

*History*  
UNFOLDING

# THE WITCHES OF SALEM



**MindSparks**  
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

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# Introduction

## What Happened at Salem?

“We have nothing to fear but fear itself.” Franklin Roosevelt made this point to a nation unravelling in the midst of the worst economic crisis of this century. Yet, along with paralyzing fear, real dangers also did beset Americans at that time.

A much better target for FDR’s warning would have been the residents of Salem, Massachusetts, in January of 1692. For they were about to descend into a deadly community-rending nightmare of utterly groundless fears and accusations. Of course, in the late 1600s, people still did have a name for such terrors—and that name was “witch.” In fact, the 15th and 16th centuries were the high point of fears about witchcraft in Europe. The outburst in Salem was actually one of the last of its kind. But why Salem?

We do know some of what contributed to the sense of foreboding in Salem Village in 1692. Warfare with the Indians along the New England frontier had been widespread in recent years. The old Puritan order was starting to fade. Ties within New England’s close-knit towns were fraying. A sense that things were falling apart was in the air. Yet these factors only take us so far. For as quickly as the hysteria swept through Salem, just as quickly did it pass. Human weakness and human strength were both nurtured within this community. In this sense, the story of Salem is a warning to us all that good and evil exist side by side, and that good can never be taken for granted.

The 12 visual displays we have chosen here focus on many of these aspects of the story of the Salem witch trials. The visuals are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three displays to explore one broad topic in the overall story. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

### **An Age of Inquisition**

The persecution of heretics and witches reached its high point during the centuries of Reformation and the wars of religion. The illustrations here focus on this broader context for the events in Salem.

### **Troubled Times in Puritan New England**

New England’s strict Puritan faith, Indian troubles along the frontier, social and economic tensions with Salem itself—all these and more made the townsfolk highly anxious and open to the idea that all their problems might have a supernatural cause.

### **Accusers, Witches, Judges**

The illustrations here all focus on aspects of the witch hysteria itself—the behavior and motives of the accusers, the approach taken by the judges, the different responses of the hundreds who were all falsely accused.

### **Salem: The Aftermath**

For a year, the hysteria spread out from Salem. Even at its height, there were many who had doubts about the accusations. Then, the colony came to its senses. Outwardly, life was not all that different in it after 1692. But in part because of the crisis, something had changed forever.

## Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

## How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

**A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET** This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

**DIGITAL IMAGES** The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS**

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will better understand the historical context for the Salem witch trials.
2. Students will consider reasons for the increase in fears about witchcraft in Europe in the 1500s and 1600s.

# An Age of Inquisition

*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

Religious intolerance has a long history, not only in Europe and the West, but throughout the world. The Salem witch trials erupted toward the end of that history. This horrifying illustration is of an earlier, somewhat different form of persecution. It pictures some executions ordered by the Spanish Inquisition. From the 1200s on, the Catholic Church was increasingly worried about heresy. And its various Inquisitions were aimed mainly at finding and punishing heretics, not witches. The Spanish Inquisition was especially brutal. It had more to do with the political goals of Spain's rulers than with the purely religious concerns of the Church. But in general, the Inquisitions indicate that fears about threats to religious unity were rising in Europe even before the Reformation.

**Illustration 2**

The Reformation divided Europe and changed its history drastically. In England, it led to a three-way conflict between Catholics, Anglicans and various sects who wanted to "purify" the official Anglican Church. This illustration is a book cover from 1645, during the English Civil War. In it, King Charles I and an Anglican bishop protect the tree of religion as a Jesuit strips its bark and Cromwell's Puritans dig up its roots and cut its branches. The scene illustrates the bitter rivalry between Catholicism and Europe's Protestant political rulers, as well as the clash between those rulers and other Protestant sects they could not control. The illustration depicts a spirit of bitter rivalry that triggered many religious wars throughout Europe in this Reformation era.

**Illustration 3**

A belief in witches with magical power to do harm has been found in many cultures. In Christian Europe, this belief also included the idea that witches were agents of the devil—and therefore not simply a threat to individuals. They endangered the entire community, if not Christianity itself. As in other cultures, women were seen as more likely than men to become witches. The two centuries after the Reformation were actually the high point of witchcraft fears. Tens of thousands were burned at the stake or executed in other ways. Cultural and social change in these years may have left people feeling uneasy and cut off from one another, a good setting for fostering fears of witches and their evil powers.



## Lesson 1—An Age of Inquisition

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### **Discussing the Illustration**

1. This horrible scene is an example of what sometimes happened to heretics in Europe in the Middle Ages and later. What is meant here by the word “heretic”?
2. In this illustration, a number of heretics are being burned at the stake. This punishment was carried out often by the rulers of Spain in the late 1400s. But these rulers claimed to be acting for the sake of the one organized church that at that time controlled religious life of Europe. Can you name that church?
3. In the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church set up a special tribunal to stop heresy. Can you give the name of that tribunal?
4. The Inquisition was especially cruel in Spain. Can you think of why this was so? In general, why do you think the Church and many kings and queens in Europe approved of such cruel methods against heresy?

### **Follow-up Activities**

1. **Small-group activity:** The Inquisition of the Middle Ages differed in many ways from the so-called Spanish Inquisition agreed to by the Pope in 1478. Your group should learn more about both versions of the Inquisition. Prepare a brief report in which your group takes a stand for or against this statement: “The entire Catholic Inquisition should not be unfairly blamed for the worst excesses of the Spanish Inquisition.”
2. Learn more about the methods used in the various Inquisitions to force heretics to confess. Make a list of all of these methods. Now divide the methods into two groups. One of these groups should be made up of all the methods you think would be allowed in courts today. The other group should include all those methods that would not be allowed in courts today. Discuss your two groupings with the entire class.

