

Crucible Seminar Discussion Questions (Also, review the essay topics given earlier, as well as other questions asked in the film study guide)

Opening Discussion Question: Give reasons why Arthur Miller may have chosen *The Crucible* as the title for this play.

1. Consider the opening sequence in the woods. A circular symbol is repeatedly used. Can you think of some examples? Are there any other reoccurring symbols? Discuss the use of water.
2. Examine the relationship between John and Elizabeth Proctor. Trace its development, from the early revelations of infidelity to the later scenes of farewell. Why do you think Miller refused to portray one as the villain, the other as an innocent victim?
3. Elizabeth Proctor says, 'He have his goodness now. God forbid I take it from him.' Proctor wants to live; Elizabeth loves her husband. What is it that neither is prepared to sacrifice for the sake of Proctor's life? Why?
4. Abigail is central to the witchcraft hysteria and the destruction of the Proctors. Is she evil? Are there points in the film where the audience feels sympathy for her? Towards the end of the film she disappears, and it is clear that she is 'guilty'. Is there a single point at which the audience becomes aware of Abigail's destructive intentions?
5. Judge Danforth's 'particular danger is that his convictions are genuine and his commitment to rooting out the Devil is deeply felt.' At times Danforth begins to doubt Abigail's testimony. How do these occasions add to the complexity of the film?
6. While the play ends with Proctor in his cell, the film portrays his execution. Contrast the jubilant crowd at earlier executions with the final crowd scenes. Why has the mood changed? Does the depiction of this scene add weight to the film's political message?
7. At the film's conclusion we learn that Salem eventually came to its senses, but not before the loss of many innocent lives. What did the lives of Proctor, Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey represent, to Danforth, and to the people of Salem?
8. Is it essential, in terms of the narrative, that these three die?
9. At the end of the film, what are your feelings towards Proctor, Elizabeth, Danforth, Abigail and Mary Warren?
10. Select any three of the following characters and identify points in the film when you could identify or empathise with them. Explain what the character was feeling at that point and why you could understand them: John Proctor, Abigail Williams, Judge Danforth, Elizabeth Proctor, Reverend Hale, Rebecca Nurse, Mary Warren.