

3. as lief (leef) *adv.* rather.

- 312 **Giles:** I never said my wife were a witch, Mr. Hale: I only said she were reading books!
- 313 **Hale:** Mr. Corey, exactly what complaint were made on your wife?
- 314 **Giles:** That bloody mongrel Walcott charge her. Y'see, he buy a pig of my wife four or five year ago, and the pig died soon after. So he come dancin' in for his money back. So my Martha, she says to him. "Walcott, if you haven't the wit to feed a pig properly, you'll not live to own many," she says. Now he goes to court and claims that from that day to this he cannot keep a pig alive for more than four weeks because my Martha bewitch them with her books!
- 315 *Enter EZEKIEL CHEEVER. A shocked silence.*
- 316 **Cheever:** Good evening to you, Proctor.
- 317 **Proctor:** Why, Mr. Cheever. Good evening.
- 318 **Cheever:** Good evening, all. Good evening, Mr. Hale.
- 319 **Proctor:** I hope you come not on business of the court.
- 320 **Cheever:** I do, Proctor, aye. I am clerk of the court now, y'know.
- 321 *Enter MARSHAL HERRICK, a man in his early thirties, who is somewhat shamefaced at the moment.*
- 322 **Giles:** It's a pity, Ezekiel, that an honest tailor might have gone to Heaven must burn in Hell. You'll burn for this, do you know it?
- 323 **Cheever:** You know yourself I must do as I'm told. You surely know that, Giles. And I'd as lief³ you'd not be sending me to Hell. I like not the sound of it, I tell you: I like not the sound of it. *He fears PROCTOR, but starts to reach inside his coat.* Now believe me, Proctor, how heavy be the law, all its tonnage I do carry on my back tonight. *He takes out a warrant.* I have a warrant for your wife.
- 324 **Proctor, to Hale:** You said she were not charged!
- 325 **Hale:** I know nothin' of it. *To CHEEVER:* When were she charged?
- 326 **Cheever:** I am given sixteen warrant tonight, sir, and she is one.
- 327 **Proctor:** Who charged her?
- 328 **Cheever:** Why, Abigail Williams charge her.
- 329 **Proctor:** On what proof, what proof?
- 330 **Cheever, looking about the room:** Mr. Proctor, I have little time. The court bid me search your house, but I like not to search a house. So will you hand me any poppets that your wife may keep here?
- 331 **Proctor:** Poppets?
- 332 **Elizabeth:** I never kept no poppets, not since I were a girl.

- 333 **Cheever**, *embarrassed, glancing toward the mantel where sits MARY WARREN'S poppet*: I spy a poppet, Goody Proctor.
- 334 **Elizabeth**: Oh! *Going for it*: Why, this is Mary's.
- 335 **Cheever**, *shyly*: Would you please to give it to me?
- 336 **Elizabeth**, *handing it to him, asks HALE*: Has the court discovered a text in poppets now?
- 337 **Cheever**, *carefully holding the poppet*: Do you keep any others in this house?
- 338 **Proctor**: No, nor this one either till tonight. What signifies a poppet?
- 339 **Cheever**: Why, a poppet—he *gingerly turns the poppet over*—a poppet may signify—Now, woman, will you please to come with me?
- 340 **Proctor**: She will not! *To ELIZABETH*: Fetch Mary here.
- 341 **Cheever**, *ineptly reaching toward ELIZABETH*: No, no, I am forbid to leave her from my sight.
- 342 **Proctor**, *pushing his arm away*: You'll leave her out of sight and out of mind, Mister. Fetch Mary, Elizabeth. *ELIZABETH goes upstairs.*
- 343 **Hale**: What signifies a poppet, Mr. Cheever?
- 344 **Cheever**, *turning the poppet over in his hands*: Why, they say it may signify that she—he *has lifted the poppet's skirt, and his eyes widen in astonished fear*. Why, this, this—
- 345 **Proctor**, *reaching for the poppet*: What's there?
- 346 **Cheever**: Why—He *draws out a long needle from the poppet*—it is a needle! Herrick, Herrick, it is a needle!
- 347 *HERRICK comes toward him.*
- 348 **Proctor**, *angrily, bewildered*: And what signifies a needle!
- 349 **Cheever**, *his hands shaking*: Why, this go hard with her, Proctor, this—I had my doubts, Proctor. I had my doubts, but here's calamity.
- 350 *To HALE, showing the needle*: You see it, sir, it is a needle!
- 351 **Hale**: Why? What meanin' has it?
- 352 **Cheever**, *wide-eyed, trembling*: The girl, the Williams girl, Abigail Williams, sir. She sat to dinner in Reverend Parris's house tonight, and without word nor warnin' she falls to the floor. Like a struck beast, he says, and screamed a scream that a bull would weep to hear. And he goes to save her, and, stuck two inches in the flesh of her belly, he draw a needle out. And demandin' of her how she come to be so stabbed, she—to *PROCTOR now*—testify it were your wife's familiar spirit pushed it in.
- 353 **Proctor**: Why, she done it herself! *To HALE*: I hope you're not takin' this for proof, Mister!