## Lesson 1—An Age of Inquisition

# Illustration 2



By permission of the British Library

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This illustration is from England during a time known as the Reformation. Briefly, can you explain what the Reformation was and what big change it brought to all of Europe?
2. In the early 1500s, King Henry VIII ended the Catholic Church's control of religion in England. What Church did he set up in its place?
3. Henry VIII's actions did not end religious arguments in England. That's clear from this illustration from the 1640s. On the left, King Charles I and an Anglican bishop protect a tree labeled "religion." Next to them, a Catholic bishop tears bark off the tree. But others are also harming this tree. They are Puritan followers of Oliver Cromwell. Who were the Puritans?
4. The Puritans are digging up the tree's roots and sawing off its branches. Does this illustration favor the Anglicans and the king or the Puritans and the Catholics? What does it show about religious feelings in England at the time? Explain your answers.

### Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Discuss the above illustration and be sure you reach some agreement on its meaning. Now, have each group member take the part of the Catholic Pope, an Anglican minister or Oliver Cromwell. In this role, each group member should then write a long public letter stating your views about this book cover and why you do or do not approve of it. Post some of these letters with a copy of the illustration on the bulletin board.
2. The Catholic Church had long been concerned about witchcraft. But the high point of fears about witches came in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Using encyclopedias, history textbooks or other sources of information, create a one-page timeline showing changes in the way the Catholic Church, and later the Protestant sects, dealt with witches. Start your timeline at about the fifth or sixth century, and end it in the eighteenth century. Share it in a brief talk to the class about the history of Christian Europe's attitudes toward witchcraft.



## Lesson 1—An Age of Inquisition

### Illustration 3



The Granger Collection, NY

#### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. This drawing shows two witches mixing up some kind of magical potion. A witch is someone who is seen as able to harm individuals just by the power of his or her anger alone. A large number of societies throughout history have believed in witches of this sort. Why do you think that is so?
2. In Europe, witches were usually seen as having joined with the devil to cause evil in all sorts of ways. A large share of witches were women. So were the accusers of witches. Why do you think that was so?
3. People in Europe believed in witches in the Middle Ages. But the high point of fears about witches actually came after the Middle Ages, in the 1500s and 1600s. Some say this was because of the Reformation and its conflicts. Others say it was because village life was changing and becoming less personal or friendly. What do you think might have caused the huge increase in witchcraft cases?

#### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. In the library, look through illustrated history books for drawings and other illustrations of witches from the late Middle Ages into the 17th century. Select five to 10 that, together, show how Europeans in those centuries viewed witches and witchcraft. Make copies of these illustrations, and show them in class during a brief talk explaining why you chose these particular illustrations.
2. One writer summed up research on witchcraft in England in the 1500s and 1600s this way: "The most frequent kind of accusation of witchcraft was the one in which someone who had repudiated a neighbor, usually an old woman seeking a favor, subsequently attributed some misfortune befalling him to her anger at being refused and thus to her witchcraft." Does this view seem to fit with what you know about the Salem trials? Write a brief essay explaining why you do or do not agree that this is a good way to sum up the typical witchcraft cases in Salem.



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**OBJECTIVE**

1. Students will better understand some of the social and political factors that may have helped cause the outbreak of witchcraft hysteria in Salem in 1692.
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# Troubled Times in Puritan New England

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

In addition to Europe's broader religious history, the strict Puritan view of the world also helps account for what happened at Salem. Puritanism affected every aspect of life in colonial New England. This gravestone offers one small but dramatic bit of evidence of that. In it, an angel keeps death from snuffing out a candle. The candle represents the spiritual life, seen here as a fragile flame caught between the powerful forces of good and evil. Such a view of the universe required constant watchfulness about the presence of evil. Taken to extremes, it could easily feed fears of witchcraft such as those that swept through Salem in 1692.

**Illustration 2**

By 1692, New England was a troubled region in many ways. Violent conflict with the Indians had become much more common and much more frightening. In 1675, King Philip's War erupted all across New England. A greater percentage of the total population died in this war than in any other American conflict. In 1689, King William's War again stirred up troubles with the Indians, as tribes sided with the French or the British in that conflict. The illustration here helps convey the fears that must have been constant in small frontier communities. Salem Village, several miles inland, would have felt those fears more strongly than did people in the town of Salem. And this was only one of several sources of tension between Salem Village and the town that still controlled it.

**Illustration 3**

The earliest New England villages were close communities of large and pious families. The closeness of people must have given them a sense of real security in the wilderness. Yet, some people were always seen as "outsiders." Anyone alone and in need might be pitied, but such a person could also be upsetting as a reminder of how uncertain life could be. Elderly widows or single women often provoked this combination of pity and fear. And as this "Old Maid" drawing suggests, they also often suffered ridicule or worse. As villages grew larger in the late 1600s, people felt the close ties between them weakening. Envy and suspicion may have been increasing in places like Salem and Salem Village. And these emotions could easily spill over into charges of witchcraft.

