Introduction to Arthur Miller and *The Crucible* Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(p. 966):

1. Arthur Miller writes, “I personally feel that the theater has to confront the basic themes always…faces change…but their roots are generally the same…” What are the three themes the theater must confront?
	1. ***Man’s increasing awareness of himself and his environment***
	2. ***Man’s quest for justice***

* 1. ***The right to be human***

(pp. 1252-53)

1. Miller writes that “It would probably never have occurred to me to write a play about the Salem witch trials of 1692 had I not see some astonishing correspondences with that calamity in the America of the late forties and early fifties…” To what “calamity” is Miller referring?

***Anti-Communism “witch hunts” of the 1950s***

1. Miller gives credit to what book for his ideas for *The Crucible*?

***The Devil in Massachusetts***

1. What is one similarity Miller found between the events of the 1950s and 1692?

***1) the menace of concealed plots; 2) Similarities in the rituals of defense and investigations***

(p. 1254)

1. Why was Miller forced to delay his entrance into college? What did he do to be able to go to college?

***He had to raise tuition money; he worked for over 2 years***

1. Where did Miller attend college?

***University of Michigan***

1. What play of Miller’s opened in 1947?

***All My Sons***

1. What play of Miller’s won the Pulitzer Prize in 1949? What has this play been called?

***Death of a Salesman; “a modern American tragedy”***

1. When did *The Crucible* open? What was it not well-received?

***1953; it used the Salem Witch Trials to attack the anti-Communist “witch hunts” in which Miller was involved***

1. What is **McCarthyism**?

***Sen. Joseph McCarthy’s obsession to uncover Communists in the US***

1. Why was Miller called to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1956?

***To testify about his experiences related to Communist activity***

1. What did Miller refuse to do at the hearings?

***Testify against his colleagues and associates***

1. To whom was Miller married for five years?

***Marilyn Monroe***

Background of *The Crucible* (p. 1255)

1. What were the results of the hysteria in Massachusetts in 1692?

***Execution of 20 people and the jailing of 150 more***

1. According to the information given, list the five problems and hardships the colonists faced in New England.
	1. ***Bitter weather***
	2. ***Sickness and death***
	3. ***Devastating fires***
	4. ***drought***
	5. ***insect infestations and destruction of crops***
2. To whom did the colonists attribute their misfortunes?

***The Devil***

1. What occurred in Salem Village with the minister’s daughter and other girls?

***Seizures and lapses into unconsciousness***

1. To what did the people attribute the girls’ behavior?

***Witchcraft***

1. What are the four “dramatic” changes Miller says he made between the actual witchcraft trials and his play?
	1. ***Many characters fused into one***
	2. ***Number of girls crying out reduced***
	3. ***Abigail’s age is raised***
	4. ***Several judges fused into 2***

*The Crucible* Background Reading Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

“The Trial of Martha Carrier” Questions (Springboard pp. 96-97)

1. What, specifically, is Martha Carrier accused of doing?

***Bewitching people; tormenting people by biting, pricking, pinching, and choking them***

2. What is the evidence against Martha Carrier?

***Her children confessed they were witches and she had made them so; others said she had made them sick, injured/killed their livestock,***

3. Give an example of subjective language (bias) from Cotton Mather’s account of Martha

Carrier’s trial.

**Mather includes an account of his son Richard’s conflict with Allin Toothaker but blames Martha Carrier’s presence for the incident.**

4. Martha Carrier pleaded innocent, but was found guilty of witchcraft and executed by

hanging. How have the rules of evidence in American courts changed since the trial of

Martha Carrier?

**Hearsay alone is not accepted as evidence**

5. Martha Carrier’s own children testified that she was a witch, and confessed themselves to be witches, as well. Historians say that her children were tortured by members of the court by being “tied neck to heels until blood was ready to come out of their noses” before they confessed. Senator John McCain, who was himself tortured as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, has spoken out against the use of water boarding by the United States. He says that, when he was tortured, he gave false information in order to escape the torture, and therefore, torture is an unreliable method for gaining information. Others insist that water boarding terrorist prisoners produced the information that led to the killing of Osama Bin Laden, and is a useful tool for gaining military intelligence. What is your position on the issue of water boarding, and why?

