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Resources to Integrate Language Arts & Social Studies

The Witch of Blackbird Pond

by Elizabeth George Speare





The Witch of Blackbird Pond

by Elizabeth George Speare

**Reproducibles
and Teacher Guide**

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Settlers farm an onion field in early Connecticut.

Acknowledgments

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TEACHER INFORMATION

Z I O N I T R O D U C T Z

Welcome to *Latitudes*

Latitudes is designed for teachers who would like to broaden the scope of their literature and history study. By providing fascinating primary source documents and background information, the *Latitudes* collection of reproducibles helps your students link a fiction or nonfiction book with its historical framework.

The series broadens students' understanding in other ways too. Each packet offers insights into the book as a piece of literature, including its creation, critical reception, and links to similar literature.

The *Latitudes* selections help readers draw on and seek out knowledge from a unique range of sources and perspectives. These sources encourage students to make personal connections to history and literature, integrating information with their own knowledge and background. This learning experience will take students far beyond the boundaries of a single text into the rich latitudes of literature and social studies.

Purposes of This Packet

The material in this *Latitudes* packet for *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* has been carefully chosen for four main purposes.

1. to help students connect contemporary and historical events
2. to encourage students to investigate conflicting viewpoints about individual freedom and social control
3. to provide resources that help students evaluate what's "real" in a fiction novel
4. to help students use the skills and content of both social studies and language arts to search for meaning in a novel

Contents of This Packet

The reproducibles in this packet have been organized into five sections.

- About the Novel
- About the Period
- Primary Sources
- Comparative Works
- Suggested Activities

About the Novel

The resources here introduce students to the contextual and historical dimensions of the novel. Selections include

- a plot synopsis
- a biography of Elizabeth George Speare
- critics' comments about *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*
- key excerpts from *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*
- a glossary of historical and technical terms from the novel

About the Period

These reproducibles familiarize students with prerevolutionary Connecticut. This section includes

- a timeline of events in early Connecticut history
- a map of 17th-century Wethersfield
- a brief history of settlement in Connecticut
- descriptions of Puritan laws and customs
- information about Quakers
- a summary of Puritan beliefs about witches

Primary Sources

These resources help students go beyond stereotypes about early American history. They include

- excerpts from the Connecticut Charter
- entries from colonial journals
- a petition from a woman executed as a witch
- a transcript of a colonial trial

Comparative Works

Selections in this section give students a literary dimension to their study. The reproducibles offer

- a description of a modern "witch hunt"
- selections from Puritan writers
- excerpts from theme-related novels
- a theme-related poem
- suggestions for further reading and viewing

Suggested Activities

Each reproducible in the packet is supported with suggestions for student-centered and open-ended student activities. You can choose from activities that develop reading, writing, thinking, speaking, and listening skills. Projects are suitable for independent, collaborative, or group study.

Use of the Material

The pieces in *Latitudes* can be incorporated into your curriculum in any order you wish. We encourage you to select those resources that are most meaningful and relevant to your students.

S tory Synopsis

In 1687, sixteen-year-old Kit Tyler comes from Barbados to live with her Puritan relatives. Used to the beauty of the islands, she is disappointed by Connecticut's bleak land and ugly houses. Still, anxious to set foot in America, she goes ashore before sailing up the river to Wethersfield.

On the way back to the ship, she shocks everyone by jumping into the river to save a child's doll. Nat Eaton, the captain's son, even says her ability to swim proves she is a witch. Kit finds her only friend on the ship is John Holbrook, a young man studying to become a minister.

Kit's relatives in Wethersfield are not expecting her. But she is welcomed by her aunt Rachel and her cousins Judith and Mercy. Matthew Wood is not as eager to take Kit in. But he agrees that after her grandfather's death Kit has no other home.

Kit soon regrets her move when she realizes how dreary and harsh life will be among the Puritans. Matthew disapproves of Kit's fine clothes. And Kit, unused to work, must learn the endless tasks of keeping house. So when William Ashby comes to court her, she does not discourage him. Marriage seems the only way to escape hard work and disapproving looks.

Soon Kit is asked to teach in the dame school with Mercy. But the children get out of hand as they act out a parable from the Bible. As a result, Kit is dismissed from teaching and Mercy's position is jeopardized. Angry and sorrowful, Kit runs to the meadow by Blackbird Pond. There she meets "the witch," Hannah Tupper. Hannah gives Kit the courage to ask for a second chance.

Kit gradually adjusts to her new life, though she continues to resent it. She escapes to visit Hannah as often as possible, even though her uncle forbids her to visit the Quaker woman.

Her visits to Hannah bring Nat Eaton back into her life. Talks with Nat answer many of Kit's questions about the slave trade and the talk of independence.

