

ACT IV - Study Guide

1. Why has Reverend Hale returned to Salem? 1321

To pray with the people who are condemned to hang

2. What is Reverend Hale advising the condemned to do? 1321

Confess - he is begging them to! He knows these confessions are lies, but he thinks it is better to risk their souls by lying than to outright give up their lives.

3. What does Reverend Parris reveal about his niece Abigail? 1322

She and Mercy Lewis have stolen all of his money and run off in the night.

4. Describe the condition of Salem at this point? 1321

So many are in the jails, the town has gone deserted, farms are empty and broken up, cows are wandering the road (because nobody is around to tend, mend fences, etc.)

5. How does Andover differ from Salem? What happened there that is scaring the officials? 1322

The trials there are done with - the people of Andover rose up against the court and threw them out.

6. How do the proposed hangings of Rebecca Nurse and John Proctor differ from the past executions? 1323

They are respectable people, not drunks, outcasts, etc. (remember Elizabeth's line, "I am no Goody Good who sleeps in ditches or Goody Osburn drunk and half-witted, Act II)

7. What does Reverend Parris want Danforth to do? 1323

Postpone (not cancel!) the hangings. He is still just looking out for himself - there was a knife in his door one morning. He is worried that the town will rise up and blame him.

8. What does Reverend Hale want Danforth to do? 1324

Pardon all the condemned. If he won't do that, at least give Hale more time, postpone for a week, publish that they are striving for confessions.

9. Why does Danforth refuse to postpone the hangings? 1324

It would admit some wrongdoing or doubt, a "floundering" on their part - it would also cast doubt on the executions and condemnations of the 12 who have already been hanged..

10. What does Reverend Hale mean when he says, "there is blood on my head!?" 1325

He has contributed to the deaths of all of these people. He didn't know them and so had no qualms about condemning them and signing their warrants, but now that he understands what's really going on in Salem, he realizes that he has sent dozens of innocent people to their deaths

11. What do Hale and Danforth request of Elizabeth Proctor? 1326

Prevail upon John to confess. Make him do it.

12. What happened to Giles Corey? 1328

He refused to answer the charges – if he had (whether guilty or not), all of his lands and properties would have been forfeit to the court and his sons would have gotten nothing. This way all of his things are safe. In order to convince him, they tied him to the ground and lay heavy stones on him for two days until finally he just died.

13. What is John's excuse for confessing? 1328

He has already spoiled his name; he will not be condemning his already blackened soul by telling another lie. He is not a good man, and nothing is made worse by this lie.

14. What is Elizabeth's proof that John is a good man?

That he hasn't confessed yet. He has been under such duress and misery and has still refused to lie about this.

15. How has Elizabeth changed since we first met her?

She is much stronger. Her love for John is strengthened, too. She recognizes her coldness before and regrets her bitterness and the part it played in all of this.

16. After John confesses, what does Danforth want him to do?

Sign a written confession that will be hung on the courthouse door.

17. Discuss, "I am no Sarah Good or Tituba, I am John Proctor! You will not use me!" (p.1332) What does he mean?

He is not some outcast whose death will be 'used' to show how faulty the people of the village are. He will also not let them use his confession to cast doubt on the worthy people who have still refrained from confessing.

18. Discuss, "I have given you my soul; leave me my name!" (p.1333) What does he mean?

He has blackened his soul by telling the lie, but at least let his name remain clean. If he signs it, he signs it to a lie and his children must bear that name forever. Let him keep that clean, though he lives because of his lie.

19. To what does Hale attribute Proctor's willingness to hang?

Pride, vanity, stubbornness

20. To what does Elizabeth attribute it?

"he have his goodness now" by this act he has redeemed himself – he has refused to implicate his friends and is going to his death knowing he is an innocent man, but he goes to his death in order to keep from lying about things. He has "atoned" for the lechery and is pure again. She won't take that from him.