



SALEM WITCH TRIALS STUDY GUIDE

Forum: Special

Issue: Salem Witch Trials

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Welcome Letters From The Chairboard

Hello honourable guests, my name is Yağmur Ağacıkoğlu. I graduated from Onur Ateş Anatolian High School, this school had a very huge impact on building my character and spending four years there was the best experience of my life. Now I'm studying linguistics in Dokuz Eylül University. I've been to several mun conferences during my high school years, and still i enjoy participating. I'm looking forward to meeting you.

Yağmur Ağacıkoğlu

Greetings to all Salem community. My name is Halil Kürşat AKKUŞ and I'm a senior in this beautiful Onur Ateş Anatolian Highschool as known as MPAL. In the past years while attending MUN conferences I always think about why we don't give a try to organize our conference and now I would like to say my dream has come true.

Lastly, we are honored to host you at the first edition of MpalmUN

Sincerely

Halil Kürşat Akkuş

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Hello honourable guests, my name is Zeynep Beyza Uyanık. I'm a student at Onur Ates Anatolian High School. During my educational life here, I've taken place in several social activities and Mpalmun is one of them and I feel very lucky to having the chance of being a part of this wonderful organization. Though this is my first time in a Mun conference, I feel ready for this and can't wait to meet you all!

Zeynep Beyza Uyanık

1. Introduction

1.1 What Were the Salem Witch Trials

The Salem Witch Trials were a series of witchcraft cases brought before local magistrates in a settlement called Salem which was a part of the Massachusetts Bay colony in the 17th century.

1.2 When Did the Salem Witch Trials Take Place

The Salem Witch Trials officially began in February of 1692, when the afflicted girls accused the first three victims, Tituba, Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne, of witchcraft and ended in May of 1693, when the remaining victims were released from jail.

1.3 What Caused the Salem Witch Trials

The exact cause of the Salem Witch Trials is unknown but they were probably a number of causes. Some of the suggested theories are: conversion disorder, epilepsy, ergot poisoning, Encephalitis, Lyme disease, unusually cold weather, factionalism, socio-economic hardships, family rivalries and fraud.

Also, In 17th century Massachusetts, people often feared that the Devil was constantly trying to find ways to infiltrate and destroy Christians and their communities.

As a devout and strongly religious community living in near isolation in the mysterious New World, the community of Salem had a heightened sense of fear of the Devil and, as a result, it didn't take much to convince the villagers that there was evil among them.

In addition to this constant sense of fear, Salem residents were also under a great deal of stress during this period due to a number of factors.

2. History

The Salem witch trials were a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts between February 1692 and May 1693. More than 200 people were accused, 19 of whom were found guilty and executed by hanging (14 women and five men). One other man, Giles Corey, was crushed to death for refusing to plead and at least five people died in jail. It was the deadliest witch hunt in the history of the New England.

Twelve other women had previously been executed in Massachusetts and Connecticut during the 17th century. Despite being generally known as the *Salem* witch trials, the preliminary hearings in 1692 were conducted in several towns: Salem Village, Salem Town, Ipswich, and Andover. The most infamous trials were conducted by the Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692 in Salem Town.

2.1 Religious context

Prior to the constitutional turmoil of the 1680s, Massachusetts government had been dominated by conservative Puritan secular leaders. Influenced by Calvinism, Puritans had opposed many of the traditions of the Church of England, including use of the Book of Common Prayer, the use of clergy vestments during services, the use of sign of the cross at baptism, and kneeling to receive communion, all of which they believed constituted popery. King Charles I was hostile to this viewpoint, and Anglican church officials tried to repress these dissenting views during the 1620s and 1630s. Some Puritans and other religious minorities had sought refuge in the Netherlands but ultimately many made a major migration to colonial North America to establish their own society.

