

## Theme Analysis Questions

### Questions to help identify theme

1. What do various characters think, say, and do regarding the subject?
2. What are the main characters' key traits? How do these characters change throughout the course of events? What lessons do they learn?
3. How do the various aspects of setting serve as an apt background for the subject?
4. What is the central conflict? What is the correlation between particular conflicts and the subject?
5. What do the climax and resolution say about the subject?
6. What is the author's tone toward the subject as revealed through his or her word choice and other details?

### Questions to help generalize about theme

1. Examine the author's ideas on hysteria. Explain how this work is in part the story of the conflict between emotionalism and rationalism? What is the author saying about both sides? Points to consider: the effect of paranoia, fear, suspicion, and mass hysteria on logic, rational thought, and common sense; the destruction of public order in the face of chaos.
2. Around what political dangers does the play revolve?
3. How does the author view authority? Points to consider: What constitutes or is the source of true authority? What is the proper exercise of authority? When does the exercise of authority become abusive? What does the author say about the various types of authority (religious; social, economic; civil, state; scholarly, academic, intellectual; common sense, reason, moral integrity, fidelity to conscience and truth)?
4. Examine the author's views on guilt. Points to consider: How do people cope with sin and guilt? What are the effects of sin and guilt on both the sinner and the sinned against? What are the consequences of sin? What is an individual's responsibility for his or her behavior?
5. Examine the author's views on ignorance/superstition. Points to consider: What role do ignorance and superstition play in the development of violence, hysteria, injustice, paranoia, and persecution? Do fear and suspicion feed upon themselves and result in persecution, hysteria, and the destruction of public order and the overall sense of good?
6. Examine the author's views on individual integrity in the face of violence and mass hysteria. Points to consider: What is an individual's responsibility to speak out against social injustice? Is it more noble to die with integrity or to compromise your principles and live? Does life lose meaning once a person's name has been sullied, his or her reputation destroyed, or his or her identity and sense of self lost?
7. Examine the author's views on duty. Points to consider: Where does an individual's first duty lie: with family, God, country, self, friends, other?
8. How do the ideas developed in this work relate to one another?
9. How does the author introduce and develop these ideas in each act?

Write a complete sentence that expresses what you think the author says about each of these topics.