Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible, Act IV*  
Study Guide

**p. 1090** Why do you think that Sarah Good and Tituba say that they are waiting for the devil?

Perhaps they have been brainwashed into thinking they are witches who report to the devil, or maybe they are mocking the process that labeled them witches. They may even be pretending to be witches in order to make their “confessions” believable.

**p. 1091** Why problem might Hale be attempting to resolve by visiting with those who have been condemned and praying with them?

He has become very disappointed with the investigations, and he may be attempting to ease his guilt for his earlier role in the witch hunt.

**p. 1092** What is the real motive behind Reverend Hale’s visits to Rebecca and the other condemned women?

Hale no longer believes that the women are witches and urges them to make false confessions to save their lives.

**p. 1092** What news does Reverend Parris give the court?

His niece Abigail and her friend Mercy Lewis have stolen his money and disappeared.

**p. 1093** How is Abigail’s disappearance a significant problem for Danforth?

Danforth’s entire case rests on Abigail’s testimony. Also, with her gone, the other girls may be affected because they don’t have Abigail around to coach them.

**p. 1093** Why might Abigail have decided to flee Salem?

Perhaps Abigail felt the slight change in the public’s opinions of witchcraft that was slowly beginning to take place. Also, she could have feared that John Proctor’s testimony about her has ruined her reputation. Finally, since John Proctor will die, she can no longer become his wife.

**p. 1094** What threat has Reverend Parris received at his home?

Reverend Parris found that a dagger had been thrown at his front door.

What message might the perpetrator be trying to send to Reverend Parris?

There may be little opposition to executing people of bad reputations, but putting honorable people to death will cause others to take action.
Why is so **ironic** about Danforth’s comment to Hale when he says, “You misunderstand, sir; I cannot pardon these when 12 are already hanged for the same crime. It is not just.”

Danforth is saying that to pardon some prisoners after having hanged others is not just. This is ironic because if the original hangings were not just, then hanging more prisoners would also be unjust.

What is revealed about Danforth’s character when he states that more must die in order to justify the executions that have already taken place; therefore, he will not accept any pleas for pardon or postponement?

This reveals how inflexible he is but also how much he fears losing face. He won’t pardon anyone or postpone any hangings because he cannot admit his self-doubt. He is more committed to being consistent and carrying out the law than to justice.

Why does Hale cry out, “There is blood on my head! Can you not see the blood on my head!”

Hale blames himself for the death of the innocent and fears that he will pay a high price for his crimes.

Explain the following **simile** used by Hale: “I came into this village like a bridegroom to his beloved, bearing gifts of high religion; the very crowns of holy law I brought, and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died; and where I turned the eye of my great faith, blood flowed up…”

Hale compares himself and his religious knowledge to a bridegroom with gifts for his bride.

How does this **simile** make his description of the consequences of his actions both dramatic and shocking?

The image of a bridegroom with gifts for his love contrasts greatly with the description of death and flowing blood.

How does Hale justify his advising Elizabeth to persuade Proctor to lie? What character flaw does he warn her against?

Hale maintains that dying for the sake of pride may be a greater sin than lying to save one’s life. Hale is aware of the flaw of pride in his own character, and he advises Elizabeth according to his experience and insights.

How would Elizabeth’s convincing Proctor to confess represent a solution for Parris, Danforth and Hale?

If Proctor confesses to witchcraft and does not hang, then Parris will not have to fear for his livelihood and personal safety due to the backlash of public opinion against hanging reputable citizens. Danforth will not face a rebellion by the citizens loyal to Proctor, and his court decisions will be vindicated. Saving Proctor will ease some of Hale’s guilt at his part in starting the witch trials.
Despite being ragged, dirty prisoners, John and Elizabeth Proctor seem to be elevated to heroic stature. How is this so?

The Proctors have nothing left to lose and their love is now renewed. They are acting heroically here, soaring above the moral chaos of the Salem trials.

How did Giles Corey die?

He was crushed to death with stones.

What motivated Giles Corey to die without confessing?

Giles Corey didn't confess in order to preserve his property for his family.

What does John want from Elizabeth when they see each other for the first time since they've both been jailed?

John wants her approval for his confession to witchcraft.

How do John’s two choices, to remain silent or to confess, both cause a problem for him?

A confession would save his life but would be a lie and would give credibility to his accusers who have sent innocent people to their deaths and are planning to send more. To remain silent means he will hang.

What flaw does Elizabeth urge Proctor to forgive himself for?

Elizabeth urges her husband to forgive himself for his infidelity and his lack of courage in not admitting it to the court sooner.

What flaw does Elizabeth see in herself?

She has always felt unattractive and thought that no man could ever love her. She feels that her coldness, her inability to express her love, and her lack of attention contributed to John’s infidelity.

Why does Elizabeth refuse to influence John’s decision to confess or not?

She feels that he needs to face his own conscience and make his own decisions.

What does John finally admit to?

He admits to seeing the devil.

Why is Rebecca Nurse astonished at Proctor’s choice of the solution to his problem?

Rebecca cannot believe that Proctor has decided to lie to save his life since she knows that he has always been such an honest man. His confession betrays her and other innocents who have refused to confess.
How would Proctor's admission to having seen Rebecca Nurse in the devil’s company solve a problem for Danforth?

Rebecca is greatly loved and admired by the people of Salem, and Danforth worries that her death will spark a rebellion. If Proctor, another admired citizen, accuses Rebecca, then the community opposition to her execution may be weakened.

Why is John Proctor reluctant to sign his name to the confession?

If he signs his name to the confession, that becomes legal record, and he feels that his signature stands for sincerity and honesty. His name is all he has left.

Proctor ends up signing this confession but then immediately tears it up afterwards. Why does he do that?

He does not want his lie to be made public. By tearing up the confession, he regains his honor. He wants to be courageous like Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey.

What does Proctor's final decision mean for him?

Proctor's decision to refuse to admit to conspiring with the devil means that he keeps his integrity.

What does his decision mean for the town of Salem?

Now that he refuses to confess, he will be hanged. His execution may inspire a rebellion.

What does Elizabeth mean when she says that John has “his goodness now”?

Elizabeth means that John values truth more than he values his own life.