



Directions: Write a **thesis-driven literary analysis essay** in which you respond to one of the prompts listed below. This essay will be worth 110 points (100 essay, 10 pre-writing), and your score will be determined by the following guidelines.

Content and Ideas: How effective is the essay in communicating the writer's ideas and interpretations of the play?

- ✓ Is there an interesting, engaging title that provides the reader an idea of the **argument** of the essay?
- ✓ Is there a strong, clear, and focused **thesis** around which the essay is organized?
- ✓ Is there a clear **introduction** which names the work and author being discussed?
- ✓ Does the essay as a whole make valid and defensible points about *The Crucible*?
- ✓ Is there a convincing and powerful **conclusion**?
- ✓ Does the essay include **six quotations** from the play, and are they craftily integrated into the essay?
- ✓ Does the writer's **voice** come through the words as strong and individualized?
- ✓ Does it follow literary essay guidelines?

Mechanics and Usage: How effective is the writing itself in allowing the message of the writer to be clearly understood by the reader?

- ✓ Do all **pronouns** have a clear **antecedent**?
- ✓ Are titles correctly punctuated with italics?
- ✓ Are quotations properly punctuated and cited?
- ✓ Are numbers and numerals correctly written?
- ✓ Is the play discussed in **literary present tense**?
- ✓ Is the essay free of **distracting and weak** words?
- ✓ Is the essay free of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage errors (i.e. there v. their v. they're; your v. you are)

Format: Is the essay presented with the following formatting rules?

- ✓ Typed, double-spaced, 12-point font
- ✓ Name, teacher name, class, date in top, left-hand corner (MLA format) along with last name and page number in the upper right-hand corner of each page
- ✓ Title is centered, using the same font as the text of the essay (not bold, not bigger)

Topic Choices:

1. John Proctor had a moral decision to make concerning his future with his family, one that could be argued well, as Reverend Hale states, "Life is God's most precious gift; no principle however glorious, may justify the taking of it." Are a man's principles of integrity so important than that of his life and obligation to his wife and children? Be sure to use specific reasoning and references to the play to defend your position. Consider using arguments from Proctor and Hale as a kind of springboard for your claims.
2. According to critic Penelope Curtis, "The most interesting feature of *The Crucible* is that it is so impressively a play about evil forces, despite the fact that it seems to be a play discrediting the belief in such forces." What are the evil forces that Miller presents in the play? Think of particular forces such as arrogance, intolerance, vengeance, etc. and then connect them to characters in the play.
3. Some critics of the play suggest that Elizabeth Proctor comes across as weak-minded, impassive, and even "cold" character, which neither helps nor hinders her husband's desperate situation. Argue either for or against Elizabeth. Write an essay that encourages your audience that she is (or is not!) worthy of admiration.
4. Arthur Miller often creates characters who must choose between conduct serving only their own self-interests and conduct demonstrating commitment to the larger community. Discuss the theme of "individual vs. society" with specific reference to John Proctor in *The Crucible*. This means you must show a progression from the beginning of the play to the end. Your explanation must have examples that deal with character development.
5. Foil is used throughout the play to provide striking contrasts between characters. With this in mind, write an analysis paper contrasting two characters. What character traits to each have which makes them foils for the other? How are these characters different? Do they change as the play progresses?
6. Discuss the changes that Reverend Hale undergoes in the course of the play. What is his central conflict? What is Reverend Hale's change meant to communicate?
7. Arthur Miller suggests that sacrifices may be necessary to restore social order. Analyze the sacrifices and discuss whether they are necessary or not.
8. *The Crucible* presents various views of the nature of authority. Discuss some of these views and which characters represent or promote them.
9. Analyze Arthur Miller's treatment of women in *The Crucible*.
10. Choose your own topic. If there is something in particular you would like to discuss about *The Crucible*, here is your chance. But please keep in mind that all of the same guidelines apply, particularly that of having a strong thesis statement in which you present your point. I'm more than happy to discuss your ideas with you!