## Lesson 2—Troubled Times in Puritan New England

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. The English colonists who settled in New England followed a very strict religion, and it guided every aspect of their daily lives. What main religious group settled in New England in the 1600s?
2. This New England gravestone shows an angel struggling to keep death from putting out a flame. The flame stands for the spiritual life. Do you think this means the spiritual life of the person buried here or spiritual life in general? Explain your answer?
3. Some say a gravestone like this shows how serious the Puritans were about trying to lead good lives. Others say it shows how grim and fearful they were about this world and the next. With which view do you agree more? What, if anything, do you think can be learned about the Puritans from this gravestone?
4. The Puritans believed God was all-powerful and all-knowing, but was also in an age-old struggle with the devil. Do you think this helps to explain how fearful they were about witchcraft? Why or why not?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. The New England Puritans were followers of the religious ideas of John Calvin. Read more about John Calvin. In a brief essay, sum up Calvin's ideas and explain how these ideas do or do not help you to better understand why the Puritans would have created gravestones like the one shown here.
2. Find a cemetery in your area with gravestones from recent times and from long ago. If you or your teacher can get permission to do this, either trace or draw designs of images from some of the older gravestones and from some of the more recent gravestones. Show these designs to the class. Compare them with the one shown here from Puritan New England. Discuss the various designs or images. What do you think they show about changing attitudes toward death and those who have died at various times in the past?

## Lesson 2—Troubled Times in Puritan New England

# Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustrations

1. By the 1690s, New Englanders in villages like Salem were fearful about many things. For example, in the mid-1670s, the worst Indian war in American history had spread terror throughout New England. Can you name that war?
2. The drawing on at right shows a village preparing for an attack during King Philip's War. How does the drawing show why people in such villages would have been fearful during troubles with the Indians?
3. Starting in 1689, King William's War between France and England again spread fears about Indians throughout New England. Why might a war between England and France have lead to such fears then?
4. In 1692, the witchcraft troubles began in Salem Village, which was controlled by the town of Salem. As the map shows, the village was several miles inland from the town of Salem. Why might fears about Indians have been stronger in Salem Village than in the town of Salem?

### Follow-up Activities

1. King William's War must have made people in Salem Village uneasy. But one of the young accusers, Mercy Lewis, was especially deeply affected by Indian troubles in these years. Learn more about Mercy Lewis and her family history. Some information on her can be found in *The Devil Hath Been Raised*, by Richard B. Trask (Phoenix Publications, 1992). Prepare a brief talk about her. In your talk, explain why you do or do not think her family's story helps to explain her role in the witch trials.
2. **Small-group activity:** By the 1690s, many in Salem Village were unhappy about the control the Salem townspeople had over them. Learn more about their complaints. A brief account of this can be found in "The Salem Witch Trials," by Beth Irwin Kane, in the October 1986 *Cobblestone* magazine. Also see, *A Delusion of Satan: The Full Story of the Salem Witch Trials*, by Frances Hill (De Capo Press, 1997). Use the map shown here to help you give a brief talk in class on this aspect of the Salem witch trials.



## Lesson 2—Troubled Times in Puritan New England

### Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

#### Discussing the Illustrations

1. New England's villages were made up of large families, such as the one in the wedding ceremony here. Villagers knew each other personally and often looked to one another for all kinds of help. But by the late 1600s, that was changing. From what you know of that time, can you explain how it was changing?
2. As towns grew and became less personal, life could be hard for those who lived alone, such as widows or elderly single women. Why might that be so?
3. Most women in colonial New England worried about becoming a widow or, as the drawing at left puts it, being an “Old Maid.” This was a much bigger fear in the 1600s than it is today. Can you explain why?
4. One historian has said, “This drawing shows the pity and ridicule such women endured. They brought out very mixed feelings in people.” In Salem, elderly women made up a large share of those accused of witchcraft. Does this historian’s view help explain that fact? Why or why not?

#### Follow-up Activities

1. In New England in colonial times, the early death of a spouse was common. For many women especially, this meant they lived alone as widows for a good part of their lives. What problems do you think such women faced? Which of those problems is still true of women who survive their husbands today? What other problems did such women face then that are not common today. Learn more about the place of elderly widows in colonial New England. Based on what you learn, make two lists: one of problems common for elderly women then and now; the other of problems common only in colonial New England. Share your views in a class discussion.
2. Do the same work as required for Activity 1 above. But in this case, pretend you are the elderly woman being stereotyped in the cartoon. Write a long letter of advice to the woman who is getting married in the illustration at left.



**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will better understand what happened in Salem in 1692 as charges of witchcraft began to be made.
2. Students will discuss the actions of the accusers, the accused and the judges in the Salem witch trials.

# Accusers, Witches, Judges

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

The Salem witch hunt began in the home of the new Salem Village minister, Samuel Parris. His daughter Betty and niece Abigail Williams began playing at magic with the Caribbean Indian slave Tituba. Soon, they began to have convulsions, fits and other physical symptoms that were quickly attributed to witchcraft. In time, other accusers joined them, mostly young girls. Were they suffering from a physical or psychological illness? Were they bored adolescent and pre-adolescent girls feeling confined by their strict Puritan community. Or were they in part giving vent to the anger and rivalries of their parents and other adults in Salem Village? Evidence for all these explanations exists. But as this illustration shows, the behavior of these young accusers was taken very seriously by the authorities in Salem.

**Illustration 2**

Many people were accused of witchcraft in Salem. At first, they were questioned by Salem magistrates. Later, Massachusetts Governor Phipps set up a special court to try them. Elderly women made up a good share of the accused. As this painting suggests, some of them fought back angrily. Others were meek in protesting the charges. Still others falsely confessed. Many of these confessions were given simply to avoid a death sentence, but in a few cases, the accused actually accepted the idea that they must be witches.

**Illustration 3**

George Jacobs, shown here, was one of several men accused of witchcraft in Salem. As the painting suggests, the trials of these accused people differed in key ways from trials today. For one, the accused were said to have caused harm at a distance by sending out their “specters,” non-material versions of themselves. Or they would send a “familiar”—a bird, dog, cat or other animal—to do the devil's work. Naturally, no alibi or material fact could counter such a charge. The accused were faced by a group of emotional, writhing accusers who never had to prove anything. Their signs of affliction were proof in and of themselves. Finally, the accused had no lawyers to question the accusers anyway. And as the painting suggests, the judges were by and large convinced already.

