THE CRUCIBLE ~ Essay Assignment

Below are possible topics for an essay you will write on "The Crucible." Choose only ONE of the prompts. The essay must consist of at least four paragraphs (introduction, at least two body paragraphs, and a conclusion), although it may be longer if necessary. You must use specific details from the play, including a minimum of four direct quotes.

Choose one prompt and write a 2-4 page, academically cited typed essay.

**ESSAY REQUIREMENTS:**
- **Essay is five paragraphs, including an introduction, 3 body paragraphs and a concluding paragraph.**
- **At least 4 direct quotes from the play used as concrete details in body paragraphs.**
- **Transitions are used to guide the reader through the essay.**
- **All references to plot and character are accurate, including correct spelling of characters' names.**
- **Essay is typed, double spaced, proofread and contains minimal errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization and grammar.**
- **Sentences are varied in length, no run ons or fragments.**
- **Title of play is included, italicized or underlined; author's name is included.**

**Introduction:**
- Begins with a hook/lead that appeals to human nature/society in general
- Contains a thought provoking original thesis that reflects an in depth understanding of the play.

**Body Paragraphs**
- Each body paragraph develops an idea to support the thesis.
- Each body paragraph contains two concrete details and each concrete detail is supported with at least two commentaries
- Essay contains at least 4 embedded quotes from the play as concrete details.

**Concluding Paragraph**
- Conclusion is a full paragraph that reviews ideas from throughout the essay.
- Begins with the thesis reworded in a way that reflects ideas from the essay.
- Ends with a statement applying the topic of the essay to the world/human nature/society in general in a thought provoking manner.
- Leaves the reader with a satisfied sense of the meaning of your paper in relation to the play and the world in general.

**Essay Options:**
1. One of the reasons Arthur Miller wrote this play is to comment on the movement in the 1950's led by Senator Joseph McCarthy to seek and identify members of the Communist Party that he felt were trying to overthrow the government. This movement ruined many innocent people because of its drive to seek what it thought to be the truth, no matter who was hurt in the process. Write about another historical event that might be considered similar to this one and compare it to the Salem Witch Hunt. Make sure you use specific details from both the play and from the historical event you choose. Some possibilities:
   - the internment of Japanese citizens during World War II
   - victims of the AIDS hysteria (Ryan White and others), Ebola, Anthrax, SARS, etc...
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1. The protagonist of “The Crucible” is John Proctor, a man with a weakness for matters of the flesh but who values his reputation. What does he do at different stages and how she exemplifies the thematic significance of the title.

2. As the action heats up, some of the characters in “The Crucible” stay the same, but a few of them change. Write a detailed character study on one of the play’s dynamic characters who undergoes some sort of change from the beginning of the play to the end.

3. Preserving one’s reputation is a prevalent theme in “The Crucible.” Examine three characters, in detail, who are concerned with their reputations. How does this affect how they act? How are their situations similar or different? Is a good name more important than the truth?

4. Two characters in a literary work who serve as contrasts to each other are called foils. With this term in mind, explain how either Abigail and Elizabeth or Danforth and Hale serve as foils for each other. What character traits do each have which makes them foils for the other? How are these characters different? Do they change as the play progresses?

5. Who is ultimately more central to this story: John Proctor or Abigail Williams? What did John mean by his anguished cries of “Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name!” Is John a “real” Puritan or is Abigail?

6. Discuss the role and treatment of women (female characters) in the play. Discuss the images of women and female archetypes that Abigail, Mary Warren, and Elizabeth portray, as well as the message that Miller conveys through these characters. Consider discussing the Kohlberg moral stages of these characters and what view of women each reflects, as well as how these characters reflect the title of the play.

7. Discuss how a theme – such as scapegoating, greed, integrity, hunger for power/authority/respect, protectiveness of reputation and self-image, cowardice/bravery, hysteria/paranoia, deception or falsehood/honesty, individual/society, the power of falsehood, self-preservation as a powerful motivator, absolutism, and hypocrisy – functions in the play. Choose a character and discuss how he/she embodies this theme. Discuss how the theme – in all of its manifestations and transformations – reveals Miller’s underlying message. Consider universalizing the issues and relating them to another time and place and how the character/theme relates to the title of the play.

8. Argue whether or not Abigail is a victim of her society. Can she be excused/pardoned because of the influence of outside forces upon her? Examine the events from her past and present, and make connections between these events and her behavior. What is the larger message that Miller sends through this character? Consider discussing this character’s Kohlberg moral stages and how she exemplifies the thematic significance of the title.

Your essay must be typed, 12-point font, double-spaced.
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Turn your paper in ~ ON TIME ~ or you bare “the mark” of Salem on your forehead.