Kit brings Hannah another visitor—the child whose doll she saved. Prudence's mother will not allow her to attend school, but Kit teaches the child to read and write at Hannah's.

Meanwhile, Kit's attachment to her family grows. She even comes to respect her harsh uncle, especially when he leads the colonists during the crisis that occurs when Governor Andros demands that Connecticut's charter be turned over.

continued

Story Synopsis *continued*

However, Kit's relatively peaceful life ends when a mysterious fever afflicts the people of Wethersfield. The colonists panic and accuse Hannah of causing the disease. A mob goes after Hannah to try her as a witch. Kit learns of the plot and sneaks out to save Hannah. The two barely escape when the mob burns Hannah's house down. From their hiding place, Kit sees Nat's ship. Hannah is taken safely aboard.

When Kit returns, she herself is accused of witchcraft because of her friendship with Hannah. The magistrates become convinced of her guilt when a copybook she had given to Prudence has the child's name written over and over. Kit feels she must protect Prudence, so she cannot defend herself. But Nat brings Prudence to the trial. After Prudence proves Kit taught her to read and write, Kit is found innocent.

With new strength and insight, Kit breaks off her unspoken engagement to William and plans to return to Barbados. Her cousins' lives seem settled. Judith becomes engaged to William Ashby. And Mercy agrees to marry John Holbrook, just returned from captivity among the Indians.

As Kit plans to leave, she realizes she has come to love her family and even New England. But most of all, she loves Nat Eaton. When Nat returns, he asks Kit to marry him. Kit agrees, knowing she will feel at home anywhere as long as she is with Captain Nat Eaton.



Courtesy, Antiquarian & Landmarks Society, Hartford

The Buttolph-Williams house, built around 1710, was Speare's model for the Woods' home.

About the Author

Elizabeth George Speare

Elizabeth George Speare loves writing about history. Early in her career, she wrote magazine articles about family life. But one day, she read the story of a young girl kidnapped by Abnaki Indians in 1754. Miriam Willard's story became Speare's first historical novel, *Calico Captive*.

The idea for *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* also came from Speare's reading. She read that English children from Barbados were often sent to school in colonial Boston. Speare "wondered what would happen if a girl from that sunny and luxurious [West Indian] island had not come to Boston but to the small Puritan town of Wethersfield in 1685."

At the time, Speare was living in Wethersfield. So she researched the town's history to find better background for her story. Speare found old handwritten testimony from witch trials. She also discovered a map showing Blackbird Pond. The pond and an old house in Wethersfield became part of her second novel.

Speare tries to use real places and real people in her books wherever possible. "Gathering the material for a book takes me a year or more," she explains. "While I am taking pages of notes in libraries and museums the story is slowly growing in my mind. When I finally begin to write, I know in general what my characters are to do and how their story will end, though many surprising changes always occur on the way. I work very slowly, doing only a few pages a day, trying to make each sentence say exactly what I mean."

Speare was born in Melrose, Massachusetts, in 1908. After receiving her master's degree from Boston University, she taught high school English. She married in 1936 and has two children. Speare always wanted to write. But "not until both children were in junior high

school did I find time at last to sit down quietly with pencil and paper."

Because she has lived in New England all her life, many of her novels are set in colonial America. Most feature courageous young people who face dangers and obstacles. Speare believes that young people need heroes who face terrifying situations and "armed with courage and truth, win out against them...in reading of such heroes, children are strengthened and given courage to face the very real dangers and difficulties of their own lives."

Besides Speare's four historical novels, she has written two nonfiction books about colonial New England. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* is one of several award-winning books. The novel won both the Newbery Medal and the Society of Colonial Wars Award in 1959. Speare received the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award in 1989 for her lasting contributions to children's literature.

Reading and writing historical fiction gives Speare new courage and insight. "Every book begins with questions," she explains. "How must it have seemed to the people who lived through the experience? What choices would I have made in their place? I find the answers by going back in the past, by living side by side with them until the world they lived in becomes as real to me as the room in which I am working. This is an enormously satisfying experience. I find that I always come back to my own problems... renewed." For Speare, historical fiction is a way of sharing "these gifts from the past."

Critics' Comments

*When books are published, critics read and review them.
The following statements are comments that have been made
by the critics of **The Witch of Blackbird Pond**.*

An attractively composed book...Helpful as supplementary reading for American history classes.

—T.C. Kelly
Library Journal

Rarely has a book taken us back into seventeenth-century life as this does. The secret perhaps is that Kit is a fully realized character and so are her two cousins and the three young men who play important parts in the story.

—Margaret Libby,
New York Herald Tribune Book Review

Three satisfactorily concluded romances run through this absorbing story. The New England of colonial times—of candle dipping, soup-boiling, and corn-husking bees—is realistically drawn as background for a solidly written character study.

