The Crucible – Act 1

 [inert](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/inert)

unable to move or resist motion

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

His daughter, Betty Parris, aged ten, is lying on the bed, **inert**.

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 [persecute](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/persecute)

cause to suffer

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

He believed he was being **persecuted** wherever he went, despite his best efforts to win people and God to his side.

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 [conceive](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/conceive)

have the idea for

NOTES:

"Conceive" also means "become pregnant" and is suggested in the example sentence's focus on children. This pun (along with the description of Reverend Parris as "a widower with no interest in children, or talent with them") makes the adults of Salem seem hypocritical, since they can conceive children, but cannot conceive of them.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

He regarded them as young adults, and until this strange crisis he, like the rest of Salem, never **conceived** that the children were anything but thankful for being permitted to walk straight, eyes slightly lowered, arms at the sides, and mouths shut until bidden to speak.

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 [creed](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/creed)

the written body of teachings of a religious group that are generally accepted by that group

NOTES:

Compare with the antonymous "incredulous" in the list for Act 4. Both words come from the Latin "credere" which means "to believe" but here, the noun "creed" refers to the religious beliefs of all the Salem inhabitants, while the adjective "incredulous" refers to one person's disbelief.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Their **creed** forbade anything resembling a theater or “vain enjoyment.”

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 [somber](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/somber)

grave or even gloomy in character

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Which is not to say that nothing broke into this strict and **somber** way of life.

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 [ordinance](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/ordinance)

an authoritative rule

NOTES:

As suggested by the sentence structure, "ordinance" and "word" are nearly synonymous nouns--"ordinance" refers to the authoritative rules of the Salem community, which are mostly based on the Puritans' interpretations of the authoritative "Word" of God.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

That there were some jokers, however, is indicated by the practice of appointing a two-man patrol whose duty was to “walk forth in the time of God’s worship to take notice of such as either lye about the meeting house, without attending to the word and **ordinances**, or that lye at home or in the fields without giving good account thereof, and to take the names of such persons, and to present them to the magistrates, whereby they may be accordingly proceeded against.”

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 [predilection](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/predilection)

a predisposition in favor of something

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

This **predilection** for minding other people’s business was time-honored among the people of Salem, and it undoubtedly created many of the suspicions which were to feed the coming madness.

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 [rankle](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/rankle)

gnaw into; make resentful or angry

NOTES:

The first part of the definition connects more vividly to the Latin origin: "dracunculus" means "small serpent" and in the eyes of the Puritans, if old disciplines rankle, then that could be because the Devil (often connected to the form of a serpent) is gnawing into a person's flesh and soul.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

It was also, in my opinion, one of the things that a John Proctor would rebel against, for the time of the armed camp had almost passed, and since the country was reasonably--although not wholly--safe, the old disciplines were beginning to **rankle**.

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 [maraud](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/maraud)

raid and rove in search of booty

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

It stood, dark and threatening, over their shoulders night and day, for out of it Indian tribes **marauded** from time to time, and Reverend Parris had parishioners who had lost relatives to these heathen.

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 [defile](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/defile)

place under suspicion or cast doubt upon

NOTES:

"Defile" and "corrupt" are used synonymously here, although the slight difference that makes "corrupt" seem a stronger verb can be seen in their Latin roots: "fouler" means "to trample" (and connects to the definition "make dirty or spotty") while "corrumpere" means "to destroy" (compare with "corruption" in this list).

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

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 ways and deceitful ideas.

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 [perpetuation](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/perpetuation)

the act of prolonging something

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

It was, however, an autocracy by consent, for they were united from top to bottom by a commonly held ideology whose **perpetuation** was the reason and justification for all their sufferings.

 [repression](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/repression)

the act of repressing; control by holding down

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Evidently the time came in New England when the **repressions** of order were heavier than seemed warranted by the dangers against which the order was organized.

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 [injunction](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/injunction)

a formal command or admonition

NOTES:

"Jungere" means "to join"--this Latin root can be seen more clearly in words such as "junction" and "conjunction" but it is hinted at here, since the "injunctions" described are those that are charitable ("showing or motivated by sympathy and understanding and generosity") and that should keep neighbors joined in peaceful harmony. However, similar to "ordinance" in this list, the example sentence focuses on the breaking of commands and rules.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Long-held hatreds of neighbors could now be openly expressed, and vengeance taken, despite the Bible’s charitable **injunctions**.

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 [dissembling](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/dissembling)

pretending with intention to deceive

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

He is bending to kneel again when his niece, Abigail Williams, seventeen, enters--a strikingly beautiful girl, an orphan, with an endless capacity for **dissembling**.

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 [apprehension](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/apprehension)

fearful expectation or anticipation

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Now she is all worry and **apprehension** and propriety.

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 [abomination](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/abomination)

an action that is vicious or vile; an action that arouses disgust or abhorrence

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Now then, in the midst of such disruption, my own household is discovered to be the very center of some obscene practice. **Abominations** are done in the forest--

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 [snivel](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/snivel)

whining in a tearful manner

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

She hates me, uncle, she must, for I would not be her slave. It’s a bitter woman, a lying, cold, sniveling woman, and I will not work for such a woman!

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 [begrudge](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/begrudge)

wish ill or allow unwillingly

NOTES:

"Begrudge" and "resent" can be synonymous verbs, and both parts of the definition are used here: Abigail wishes ill upon (resent) her uncle, because she thinks he might allow unwillingly (begrudge) the bed in his house on which she sleeps.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

With ill-concealed resentment at him: Do you **begrudge** my bed, uncle?