## Lesson 3—Accusers, Witches, Judges

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### *Discussing the Illustration*

1. The Salem witch trials began in the winter of 1692, when a group of young girls began acting strangely and accusing others of witchcraft. From what you see here, and what you know of the Salem witch trials, can you describe some of their strange behavior?
2. Some say the girls were actually suffering from some physical or psychological illness. Do you think this is possible? If so, why didn't the New Englanders of the time see their behavior as a sign of illness?
3. Some say the girls, who played at magic themselves that winter, were just bored or trying to cause trouble. Might this be true? Why or why not?
4. The girls were part of the household of Salem village minister Samuel Parris. Parris and the Putnam family had enemies in the village. This has led some to say that these adults used the children to accuse their enemies of witchcraft. Do you think this is possible? Why do you think these girls began making their accusations that winter? Explain your answers.

### *Follow-up Activities*

1. **Small-group activity:** Those who claimed to be under the spell of witches were mainly a group of young girls. But the adults in one Salem village family also played a key role in what happened in Salem in 1692. That was the Putnam family. Learn more about the Putnams and their role in the Salem witch trials. One good source is *A Delusion of Satan: The Full Story of the Salem Witch Trials*, by Frances Hill (De Capo Press, 1997). Based on what you learn, prepare a brief talk to the class about the Putnams and their role in the witch hunts.
2. Another member of the Parris household who was a key figure in the witch hunts was Tituba. Some say Tituba was wrong to confess to being a witch as she did. They say this greatly added to the fears about witchcraft in Salem and led to many more being accused. Others say Tituba had a right to do what she did, especially given her role in the Parris household and Salem society. Learn more about Tituba and then write an essay explaining your view of this matter.



## Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### *Discussing the Illustration*

1. Among those accused by the girls were several elderly women in the Village. This painting depicts one of these accused witches during her trial. What opinion of her, the judges and the jury does the artist seem to have? What features in the painting help it to show how the artist felt?
2. Why do you think so many elderly women like the one shown here were among those accused as witches?
3. This accused witch is fighting back hard against her accusers. Everyone else seems terrified of her. What were some of the specific powers that made witches so frightening?
4. Not all the accused witches took as strong a stand as this woman seems to be doing. In fact, some of the accused confessed to being witches. In most cases, they did this knowing they were not witches. But in some cases, they seem to have believed they actually were witches. How would you explain both kinds of confession?

### *Follow-up Activities*

1. **Small-group activity:** Several of those accused of witchcraft in Salem were elderly women. Among them were Martha Cory, Sarah Osborne, Rebecca Nurse and Ann Pudeator. Each group member should learn more about one of these elderly female victims of the Salem witch hunt. Based on what you learn, come up with some ideas about what, if anything, they had in common. What about them might help explain why a large share of accused witches were elderly women? Report your group's conclusions to the rest of the class.
2. **Small-group activity:** Visit the library and read more about the trials of those accused of witchcraft in Salem. In particular, look for accounts of elderly women accused of being witches. Using what you learn, write a brief one-act play based on the scene in the painting shown here. You can make your own decisions about who the figures in the painting are. Practice your play and perform it in front of the class.

## Illustration 3



Courtesy of Library of Congress

### *Discussing the Illustration*

1. Not all those accused of witchcraft in Salem were women. This painting depicts the trial of George Jacobs, a man in his seventies. What opinion of the trials do you think was held by the artist who painted this picture? What features in the painting help to show what the artist really felt about the trial?
2. As the painting shows, the young bewitched girls are all in the room together with the man they are accusing? Why do you think the officials in charge in Salem saw that as necessary?
3. In what ways is the scene here like jury trials today? In what ways does it seem different from such trials?
4. Jacobs made a strong defense of himself. In talking about so-called “spectral evidence” against him, he said, “The devil can go in any shape. The devil can take any likeness.” Can you explain what “spectral evidence” was? Why were the statements Jacobs made about this evidence a good defense? Why do you think the judges ignored his point?

### *Follow-up Activities*

1. Another male victim, George Burroughs, was a key figure in the Salem witch trials. Learn more about him. Prepare a brief talk to the class about who he was and what happened to him. In your talk, try to explain why his case was so important for the entire story of the Salem witch trials.
2. **Small-group activity:** Like George Jacobs, most of the Salem accused forcefully denied being witches. However, some actually confessed. Tituba did this. So did Abigail and Deliverance Hobbs. The same thing happened in the Soviet Union in the late 1930s, during the so-called “purge trials.” A number of top Communist Party officials confessed to being traitors even though they were not. As a group, learn more about the Soviet purge trials and the confessions given in them and in Salem in 1692. Prepare a brief report to the class comparing the two groups of trials and discussing the question of why some people confessed in both situations.



**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will appreciate how widespread and accepted were ideas about witches in New England during the Salem trials.
2. Students will discuss why the witchcraft fears vanished so quickly in 1693 after spreading so rapidly in 1692.

# Salem: The Aftermath

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION****Illustration 1**

Almost no one in Salem questioned the existence of witches. And why should they have? The best-educated and leading men in Massachusetts believed in witches. The most respected members of the colony were still its ministers, such as Cotton Mather. His “Memorable Providences” was a widely read account of another case of bewitchment similar to what the Salem accusers were experiencing. Some in the colony had doubts about the use of spectral evidence—charges of being afflicted by the specter or spirit of an accused person. But Mather defended this evidence. And he went on to defend the trials even after they were over in his book “The Wonders of the Invisible World.”