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 352, mark details that add vividness and drama to Cheever's account of the dinner scene.

QUESTION: Why does Miller give Cheever these strong, descriptive lines?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of this description?

- 354 Hale, *struck by the proof, is silent.*
- 355 **Cheever:** 'Tis hard proof! *To* HALE: I find here a poppet Goody Proctor keeps. I have found it, sir. And in the belly of the poppet a needle's stuck. I tell you true, Proctor, I never warranted to see such proof of Hell, and I bid you obstruct me not, for I—
- 356 *Enter* ELIZABETH *with* MARY WARREN. PROCTOR, *seeing* MARY WARREN, *draws her by the arm to* HALE.
- 357 **Proctor:** Here now! Mary, how did this poppet come into my house?
- 358 **Mary Warren,** *frightened for herself, her voice very small:* What poppet's that, sir?
- 359 **Proctor,** *impatiently, points at the doll in* CHEEVER'S *hand:* This poppet, this poppet.
- 360 **Mary Warren,** *evasively, looking at it:* Why, I—I think it is mine.
- 361 **Proctor:** It is your poppet, is it not?
- 362 **Mary Warren,** *not understanding the direction of this:* It—is, sir.
- 363 **Proctor:** And how did it come into this house?
- 364 **Mary Warren,** *glancing about at the avid faces:* Why—I made it in the court, sir, and—give it to Goody Proctor tonight.
- 365 **Proctor,** *to* HALE: Now, sir—do you have it?
- 366 **Hale:** Mary Warren, a needle have been found inside this poppet.
- 367 **Mary Warren,** *bewildered:* Why, I meant no harm by it, sir.
- 368 **Proctor,** *quickly:* You stuck that needle in yourself?
- 369 **Mary Warren:** I—I believe I did, sir, I—
- 370 **Proctor,** *to* HALE: What say you now?
- 371 **Hale,** *watching* MARY WARREN *closely:* Child, you are certain this be your natural memory? May it be, perhaps that someone conjures you even now to say this?
- 372 **Mary Warren:** Conjures me? Why, no, sir, I am entirely myself, I think. Let you ask Susanna Walcott—she saw me sewin' it in court. *Or better still:* Ask Abby. Abby sat beside me when I made it.
- 373 **Proctor,** *to* HALE, *of* CHEEVER: Bid him begone. Your mind is surely settled now. Bid him out, Mr. Hale.
- 374 **Elizabeth:** What signifies a needle?
- 375 **Hale:** Mary—you charge a cold and cruel murder on Abigail.
- 376 **Mary Warren:** Murder! I charge no—
- 377 **Hale:** Abigail were stabbed tonight; a needle were found stuck into her belly—
- 378 **Elizabeth:** And she charges me?
- 379 **Hale:** Aye.
- 380 **Elizabeth,** *her breath knocked out:* Why—! The girl is murder! She must be ripped out of the world!

