioned in court today and that Mary Warren “saved [Elizabeth’s] life” by standing up for her. Elizabeth assumes that Abigail has accused her in order to have her killed and take John as a husband.

5. What are some of the ways in which John Hale questions Proctor and his wife about their religious faith? How do the Proctors answer each of the questions and allegations?
   Hale reveals his suspicions and confronts them about not attending church regularly and not having all of their children baptized; he then asks John to recite the Ten Commandments. The Proctors answer all of the questions honestly and directly.

6. What theological argument does John Hale use to explain the causes of the events in Salem?
   He says, “...until the hour before the Devil fell, God thought him beautiful” (175, line 710).

7. What conflict does John Proctor face at the end of the act?
   John faces the internal conflict of deciding whether or not to tell the court that Abigail confesses to him that the girls are lying. He knows that Abigail may turn on him and ruin his reputation by telling the court about his sexual immorality. He also faces the external conflict of seeing his wife be arrested and falsely accused.

8. Explain how each of the following is an example of verbal, situational, or dramatic irony:
   a. Mary’s gift of a poppet to Elizabeth – The poppet was given as a gift by Mary Warren. It is unexpected that the poppet would ultimately lead to Elizabeth’s’ death by verifying that she is a witch.
   b. The one Commandment out of ten that John Proctor can’t remember – Proctor cannot remember the commandment forbidding adultery. This is dramatic irony because the audience knows that John committed adultery, however, Hale is unaware of Proctor’s affair.
   c. Proctor’s statement about Abigail at the end of the act, “Good. Then her saintliness is done with.” – This is verbal irony because John is fully aware of the fact that Abigail is not “saintly.”

9. Explain John Proctor’s allusion as he tells Hale, “Pontius Pilate! God will not let you wash your hands of this!”
   Pilate was a Roman governor who presided over the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. After speaking to Christ, he came to believe that Jesus was in fact the son of God, but the citizens were adamantly demanding that Christ be punished for treason. Pilate publicly washed his hands indicating that he was absolving himself of the responsibility of Christ’s death. Proctor calls Hale “Pontius Pilate” to let him know that blood will be on his hands for anyone murdered in these trials if her does not speak out against the court and stand for the truth.

10. The end of this act hints that the most important conflict in the play, will take place between two specific characters—a protagonist and an antagonist. Who is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist?
    John Proctor v. Abigail Williams
**Speaking like a Puritan – Metaphoric Language from Act Two of *The Crucible***

**Directions.** One of the ways Arthur Miller conveys the Puritan Setting and central thematic images of *The Crucible* is through the use of metaphoric language. Read the following lines from Act Two, and work with your group to determine the meaning behind the metaphors. After looking at the metaphoric language that Miller’s characters speak, create a metaphor to describe Mary Warren, Hale, or Abigail. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metaphor</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proctor: “a funeral marches round your heart.”</td>
<td><em>Sadness and grief have overtaken your spirit</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth: “the magistrate sits in your heart.”</td>
<td><em>Your own conscience judges you and is the cause of your guilt</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Proctor: “I will curse her hotter than the oldest cinder.”</td>
<td><em>I’ll show her my anger and let her know where I stand in our relationship.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hale: “Theology is a fortress.”</td>
<td><em>People’s beliefs are their protection</em></td>
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<td>Francis Nurse: “My wife is the very brick and mortar of the church.”</td>
<td><em>Rebecca’s faithfulness holds the church together</em></td>
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<td>Proctor: “Vengeance is walking in Salem.”</td>
<td><em>Everyone in Salem is out to get revenge on one another</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Our Metaphor:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Abigail is the source of the problems in Salem.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Abigail is the root of all evil in Salem.</td>
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