**Illustration 2**

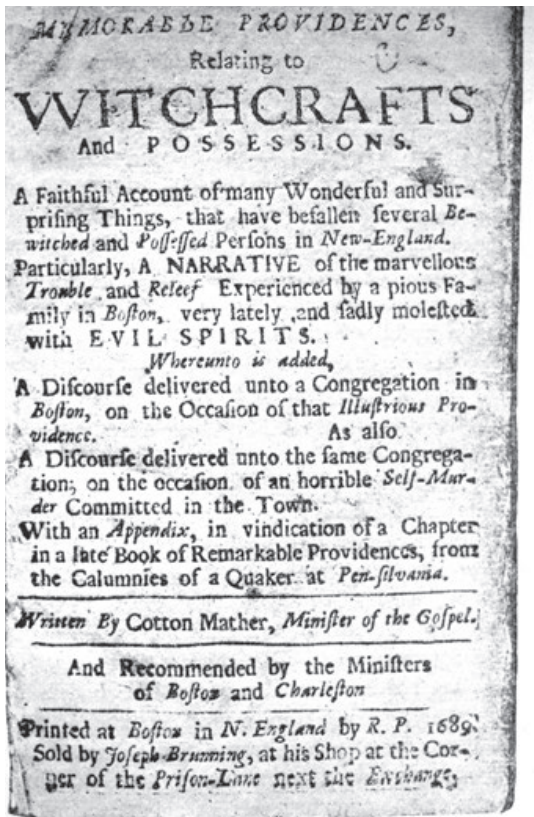
Another cause of anxiety in New England was the political upheaval in England known as the “Glorious Revolution” of 1689. It meant that new governments would soon be established in the colonies. This made many Puritans fearful of losing control over the colony’s religious life. William Phipps, shown here, went to England with Cotton Mather’s father, Increase, to get a new charter for Massachusetts. He returned as the colony’s governor in 1692, in the midst of the witchcraft crisis. He quickly established a special court to try the accused. But by October, he and others were starting to doubt the accusers—especially after they began accusing many respectable people, including the governor’s own wife.

**Illustration 3**

The last executions of witches took place on September 22, 1692. Nineteen people in all were hanged as witches, and one was pressed to death for refusing trial. By early 1693, about one hundred and fifty people from Salem and nearby villages were still in jail awaiting trial as witches. But as quickly as the witchcraft terror had spread, it disappeared almost as quickly. In May, Governor Phipps released all those still in jail. Soon, many were apologizing for what they had done, as this letter from some of the Salem jurors makes clear. Their Puritan faith may have led them astray in Salem. But as this letter makes clear, that faith also gave them the courage and honesty to face up to what they had done.

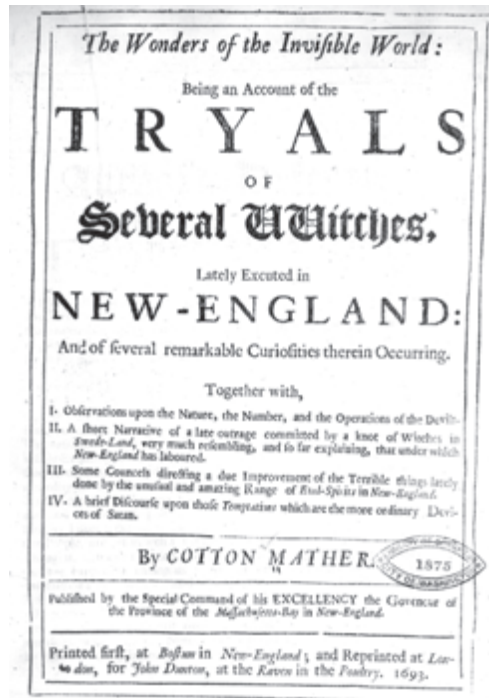
## Lesson 4—Salem: The Aftermath

# Illustration 1



TITLE OF COTTON MATHER'S "MEMORABLE PROVIDENCES"

Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustrations

- At first, many of the top leaders of the Massachusetts Bay colony supported the witchcraft accusations in Salem. One of those who did the most to encourage the witch hunt is the man shown here. He is Cotton Mather. What have you read or learned about him?
- Cotton Mather was a forceful Puritan leader. His books and sermons were widely read. In 1689, he wrote "Memorable Providences," shown at left. It was a book on a recent witchcraft case. Some say people in Salem may have discussed the book and been led to make witchcraft accusations because of it? Do you think this is possible? Why or why not?
- Mather urged the judges at Salem to accept "spectral evidence." In 1693, he defended what had happened in an account of the trials shown on the right. Yet during his life, he was also a very strong supporter of scientific research. Does it seem odd to you that a leader like Mather would both believe in witches and support science and the teaching of science? Explain your answer.