- 381 **Cheever**, *pointing at ELIZABETH*: You've heard that, sir! Ripped out of the world! Herrick, you heard it!
- 382 **Proctor**, *suddenly snatching the warrant out of CHEEVER'S hands*: Out with you.
- 383 **Cheever**: Proctor, you dare not touch the warrant.
- 384 **Proctor**, *ripping the warrant*: Out with you!
- 385 **Cheever**: You've ripped the Deputy Governor's warrant, man!
- 386 **Proctor**: Damn the Deputy Governor! Out of my house!
- 387 **Hale**: Now, Proctor, Proctor!
- 388 **Proctor**: Get y'gone with them! You are a broken minister.
- 389 **Hale**: Proctor, if she is innocent, the court—
- 390 **Proctor**: If *she* is innocent! Why do you never wonder if Parris be innocent, or Abigail? Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning as clean as God's fingers? I'll tell you what's walking Salem—vengeance is walking Salem. We are what we always were in Salem, but now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law! This warrant's vengeance! I'll not give my wife to vengeance!
- 391 **Elizabeth**: I'll go, John—
- 392 **Proctor**: You will not go!
- 393 **Herrick**: I have nine men outside. You cannot keep her. The law binds me, John. I cannot budge.
- 394 **Proctor**, *to HALE, ready to break him*: Will you see her taken?
- 395 **Hale**: Proctor, the court is just—
- 396 **Proctor**: Pontius Pilate!⁴ God will not let you wash your hands of this!
- 397 **Elizabeth**: John—I think I must go with them. *He cannot bear to look at her*. Mary, there is bread enough for the morning; you will bake, in the afternoon. Help Mr. Proctor as you were his daughter—you owe me that, and much more. *She is fighting her weeping*. *To PROCTOR*: When the children wake, speak nothing of witchcraft—it will frighten them.
- 398 *She cannot go on.*
- 399 **Proctor**: I will bring you home. I will bring you soon.
- 400 **Elizabeth**: Oh, John, bring me soon!
- 401 **Proctor**: I will fall like an ocean on that court! Fear nothing, Elizabeth.
- 402 **Elizabeth**, *with great fear*: I will fear nothing. *She looks about the room, as though to fix it in her mind*. Tell the children I have gone to visit someone sick.

NOTES

4. **Pontius Pilate** Roman governor who condemned Jesus to be crucified. Pilate washed his hands before the crowd to show that he refused to take responsibility for Jesus' death.

- 403 *She walks out the door. HERRICK and CHEEVER behind her. For a moment, PROCTOR watches from the doorway. The clank of chain is heard.*
- 404 **Proctor:** Herrick! Herrick, don't chain her! *He rushes out the door. From outside: Damn you, man, you will not chain her! Off with them! I'll not have it! I will not have her chained!*
- 405 *There are other men's voices against his. HALE, in a fever of guilt and uncertainty, turns from the door to avoid the sight: MARY WARREN bursts into tears and sits weeping. GILES COREY calls to HALE.*
- 406 **Giles:** And yet silent, minister? It is fraud, you know it is fraud! What keeps you, man?
- 407 *PROCTOR is half braced, half pushed into the room by two deputies and HERRICK.*
- 408 **Proctor:** I'll pay you, Herrick. I will surely pay you!
- 409 **Herrick, panting:** In God's name, John, I cannot help myself. I must chain them all. Now let you keep inside this house till I am gone! *He goes out with his deputies.*