**Student answers will vary…**

“The Lessons of Salem” (*Springboard* pp. 97-100)

Chunk 1:

1. List some of the charges leveled against Martha Carrier.

***Girls accused her or tormenting them; people’s livestock died after arguing with her; people heard her voice telling they would be poisoned; her children claimed to be witches and she converted them.***

1. Who were her accusers?

***Community members (adults and children) and her own children***

1. Based on the information in the first paragraph, give one reason that they might have accused her.

***Bad things happened to those around her; she could not defend herself from accusations***

1. What was Thomas Brattle’s concern?

***He was afraid the trials would tarnish Salem forever; yes, the town is still known for the trials***

1. According to the third paragraph, what has Salem done to commemorate the Tercentenary (300th anniversary? of the Salem Witch Trials? Give at least three examples:
	1. ***Programs to commemorate the event (dramatized trials, symposiums)***
	2. ***Emphasis on human rights***
	3. ***Memorial to victims***
2. The “witch trials represent more than just a creepy moment in history.” What do they really stand for?

**The victory of prejudice over reason and fear over courage**

1. What are some examples of modern witch hunts?

**Round up of Japanese-Americans during WW2; pursuit of Communism in the 1950s; child abuse allegations in preschools**

Chunk 2:

1. What was Salem village disputing in 1692?

**Ministers**

1. Who was the choice for minister? Was he the first choice?

**Rev. Samuel Parris; no, the 4th**

1. Who is Tituba? What were the girls of the village doing with her in Parris’s kitchen?

**Western Indian slave owned by Rev. Parris; listening to voodoo tales, taking part in fortune telling**

1. How did some of the girls begin to act shortly after their time with Tituba? What did Dr. Griggs say was wrong with them?

**Seized with fits; “evil hand” was upon them**

1. Who were the first three women accused as witches? Describe each woman:
	1. **Tituba – Parris’s slave, a pagan woman**
	2. **Sarah Good – a beggar, uttered angrily from house to house**
	3. **Sarah Osborne – lived with her 2nd husband before they were married**
2. According to the second paragraph on page 99, what was different about accused witch Rebecca Nurse?

**She was 71; religious and respected in the community**

1. Of what was Susannah Martin accused?

**Jumping in a window of Barnard Peach’s room and lying on his for 2 hours**

1. Why did Dorcas Good have to get a special set of chains?

**She was 5 years old; regular shackles/chains were too big**

1. Were there any townspeople who doubted the accusations? What was their proof that the accusations might be false?

**Yes; some overheard girls saying the accusations were for “sport” (they were made up)**

1. What is an example of *spectral evidence*?

**Evidence invisible to everyone except the person testifying; the devil whispering in Martha Carrier’s ear**

1. What did the governor rule about spectral evidence? What was the effect of this ruling?

**He ruled out its use; it became virtually impossible to convict the accused; the witch craze effectively ended**

Chunk 3:

1. What do scholars believe was behind the events in Salem?

**Clinical hysteria**

1. What do many historians believe was behind the accusations?

**Local feuds and property disputes**

ANSWER KEY: SHORT ANSWER STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - *The Crucible*

Act One

**1. "So now they and their church found it necessary to deny any other sect its freedom, lest their**

**New Jerusalem be defiled and corrupted by wrong and deceitful ideas." What is the irony in that statement?**

*The Puritans came to this country for religious freedom; however, when they got here, they persecuted others as they had been persecuted.*

**2. Explain how the witch-hunt years were a time of "general revenge."**

*The Puritans followed strict laws and held in their anger towards their neighbors. The witch hunts were a chance to get revenge on their neighbors for whatever petty squabbles they had been having.*

