**Themes:**

Several significant themes emerge early in the play. One of these that Miller develops throughout the first act is the speed at which gossip can spread in a close-knit society like Salem. Miller establishes Salem as a world in which little information is considered private; all information is open to suspicion and question. This correlates to the McCarthy hearings, which probed into the lives of the suspected communists for evidence of their anti-American activity, no matter the actual relevance.

A second theme that Miller establishes is the ability of people to choose whichever position suits their self-interest. Abigail Williams shows the ability to affirm or deny any charge against her based entirely on whether it serves her needs, while Tituba, when charged with witchcraft, denies it only until she realizes that admitting to the crime will save her from further punishment and that accusing others will shift the blame elsewhere. The shift of blame from one character to another will be a recurring plot point, as few characters will accept the consequences of their actions or directly confront the charges leveled against them.

Perhaps the most important theme that Miller develops in this act is the propensity of accusations to snowball. The charges against the girls and Tituba become perpetually more significant: at first they are accused of merely dancing, then of dancing naked. The charges proceed until Tituba is deemed a witch and accuses others of conspiring with Satan. Legitimate charges of dancing and sinful activity increase in magnitude until charges of Satanism arise. The irony of this situation is that the fight against sinfulness in Salem will become more sinful and malicious than any of the actual events that occurred – much like, in Miller's opinion, the McCarthy era did more to tear apart America than Communist sympathizers ever did.