- 410 PROCTOR *stands there, gulping air. Horses and a wagon creaking are heard.*
- 411 **Hale**, *in great uncertainty*: Mr. Proctor—
- 412 **Proctor**: Out of my sight!
- 413 **Hale**: Charity, Proctor, charity. What I have heard in her favor, I will not fear to testify in court. God help me. I cannot judge her guilty or innocent—I know not. Only this consider: the world goes mad, and it profit nothing you should lay the cause to the vengeance of a little girl.
- 414 **Proctor**: You are a coward! Though you be ordained in God's own tears, you are a coward now!
- 415 **Hale**: Proctor, I cannot think God be provoked so grandly by such a petty cause. The jails are packed—our greatest judges sit in Salem now—and hangin's promised. Man, we must look to cause proportionate. Were there murder done, perhaps, and never brought to light? Abomination? Some secret blasphemy that stinks to Heaven? Think on cause, man, and let you help me to discover it. For there's your way, believe it, there is your only way, when such confusion strikes upon the world. *He goes to GILES and FRANCIS.* Let you counsel among yourselves; think on your village and what may have drawn from heaven such thundering wrath upon you all. I shall pray God open up our eyes.
- 416 **HALE** *goes out.*
- 417 **Francis**, *struck by HALE'S mood*: I never heard no murder done in Salem.
- 418 **Proctor**—*he has been reached by HALE'S words*: Leave me, Francis, leave me.
- 419 **Giles**, *shaken*: John—tell me, are we lost?
- 420 **Proctor**: Go home now, Giles. We'll speak on it tomorrow.
- 421 **Giles**: Let you think on it. We'll come early, eh?
- 422 **Proctor**: Aye. Go now, Giles.
- 423 **Giles**: Good night, then.
- 424 **GILES COREY** *goes out. After a moment:*
- 425 **Mary Warren**, *in a fearful squeak of a voice*: Mr. Proctor, very likely they'll let her come home once they're given proper evidence.
- 426 **Proctor**: You're coming to the court with me, Mary. You will tell it in the court.
- 427 **Mary Warren**: I cannot charge murder on Abigail.
- 428 **Proctor**, *moving menacingly toward her*: You will tell the court how that poppet come here and who stuck the needle in.
- 429 **Mary Warren**: She'll kill me for sayin' that! PROCTOR *continues toward her.* Abby'll charge lechery⁵ on you, Mr. Proctor!
- 430 **Proctor**, *halting*: She's told you!

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraph 415, mark words and phrases that relate to causes and effects.

QUESTION: Why does Miller include this speech with this seeming expression of logic?

CONCLUDE: What is the effect of this speech?


5. lechery (LEHCH uhr ee) *n.* lust; adultery—a charge almost as serious as witchcraft in this Puritan community.

- 431 **Mary Warren:** I have known it, sir. She'll ruin you with it. I know she will.
- 432 **Proctor, hesitating, and with deep hatred of himself:** Good. Then her saintliness is done with. *MARY backs from him.* We will slide together into our pit; you will tell the court what you know.
- 433 **Mary Warren, in terror:** I cannot, they'll turn on me—
- 434 *PROCTOR strides and catches her, and she is repeating, "I cannot. I cannot!"*
- 435 **Proctor:** My wife will never die for me! I will bring your guts into your mouth but that goodness will not die for me!
- 436 **Mary Warren, struggling to escape him:** I cannot do it. I cannot!
- 437 **Proctor, grasping her by the throat as though he would strangle her:** Make your peace with it! Now Hell and Heaven grapple on our backs, and all our old pretense is ripped away—make your peace! *He throws her to the floor, where she sobs. "I cannot. I cannot . . ." And now, half to himself, staring, and turning to the open door:* Peace. It is a providence, and no great change; we are only what we always were, but naked now. *He walks as though toward a great horror, facing the open sky.* Aye, naked! And the wind, God's icy wind, will blow!
- 438 *And she is over and over again sobbing, "I cannot, I cannot. I cannot" as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. Why does Hale visit the Proctors' home?
2. What do some of the accused, such as Sarah Good, do to save themselves from hanging?
3. What evidence of Elizabeth's guilt does Cheever find?
4.  **Notebook** Write a summary of Act II of *The Crucible*.

RESEARCH

Research to Explore Conduct research on an aspect of the text you find interesting. For example, you may want to learn about the Court of Oyer and Terminer, established to try and convict Salem witches.