**3. Identify Tituba, Abigail, Betty**

***Tituba*** *- Parris's slave from Barbados; went with the girls into the forest; accused of conjuring spirits and being a witch; she confessed to being a witch to save her life.*

***Abigail*** *- Parris's orphaned niece who lived in his home; main instigator of the witch hunt; enjoyed the attention and tried to get revenge on several people in the village; had an affair with John Proctor and wanted to take Elizabeth's place as his wife.*

***Betty*** *- Parris's daughter; had some sort of a fit and won’t wake up; only explanation the people of Salem can find for her condition is the presence of witchcraft in their village.*

**4. Why does Mrs. Putnam believe there are witches in Salem?**

*She has lost 7 babies in their first few days of life, and her only living child (Ruth) is acting peculiar; witchcraft is her answer to these strange events.*

**5. Why is Thomas Putnam bitter?**

*His candidate for minister was rejected, his attempt to break his father's will had failed. He thought he was smarter than others in Salem, yet often didn’t get his way. He was greedy and frustrated.*

**6. Parris says, "Oh, Abigail, what proper payment for my charity! Now I am undone!" What does that mean?**

*After he has taken her in and provided her with a home, her dabbling in witchcraft could likely cause his ruin. He was not liked in the village.*

**7. What is Mary's argument to Abby?**

*She wants Abby to tell the truth about what happened in the woods. The worst that can*

*happen to them would be that they would be whipped and reprimanded; if the lies go on, things could get out of hand and the punishment would be far worse (jail or hanging).*

**8. Describe Proctor.**

*Proctor is a strong, fit man in his thirties; a farmer; even-tempered, soft-spoken, yet full of authority and confidence; had an affair with Abigail.*

**9. What happened between Abigail and John Proctor prior to the opening of the play?**

*They had an affair.*

**10. What was the "sign" that Betty was bewitched?**

*She could not stand to hear the Lord's name.*

**11. Identify Francis and Rebecca Nurse.**

*Older couple, respected in the village; both were calm and kind; Francis was known for settling disputes; Rebecca helped to deliver some of the Putnam's babies.*

**12. Explain the political relationship between the Putnam and Nurse families.**

*The Nurses were not liked by the Putnams because of some land disputes; the Putnams got revenge when Mrs. Putnam accused Rebecca of bewitching her newborn babies and causing their deaths.*

**13. What did Rebecca do to Betty?**

*She stood over Betty and quieted her.*

**14. What is Rebecca's explanation of the girls' behavior?**

*She thinks the girls have made up their story to get attention*

**15. "There are wheels within wheels in this village and fires within fires." Explain.**

*There were many political and personal grudges held among the people of Salem, all mixed up with their social and religious beliefs.*

**16. What is Proctor's reason for his not regularly attending church?**

*He doesn't like Parris or the way he preaches; he also doesn't think Parris is a very good minister because he seems too concerned with material wealth.*

**17. What does Parris want?**

*Parris wants the deed to his house, and firewood in addition to his salary.*

**18. Giles says, "Think on it now, it's a deep thing, and dark as a pit." To what is he referring literally and symbolically?**

*Literally - people are not getting along and are suing each other at an alarming rate.*

*Symbolically - their system of theocracy seems to be failing.*

**19. What do Putnam and Proctor argue about? What does this show?**

*They argue about lumber and the ownership of a piece of land on which the lumber grows; Putnam is a land-grabbing man who will use devious means to get what he wants.*

**20. Who is Rev. John Hale, and why does he come to Salem?**

*Rev. John Hale is an expert in witchcraft. He comes to Salem to help the town rid itself of witchcraft.*

**21. Hale says, "They [the books] must be [heavy]; they are weighted with authority." What is the significance of this remark?**

*The books are filled with information about the devil and witchcraft (and how to get rid of it).*

