



The
Salem
Witch
Trials

1692 - 63

What Happened in Salem, 1692?



Mission - to understand what happened in Salem 1692 and why!

The first case brought to the special court was Bridget Bishop, an older woman known for her gossipy habits and promiscuity. When asked if she committed witchcraft, Bishop responded, "*I am as innocent as the child unborn.*" The defense must not have been convincing, because she was found guilty and, on June 10, became the first person hanged on what was later called Gallows Hill.

Smithsonianmag.com

A

Belief in the supernatural - and specifically in the devil's practice of giving certain humans (witches) the power to harm others in return for their loyalty had emerged in Europe as early as the 14th century, and was widespread in colonial New England.

History.com

B

In an effort to explain by scientific means the strange behaviour of the "bewitched" Salem women in 1692, a study published in **Science magazine** in 1976 cited the fungus ergot (found in rye and wheat) can cause symptoms such as delusions, vomiting and muscle spasms. The women may have eaten poisoned bread but believed they had been cursed.

C



The three accused witches were brought before the magistrates Jonathan Corwin and John Hathorne and questioned. One of them, Tituba confessed, likely seeking to save herself from conviction by acting as an informer, she claimed there were other witches acting alongside her in service of the devil against the Puritans. As hysteria spread a number of others were accused, including Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse—both regarded as upstanding members of church and community—and the four-year-old daughter of Sarah Good.

D

Like Tituba, several accused "witches" confessed and named still others, and the trials soon began to overwhelm the local justice system. In May 1692, the newly appointed governor of Massachusetts, William Phips, ordered the establishment of a special Court of Oyer (to hear) and Terminer (to decide) on witchcraft cases for Suffolk, Essex and Middlesex counties. Presided over by judges the court handed down its first conviction, against Bridget Bishop, on June 2. She was hanged eight days later on what would become known as Gallows Hill in Salem Town. Five more people were hanged that July; five in August and eight more in September. In addition, seven other accused witches died in jail, while the elderly Giles Corey (Martha's husband) was pressed to death by stones after he refused to deny his role. Though the respected minister Cotton Mather had warned of using testimony from dreams and visions, his concerns were largely ignored during the Salem witch trials. **Brittanica.com.**

E

How far does source E support A

Point of support / corroboration

P1 :

P2 :

Point not supported / corroborated

P1 :

P2 :

Mostly supports Does not support

How reliable is source C ?

The content (what) is / is not reliable because ..

The provenance (who) is / is not reliable

Mostly reliable Mostly unreliable

Quick Questions

Give two possible reasons for the Salem Witch Trials

Who was pressed to death ?

Why did Tituba confess to using witchcraft ?

Describe The Salem Witch Trails

Why / causes :

What happened :

Effect / impact :

The Salem Witch Trials - reliable evidence?

6 mins



Mission: to analyse, evaluate and compare historical sources to understand if the evidence against 'witches' was reliable.



Who was it, demanded Hathorne, who tortured the poor girls? "The devil, for all I know," Tituba rejoined before she began describing him, to a hushed room. She introduced a full, evil cast, their animal accomplices and various superpowers. She was masterful and gloriously persuasive. Only the day before, Tituba said a tall, white-haired man had ordered her to hurt the children. He would kill her if she did not. Had the man appeared to her in any other guise?. She gave a vivid, lurid and hare-brained account. She had seen a hog, a great black dog, a red cat, a yellow bird and a hairy creature that walked on two legs. Another animal had turned up too. She did not know what it was called and found it difficult to describe, but it had "wings and two legs and a head like a woman." More than anyone else, she propelled America's infamous witch hunt forward, supplying its imagery and determining its shape.

Smithsonian.mag

A

"I was taken very ill again all over & felt a great pricking in ye soles of my feet, and after a while I saw apparently the shape of Margret Scott, who, as I was sitting in a chair by ye fire pulled me with ye chair, down backward to ye ground, and tormented and pinched me very much."

B

Evidence given by Margret Scott during the Salem Witch Trials
1692

One of the reasons that the witch trials stand out in the history of early American law is that the court admitted spectral evidence to the proceedings. Spectral evidence was testimony in which witnesses claimed that the accused appeared to them and did them harm in a dream or a vision. Contemporary witch lore held that witches could project themselves spiritually, either directly or with the aid of Satan, in order to harm their victims from afar. The witch's victims might then see a spectral image of the witch approach them as an apparition. The specter of the witch could pinch, bite, or choke its victims, or otherwise harass them while the witch remained in a remote location. Its appearance might be that of the witch or of an animal acting as the witch's familiar. The court could then use the witness testimony of these events to support a conviction for witchcraft.

C



Image message? Tip = consider facial expressions

D

Source skills = I can ... analyse, compare, interpret and evaluate.



Q1

What is the main point or message of source A?

Q2

Provide a sub-point or message from source A

Q3

How similar are the MAIN messages from sources B and C? Not similar: somewhat similar: very similar (Explain answer)

Q4

How similar are the sub-messages from sources B and C? Not similar: somewhat similar: very similar (Explain answer)

Q5

What is the main message of source D?

Q6

Give an example from source B, C or D that corroborates (supports) source A.

Q7

Give an example from source B, C or D that does NOT corroborate (support) source A.


Q8

How reliable is source A? Circle a score then explain your reason (Not Reliable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Reliable)

Q9

The most important thing you learned from all of these sources combined?

Salem Witch Trials Summary

 **Mission** - to complete a brief summary of the Salem Witch trials.

My Salem Summary

- 1 Year
- 2 First accused
- 3 Magistrates
- 4 Governor of Mass
- 5 Reason / why
- 6 Reason / why
- 7 What happened
- 8 What happened
- 9 What happened
- 10 What happened
- 11 What happened
- 12 Consequence
- 13 Consequence



Salem Witch Trials Summary

Teacher note: allow lots of room for different interpretations of 'answers'. Use the Salem source sheet for information.

Salem Summary Suggestions

1	Year	1692
2	First accused	<i>Tituba</i>
3	Magistrates	<i>Jonathon Corwin and John Hawthorne</i>
4	Governor of Mass	<i>William Phips</i>
5	Reason / why	<i>Ergot Poisoning</i>
6	Reason / why	<i>Beliefs in supernatural (connect to religion, Devil and Satan)</i>
7	What happened	<i>Possessed women / blamed Tituba</i>
8	What happened	<i>Tituba confessed</i>
9	What happened	<i>Blamed spreads</i>
10	What happened	<i>Trials of suspected witches</i>
11	What happened	<i>Hangings in Salem</i>
12	Consequence	<i>Hysteria / panic spread</i>
13	Consequence	<i>Hangings and trials spread.</i>



Salem Witch Trials - 1692

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