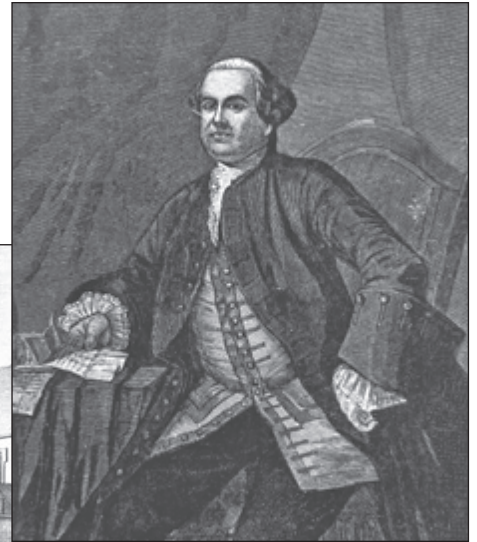
### Follow-up Activities

- Learn more about Cotton Mather and his father Increase. On the basis of what you learn, write two imaginary diary entries for the year 1695 reflecting on the Salem trials three years later. Write one entry as if you are Increase Mather. Write the other as if you are Cotton Mather. (If more than one student does this activity, have the class pass around the entries, read them aloud and try to guess which are supposed to be by Increase and which by Cotton.)
- Small Group Activity:** Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, a famous novel set in Puritan New England. But a short story by Hawthorne called "Young Goodman Brown" is also about the kind of Puritan outlook that could produce the terrifying fears of witchcraft that arose in Salem. This short story is found in a collection of stories by Hawthorne called *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Read and discuss this short story. Prepare a brief talk in class on the story and on how it did or did not help you to better understand the events in Salem in 1692.

## Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### *Discussing the Illustrations*

1. In 1692, William Phipps returned from England with Cotton Mather's father, Increase. Phipps had been chosen by the King of England as the new colonial governor of Massachusetts. When he arrived home, the jails were full of people accused of witchcraft from Salem and nearby towns. Can you explain what Phipps did about this?
2. By late September, 19 people had been hung for being witches. And one man, Giles Corey, was pressed to death under heavy stones for refusing a trial. What else have you read or learned about the trials and executions of the accused?
3. Over one hundred more people still awaited trial. But by then, many powerful people in Salem and the rest of Massachusetts were beginning to have doubts about the trials. In part that's because some wealthy and important people were now being accused, including Governor Phipp's own wife! Why do you think this added to doubts about the trials?

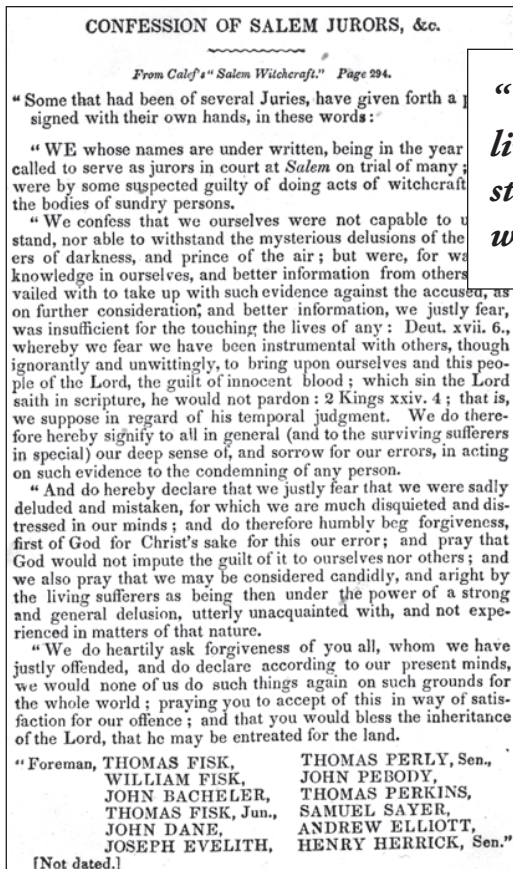
### *Follow-up Activities*

1. In May 1692, Phipps returned from England with Increase Mather. They were in England getting a new charter for Massachusetts. This new charter had been a big cause of concern in Massachusetts. Read more about the history of New England in the late 1600s. In particular, find out why changes England in 1689 would have concerned Puritan New England. Write a brief essay explaining how all this might have added to uneasy feelings in Salem and elsewhere in Massachusetts at this time.
2. **Small-group activity:** Sir William Phipps was only one of several important Massachusetts leaders who played key roles in the Salem witch trials. Three others were John Hathorne, William Stoughton and Nathaniel Saltonstall. Read more about Phipps and these other three men. Prepare a brief talk in class about them. Explain how each viewed the Salem trials, and in what ways, if any, their views changed over time. Finally, discuss why these men might have had such differing views about witchcraft in Salem.



## Lesson 4—Salem: The Aftermath

### Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

*“We also pray that we may be considered . . . by the living sufferers as being then under the power of a strong and general delusion, utterly unacquainted with, and not experienced in matters of that nature.”*

#### Discussing the Illustrations

1. While the trials were still going on, many educated leaders began to speak out against them. Even Cotton Mather's father, Increase, spoke against the use of spectral evidence. He wrote that it was “better that 10 suspected witches should escape than one innocent person should be condemned.” Do you agree with this view? Why or why not?
2. A few years later, a group of jury members from the trials wrote the letter you see here apologizing for their part in the trials. What do you think of the part of their statement shown in large type above here?
3. Some say the witch hunt was caused by the strict Puritan beliefs of the time. Yet in their apology, the jury members still accept those same Puritan beliefs. For example, they say, “We confess that we ourselves were not . . . able to withstand the mysterious delusions of the powers of darkness, and prince of the air.” Do you think Puritanism was mainly to blame for the witchcraft trials? What other factors could have caused them? Explain your answers.

#### Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** One famous play about the Salem trials is *The Crucible*, written by Arthur Miller. As a group read and discuss this play. Choose one scene from the play that you think is most important for an understanding of what the Salem trials were like. Practice acting out the scene. Then give the entire class a brief description of Miller's play, perform the scene you have chosen, and explain to the class why you chose that scene.
2. Pretend you are the son or daughter of one of the executed victims of the Salem witch trials. You are no longer in Salem, but someone has just sent you a copy of this notice by the jury in the Salem trials. Write a long letter to the members of the jury describing your own feelings about the witchcraft, the trials, the judges and the jury. Try to be as realistic as you can given what such a person in those years might have felt and believed.