These immigrants, who were mostly constituted of families, established several of the earliest colonies in New England, of which the Massachusetts Bay Colony was the largest and most economically important. They intended to build a society based on their religious beliefs. Colonial leaders were elected by the freemen of the colony, those individuals who had had their religious experiences formally examined and had been admitted to one of the colony's Puritan congregations. The colonial leadership were prominent members of their congregations and regularly consulted with the local ministers on issues facing the colony.

In the early 1640s, England erupted in civil war. The Puritan-dominated Parliamentarians emerged victorious, and the Crown was supplanted by the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell in 1653. Its failure led to restoration of the old order under Charles II. Emigration to New England slowed significantly in these years. In Massachusetts, a successful merchant class began to develop that was less religiously motivated than the colony's early settlers.

2.2 Gender context

An overwhelming majority of people accused and convicted of witchcraft were women (about 78%). Overall, the Puritan belief and prevailing New England culture was that women were inherently sinful and more susceptible to damnation than men were. Throughout their daily lives, Puritans, especially Puritan women, actively attempted to thwart attempts by the Devil to overtake them and their souls. Indeed, Puritans held the belief that men and women were equal in the eyes of God, but not in the eyes of the Devil. Women's souls were seen as unprotected in their weak and vulnerable bodies. Several factors may explain why women were more likely to admit guilt of witchcraft than men. Historian Elizabeth Reis asserts that some likely believed they had truly given in to the Devil, and others might have believed they had done so temporarily. However, because those who confessed were reintegrated into society, some women might have confessed in order to spare their own lives.

Quarrels with neighbors often incited witchcraft allegations. One example of this is Abigail Faulkner, who was accused in 1692. Faulkner admitted she was "angry at what folk said," and the Devil may have temporarily overtaken her, causing harm to her neighbors. Women who did not conform to the norms of Puritan society were more likely to be the target of an accusation, especially those who were unmarried or did not have children.

2.3 Local rumors of witchcraft

Mather illustrates how the Goodwins' eldest child had been tempted by the devil and had stolen linen from the washerwoman Goody Glover. Glover, of Irish Catholic descent, was characterized as a disagreeable old woman and described by her husband as a witch; this may have been why she was accused of casting spells on the Goodwin children. After the event, four out of six Goodwin children began to have strange fits, or what some people referred to as "the disease of astonishment." The manifestations attributed to the disease quickly became associated with witchcraft. Symptoms included neck and back pains, tongues being drawn from their throats, and loud random outcries; other symptoms included having no control over their bodies such as becoming limber, flapping their arms like birds, or trying to harm others as well as themselves. These symptoms would fuel the craze of 1692.

3. Useful Vocabulary

- ☐ Bewitch: cast a spell over (someone).
- ☐ Break Our Fast: To eat the first meal of the day. To have breakfast.
- ☐ Fortnight: Two weeks.
- ☐ Goodman: A title of address "Mr."
- ☐ Goodwife: A title of address used like "Mrs."
- ☐ Husbandmen: Men who make their living through agriculture, or farming the land.
- ☐ Mass hysteria: A condition in which a large group of people exhibit similar physical or emotional symptoms, such as anxiety or extreme excitement.
- ☐ Indian: Native people
- ☐ To Stand Watch: To guard the town.
- ☐ Weary: Very tired.
- ☐ Willful: Stubborn.
- ☐ Witch-hunt: A campaign directed against a person or group holding views considered unorthodox or a threat to society.
- ☐ Witchcraft: The practice of using the powers of the devil in a malicious way.

4.Character List (Character bios will be provided through emails):

Victor Hathorne
Jonathan Corwin
Reverend George Burroughs
Nathaniel Saltonstall
Nanye-Hi (Cherokee)
Bridget Bishop
Dr. William Griggs
Reverend Samuel Parris
Giles Corey
Martha Corey
Roger Toothaker
George Corwin
John Proctor
Reverend Cotton Mather
Elizabeth Howe
Mercy Lewis
John Alden Jr.
Sarah Good

5.Bibliography

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