**22. To what did Tituba confess? Why?**

*Tituba confessed that she conjured spirits, met with the devil, signed his book. If she had not "confessed," she would have hanged.*

**23. What do the girls do at the end of Act One?**

*They admit that they were bewitched, and they started naming the names of people they had “seen with the devil.”*

Act Two

**1. How much time has elapsed between Acts I and II?**

*Eight days*

**2. Describe how Proctor and Elizabeth interact over dinner. Characterize their relationship.**

*Their conversation is tense, reserved; their relationship seems strained, there is a sense of separation*

**3. Why does Elizabeth try so hard to avoid friction? What does this suggest about her relationship with John?**

*She does not want to upset him or cause conflict; she cares for him and about their relationship*

**4. Describe the allusion Elizabeth uses on page 1293. What does it reveal about Abigail's new standing in the community?**

*She compares Abigail to Moses as he parted the sea; Abigail has emerged as a key figure in the trials*

**5. Describe Elizabeth's changing emotions as she challenges John. Why does she feel this way?**

*She becomes more persistent in asking John to go to the court; she is concerned John may have lingering feelings for Abigail*

**6.What does Elizabeth want John to do?**

*She wants him to go to Ezekiel Cheever and tell him the girls are frauds*

**7. John compared Elizabeth to a judge in court. How does she respond?**

*She responds that the judge sits in John’s heart.*

**8. With whom do you sympathize, John or Elizabeth? Why?**

*Answers will vary – support with evidence from the text*

**9. What has Mary made for Elizabeth?**

*A “poppet” (doll)*

**10. Why is Mary in such a shaky physical condition?**

*She has spent the day in court proceedings*

**11. How many women will be arrested?**

*39*

**12. Why was Goody Osburn convicted?**

*She was accused of mumbling curses; she tried to say her commandments but could not*

**13. What change has Mary's participation in the court proceedings brought in her attitude with the Proctors?**

*She has an air of authority, importance*

**14. Why does she say the Proctors should be nice to her?**

*She is an official of the court; she saved Elizabeth’s life when her name was mentioned in the court*

**15. When Proctor says, without conviction, "They dismissed it," what does that tell you? (page 1298)**

*John thinks Elizabeth is no longer accused or under suspicion*

**16. Who accused Elizabeth?**

*Abigail Williams*

**17. What does Elizabeth want John to do?**

*Confront Abigail and tell her their relationship is over*

**18. Describe Reverend Hale's entrance. What is the mood surrounding his appearance?**

*John and Elizabeth are in a heated discussion when he appears in their doorway; it is tense, highly emotional*

**19. Rebecca Nurse, a seventy-year old woman who all believe is a good person, is charged. What does this information tell Elizabeth?**

*No one is safe from accusations of witchcraft*

**20. How often is Proctor in church?**

*26 times in 17 months*

**21. Explain the significance of the golden candlesticks.**

*Parris preached at length about the need for golden candlesticks on the church altar; Proctor is offended by Parris’s greed*

**22. Why hasn't Proctor's third son been baptized?**

*Proctor does not want Parris touching his child; Proctor sees nothing godly in him*

**23. What does Hale ask John to do to prove he [John] is a Christian?**

*Recite the 10 Commandments*

**24. What is ironic about John's response?**

*He omits “Thou shalt not commit adultery”; he committed adultery with Abigail*

**25. Proctor says, "I have no witness, and cannot prove it, except my word be taken." Why is this line significant?**

*People who accuse the innocent of witchcraft have been taken at their word, even with no evidence, other witnesses, or proof*

**26. What does John Proctor tell Reverend Hale about Abigail Williams?**

*They were “sporting” in the woods; they were startled when they were caught by Parris*