# **Image Close-ups**



## An Age of Inquisition

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



An Age of Inquisition

# Illustration 2



By permission of the British Library



An Age of Inquisition

# Illustration 3



The Granger Collection, NY



## Troubled Times in Puritan New England

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

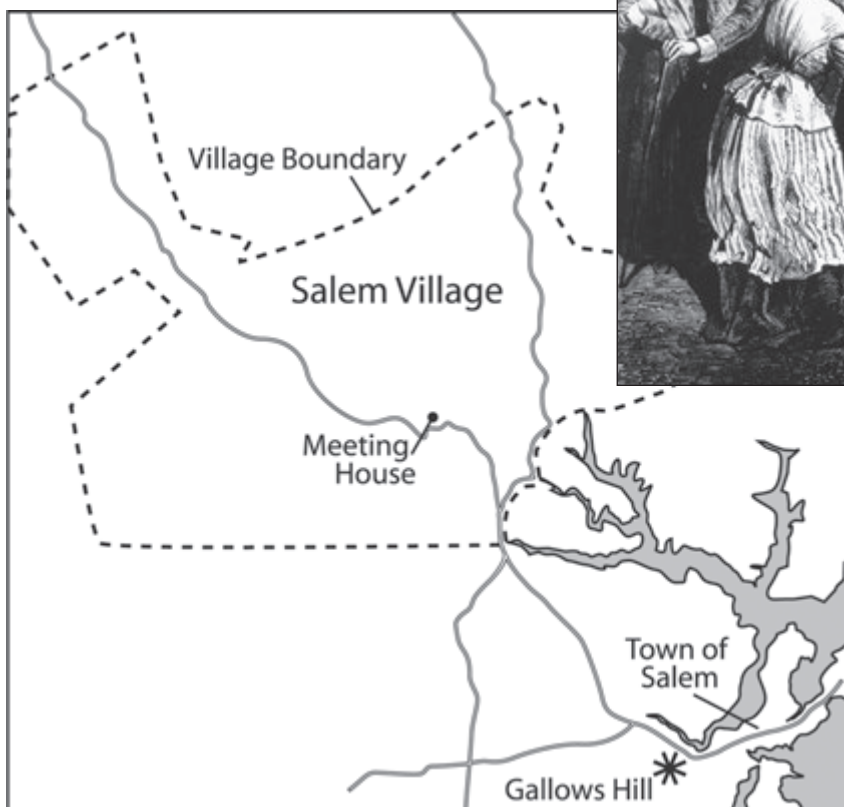


## Troubled Times in Puritan New England

# Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



## Troubled Times in Puritan New England

# Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Accusers, Witches, Judges

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Accusers, Witches, Judges  
**Illustration 2**



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Accusers, Witches, Judges  
**Illustration 3**