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 [corruption](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/corruption)

moral perversion; impairment of virtue and moral principles

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

They will howl me out of Salem for such **corruption** in my house.

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 [blatant](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/blatant)

without any attempt at concealment; completely obvious

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

He undoubtedly felt it poor payment that the village should so blatantly disregard his candidate for one of its more important offices, especially since he regarded himself as the intellectual superior of most of the people around him.

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 [vindictive](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/vindictive)

disposed to seek revenge or intended for revenge

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

His **vindictive** nature was demonstrated long before the witchcraft began.

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 [corroborate](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/corroborate)

support with evidence or authority or make more certain or confirm

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

So it is not surprising to find that so many accusations against people are in the handwriting of Thomas Putnam, or that his name is so often found as a witness **corroborating** the supernatural testimony, or that his daughter led the crying-out at the most opportune junctures of the trials, especially when--But we’ll speak of that when we come to it.

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 [intimation](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/intimation)

an indirect suggestion

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

I have spoke nothin’, but my heart has clamored **intimations**.

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 [formidable](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/formidable)

inspiring fear

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Goody Ann, it is a **formidable** sin to conjure up the dead!

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 [trepidation](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/trepidation)

a feeling of alarm or dread

NOTES:

Compare with "apprehension" in this list--both states of mind refer to Abigail, and on the surface, suggest that she's worried about her cousin and friend's health. But the phrasing of the question here hints at Abigail's more selfish concern, because her focus is not on how sick Ruth is, but on how Ruth got sick, which could be traced back to their improper activities in the forest.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Abigail, with hushed **trepidation**: How is Ruth sick?

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 [partisan](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/partisan)

an ardent and enthusiastic supporter of some person or activity

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Proctor was a farmer in his middle thirties. He need not have been a **partisan** of any faction in the town, but there is evidence to suggest that he had a sharp and biting way with hypocrites.

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 [calumny](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/calumny)

an abusive attack on a person's character or good name

NOTES:

Compare with "defamation" in this list--although the chosen definitions are identical, the tone in which each word is used is very different. Here is a serious description of Proctor's character and a foreshadowing of a plot point with the alternative definition ("a false accusation of an offense"). But in speaking to Giles, Proctor is jokingly accusing his friend of accusing him of defamation.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

In Proctor’s presence a fool felt his foolishness instantly--and a Proctor is always marked for **calumny** therefore.

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 [titillate](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/titillate)

excite pleasurably or erotically

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Mercy Lewis, both afraid of him and strangely **titillated**: I’d best be off.

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 [canny](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/canny)

showing self-interest and shrewdness in dealing with others

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Giles Corey, eighty-three, enters. He is knotted with muscle, **canny**, inquisitive, and still powerful.

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 [exude](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/exude)

make apparent by one's mood or behavior

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Rebecca walks across the room to the bed. Gentleness **exudes** from her.

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 [arbitrate](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/arbitrate)

act between parties with a view to reconciling differences

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

He was called upon to **arbitrate** disputes as though he were an unofficial judge, and Rebecca also enjoyed the high opinion most people had for him.

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 [iniquity](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/iniquity)

morally objectionable behavior

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

To top it all, Mrs. Putnam--who is now staring at the bewitched child on the bed--soon accused Rebecca’s spirit of “tempting her to **iniquity**,” a charge that had more truth in it than Mrs. Putnam could know

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 [defamation](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/defamation)

an abusive attack on a person's character or good name

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Proctor, familiarly, with warmth, although he knows he is approaching the edge of Giles’ tolerance with this: Is it the Devil’s fault that a man cannot say you good morning without you clap him for **defamation**?

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 [inculcation](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/inculcation)

teaching or impressing upon the mind by frequent instruction or repetition

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

when we see the steady and methodical **inculcation** into humanity of the idea of man’s worthlessness--until redeemed--the necessity of the Devil may become evident as a weapon, a weapon designed and used time and time again in every age to whip men into a surrender to a particular church or church-state.

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 [enthrall](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/enthrall)

hold spellbound

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

The Catholic Church, through its Inquisition, is famous for cultivating Lucifer as the arch-fiend, but the Church’s enemies relied no less upon the Old Boy to keep the human mind enthralled.

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 [propitiation](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/propitiation)

the act of placating and overcoming distrust and animosity

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

I have no doubt that people were communing with, and even worshiping, the Devil in Salem, and if the whole truth could be known in this case, as it is in others, we should discover a regular and conventionalized **propitiation** of the dark spirit.

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 [licentious](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/licentious)

lacking moral discipline; especially sexually unrestrained

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

We have all manner of **licentious** people in the village!

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 [blanch](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/blanch)

turn pale, as if in fear

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Parris, **blanched**: She called the Devil?

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 [exaltation](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/exaltation)

a state of being carried away by overwhelming emotion

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

Hale, with rising **exaltation**: You are God’s instrument put in our hands to discover the Devil’s agents among us.

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 [enrapture](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/enrapture)

hold spellbound

NOTES:

Compare with "enthrall" in this list--although the given definitions are identical, the Middle English "thral" means "slave" and emphasizes the effect of a belief in the Devil. In Medieval Latin, "raptura" means "ecstasy" and in Latin, "rapere" means "to seize"--both connect to the Christian idea of Rapture, when the saved are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord. Here, Abigail is dissembling, but she is convincing enough to enrapture her observers.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE:

She is **enraptured**, as though in a pearly light.