**27. What metaphor does Francis use when referring to his wife? (page 1304)**

*She is the “brick and mortar” of the church (she is a godly, religious woman)*

**28. How do you know Cheever does not first believe the charges against Elizabeth?**

*He says he does not like the sound/thought of her being accused*

**29. Earlier, Hale said the Devil was in Salem. According to Proctor, what is walking in Salem? (page 1307)**

*Vengeance*

**30. Elizabeth is accused. Describe the crime and the proof.**

*Abigail was stabbed by a needle; there is a needle in the doll in Elizabeth’s house (the doll Mary Warren gave her); Elizabeth is accused of stabbing Abigail*

**31. Why is Hale so unwilling to believe Abigail is guilty of fraud and murder?**

*He believes the court is just/fair/right in its dealings*

**32. What is John Proctor going to do?**

*Force Mary Warren to explain she stuck the needle in the poppet*

**33. Of what is Mary Warren most afraid?**

*Abigail will turn on her and kill her (and Abigail will charge lechery against Proctor)*

**34. What is the only way an accused person can save herself?**

*Confess to witchcraft, even if she is innocent*

**35. What is ironic about Ezekiel Cheever's being the one who arrests Elizabeth Proctor? (see question #6)**

*Cheever is the person Elizabeth encouraged John to tell that the girls were frauds; he was initially a trusted, reliable official*

Act Three

**1. What is the setting of Act III?**

*The Salem meeting house 🡪 the courtroom*

**2. Of what crime does Judge Hathorne accuse Martha Corey?**

*Witchcraft (reading fortunes, hurting children)*

**3. Giles Corey calls out what he thinks is really going on. What does he say? (pg. 1318)**

*Thomas Putnam is reaching out for land*

**4. What new testimony does Mary Warren Give (pg. 1318)**

*The girls were all pretending*

**5. Elizabeth is pregnant, so she will have a year’s reprieve. Why does Proctor continue with his charge that the girls are lying? (pg. 1320)**

*Other innocent people have been wrongly accused*

**6. How many signatures has Francis Nurse collected on behalf of Rebecca, Elizabeth, and Martha?**

*91*

**7. What is going to happen to those who signed the testament?**

*They will be summoned for questioning*

**8. Of what does Giles accuse Mr. Putnam?**

*Using his daughter to accuse others of witchcraft to get their land*

**9. What is the major flaw in Danforth’s argument on page 1325?**

*Witchcraft is an invisible crime; only the witch and victim are witnesses to it. The court must rely on the victims’ testimony as the accused will likely not confess to witchcraft.*

**10. What does the judge expect from the defenders that he does not expect from Abigail.**

*He expects those accused to show proof of their innocence; he does not expect Abigail to show proof of their guilt*

**11. What argument does Proctor use to defend Mary Warren’s statements about the poppet?**

*Elizabeth never kept any poppets in their home*

**12. What information about Abigail surprises Danforth?**

*He does not believe Proctor’s statement that Abigail wants to murder Elizabeth*

**13. How does Mary Warren explain her fainting?**

*It was pretense (fake)*

**14. What is ironic about Abigail’s speech on page 1331?**

*She accuses the court of mistrusting her and questioning her (she has lied throughout the proceedings)*

**15. What do the girls do next?**

*They pretend Mary Warren has cast a cold wind on them; they “freeze”*

**16. Describe the dialogue between Proctor, Danforth, and Abigail on pages 1332-1333.**

*Proctor accuses Abigail of being a whore; Danforth is shocked by the charge; Abigail refuses to answer any questions posed by Danforth*

**17. What does Proctor mean when he says, “Oh Francis, I wish you had some evil in you that you might know me.”**

*Francis, a good man, cannot imagine Proctor would be guilty of adultery*

**18. What is ironic about the exchange between Elizabeth and Danforth? (pg. 1334-1335)**

*Elizabeth, whom Proctor said has never lied, in fact lies to protect Proctor*

**19. What does Abby do to distract Danforth from listening to Hale?**

*She screams and pretends a bird is attacking her*

**20. How does the Act end for the following characters?**

*a. Mary Warren and Abigail – they are somewhat reconciled; Mary Warren claims to go “back to God” and turns on Proctor*