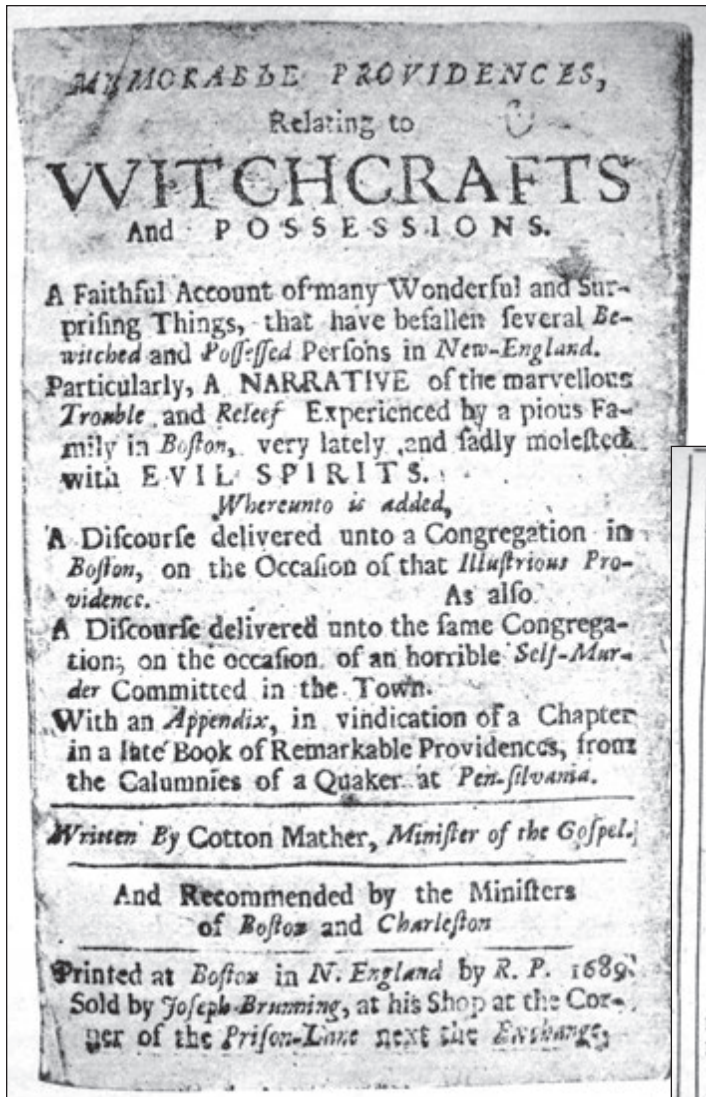


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## Salem: The Aftermath

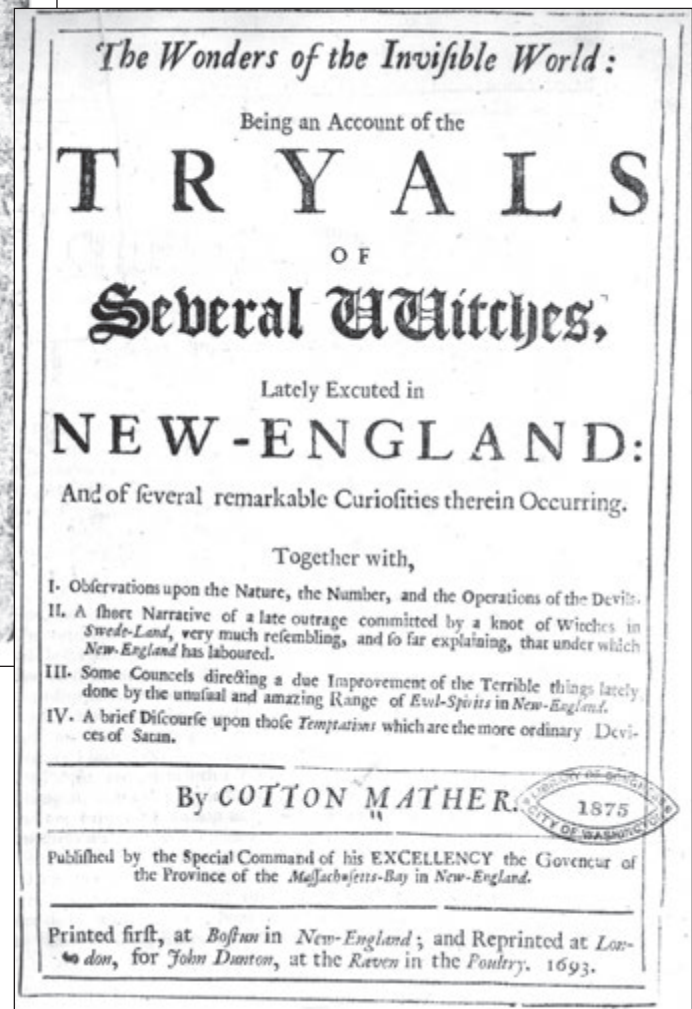
## Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



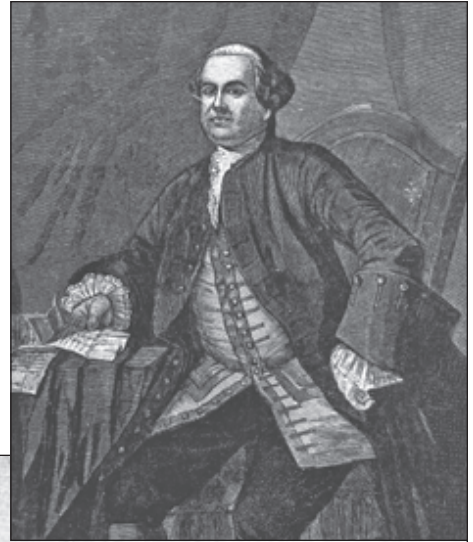
Courtesy of the Library of Congress



## Salem: The Aftermath

# Illustration 2

Courtesy of the  
Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

## Salem: The Aftermath

## Illustration 3

## CONFESSION OF SALEM JURORS, &amp;c.

From Calef's "Salem Witchcraft." Page 294.

"Some that had been of several Juries, have given forth a paper, signed with their own hands, in these words:

"WE whose names are under written, being in the year 1692, called to serve as jurors in court at *Salem* on trial of many; who were by some suspected guilty of doing acts of witchcraft upon the bodies of sundry persons.

"We confess that we ourselves w stand, nor able to withstand the myste ers of darkness, and prince of the s knowledge in ourselves, and better in vailed with to take up with such evid on further consideration; and better was insufficient for the touching the l whereby we fear we have been instr ignorantly and unwittingly, to bring u ple of the Lord, the guilt of innocent blood; which sin the Lord saith in scripture, he would not pardon: 2 Kings xxiv. 4; that is, we suppose in regard of his temporal judgment. We do there fore hereby signify to all in general (and to the surviving sufferers in special) our deep sense of, and sorrow for our errors, in acting on such evidence to the condemning of any person.

"And do hereby declare that we justly fear that we were sadly deluded and mistaken, for which we are much disquieted and distressed in our minds; and do therefore humbly beg forgiveness, first of God for Christ's sake for this our error; and pray that God would not impute the guilt of it to ourselves nor others; and we also pray that we may be considered candidly, and aright by the living sufferers as being then under the power of a strong and general delusion, utterly unacquainted with, and not experienced in matters of that nature.

"We do heartily ask forgiveness of you all, whom we have justly offended, and do declare according to our present minds, we would none of us do such things again on such grounds for the whole world; praying you to accept of this in way of satisfaction for our offence; and that you would bless the inheritance of the Lord, that he may be entreated for the land.

"Foreman, THOMAS FISK,	THOMAS PERLY, Sen.,
WILLIAM FISK,	JOHN PEBODY,
JOHN BACHELER,	THOMAS PERKINS,
THOMAS FISK, Jun.,	SAMUEL SAYER,
JOHN DANE,	ANDREW ELLIOTT,
JOSEPH EVELITH,	HENRY HERRICK, Sen."

[Not dated.]

*"We also pray that we may be considered . . . by the living sufferers as being then under the power of a strong and general delusion, utterly unacquainted with, and not experienced in matters of that nature."*

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