*b. John Proctor and Giles Corey – they are taken to jail*

Act Four

**1. What is the setting at the beginning of Act IV?**

*The Salem jail, later in the fall*

**2. Who is Sarah Goode talking about in this scene?**

*The Devil; she imagines he is coming to get her and Tituba*

**3. Herrick is drunk. What theme do you think Herrick’s drunkenness on execution day implies? (pg. 1344)**

*The corruption and collapse of Salem society; the conviction of innocent people*

**4. What meaning does Miller convey through Hathorne’s description of Parris?**

*He says Parris has a “mad” look; he weeps and seems unsteady. The trials and Abigail’s involvement in them have had a powerful effect on him*

**5. Why are there so many cows wandering the streets?**

*Their owners are in jail*

**6. According to Parris, why is Hale talking to Rebecca Nurse?**

*He is trying to get her and others to confess to witchcraft to save themselves*

**7. What have Abigail and Mercy Lewis done? Be specific.**

*They both said they were spending the night at the other’s house; Parris has heard they may have boarded a ship; his strongbox (safe) has been broken into, he thinks the girls have robbed him and left with his money*

**8. What concern does Parris express to Hathorne? Give two concerns.**

*1) Those who are to be hanged are unlike those who have been hanged in the past (they are upstanding citizens in Salem)*

*2) He feels personally threatened – a dagger was in his front door*

**9. What does Parris propose? What is Danforth’s response?**

*Parris proposes a postponement to the hangings. Danforth says twelve have already died; to postpone the hangings would reflect badly on him as a judge and make those who had already died look innocent.*

**10. What does Hale say he has returned to Salem? What does he mean by this statement?**

*He has “come to do the Devil’s work”; he is trying to convince innocent people to confess to witchcraft*

**11. Why has Elizabeth been brought out of her cell?**

*To convince Proctor to confess to witchcraft to save his life*

**12. What themes are revealed in Hale’s speech on page 1350?**

* *Good intentions sometimes lead to evil results*
* *No principle justifies the taking of life*
* *God may damn the sin of lying less than the sin of pride*

**13. Give one example of Elizabeth’s honesty and integrity. What do you think Miller is trying to say through his depiction of her?**

*She does not promise anything before she speaks to Proctor; she is a person who will not persuade her husband to act against his conscience*

**14. What happened to Giles Corey? Why wouldn’t he answer yes or no to his indictment?**

*He was pressed to death; he could not be condemned a witch if he didn’t answer, he would die a Christian and his sons would inherit his farm*

**15. Why does Proctor say he could lie where Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey could not?**

*He is not a saint; he has already been dishonest, so a lie would not spoil his reputation*

**16. Elizabeth no longer judges him, but why does she say it is pointless to forgive him?**

*Her forgiveness doesn’t matter if John does no forgive himself.*

**17. What does Elizabeth confess to John?**

*She was a cold wife; she was the reason he had an affair with Abigail*

**18. How does Rebecca react when she sees Proctor?**

*She is initially happy to see him alive, but is shocked when he confesses to witchcraft*

**19. Proctor will lie about his associations with the Devil. What won’t he lie about?**

*Seeing others with the Devil*

**20. What do Hale and Parris get Danforth to do?**

*Allow Proctor to sign a confession without implicating others*

**21. What does Proctor do to his signed confession? Why? Be specific.**

*He grabs it and refuses to let it be hung in the village; his says his confession (a lie) does not need to be made public, that it blackens the names of those who refused to confess; he begs to keep his name; he tears his confession, condemning himself to hang*

**22. How do you know Proctor has forgiven himself?**

*He sees some shred of goodness in himself by not lying to save himself*

**23. Why won’t Elizabeth plead with John one last time?**

*He has shown goodness and she will not take that from him*