—N.R. Fryatt
Horn Book

Mercy's characterization...is shown in extremes—it is she who becomes the most ill from the epidemic; it is she who is "good enough" for the minister....The setting of colonial America adds some mild interest to this typical adolescent historical romance.

—Barbara Baskin and Karen Harris
Notes from a Different Drummer

This is an unusual book, one of the top-notchers on this season's list for young people. Besides the witch trial, the historical setting includes an Indian raid and the famous hiding of the Connecticut charter. A number of actual historical characters are introduced conservatively, with no attempt to make "personalities" of them.

—S.B.B.
Christian Science Monitor

Voices from the Novel

*The following quotes are from **The Witch of Blackbird Pond**.**

"There are plenty of fine folk like you here in New England who'll pay a fat price for black flesh without asking any questions about how it got here," [Nat said to Kit.] "If my father would consent to bring back just one load of slaves we would have had our new ketch by this summer. But we Eatons, we're almighty proud that our ship has a good honest stink of horses!" (23)

"If I have to share my bed will [Kit] share my work? Or will she expect us all to wait on her hand and foot like her black slaves?"

"Shame, Judith. The child tried her best, you know that."

"A five-year-old could do better." (49)

"Whether you like it or not, Kit, William is going to come courting," [said Mercy]. (72)

"Oh—that's the Widow Tupper." Judith's voice was edged with contempt. "Nobody but Hannah Tupper would live there by Blackbird Pond, right at the edge of the swamp, but she likes it....

"...People say she's a witch." (77)

"I have an idea!" [Kit] cried, laying down the Book. Eleven small faces turned toward her eagerly. It had not taken them long to discover that Kit's ideas usually meant something new and exciting. (86)

"Thee did well, child, to come to the Meadow," [Hannah told Kit.] "There is always a cure here when the heart is troubled." ...Kit stiffened with a cold prickle against her spine. Those thin stooped shoulders, that tattered gray shawl—this was the queer woman from Blackbird Pond—Hannah Tupper, the witch! The girl stared, horror-struck, at the odd-shaped scar on the woman's forehead. Was it the devil's mark? (91)

"Why do they say she's a witch?" Prudence demanded, as [she and Kit] walked slowly back along the path.

"Because they have never tried to get to know her. People are afraid of things they don't understand. You won't be afraid of her now, will you?" (117-118)

"What is treason, Kit? A man is loyal to the place he loves....I suppose it's like that for these people in Wethersfield. How can a king on a throne in England know what is best for them? A man's first loyalty is to the soil he stands on." (129-130)

"We're going for the witch."

... "John Wetherell's boy died today. That makes three dead, and it's the witch's doing!"

... "Time and again she's been seen consorting with the devil down in that meadow!"

"Now she's put a curse on our children. God knows how many more will be dead before morning!"

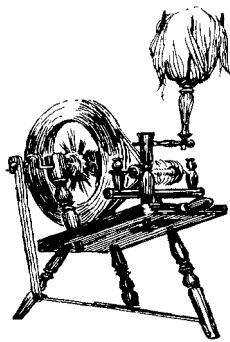
... "The curse of God, you mean!" another voice screamed. "His judgment on us for harboring an infidel and a Quaker." (182-183)

"[Hannah Tupper's] gone straight back to Satan!" pronounced Goodwife Cruff, "but she's left another to do her work!"

Kit could have laughed out loud, but a look at Goodwife Cruff sobered her. The woman's eyes were fastened on her face with a cunning triumph. (198)

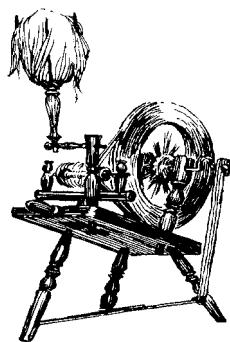
"All my life I've wished I could read," [said Goodman Cruff]. "If I'd had a son, I'd of seen to it he learned his letters. Well, this is a new country over here, and who says it may not be just as needful for a woman to read as a man? Might give her summat to think about besides witches and foolishness." (221-222)

*All page numbers provided are from the Dell Yearling edition of the book.



GLOSSARY

*Understanding who the following people are or what the following terms mean may be helpful as you read **The Witch of Blackbird Pond**.*



cavalier: gentleman trained in arms and horsemanship

dowry: money, goods, or estate that a woman brings to her husband in marriage

dragoons: heavily armed, mounted soldiers

eat at board: eat at a table made from boards set on trestles

Goodwife (Goody): a title for the mistress of a household

husking bee: gathering of young people to husk corn and celebrate

masque: short play that represents an allegory (symbolic story) performed by masked actors

preternatural: unexplainable by ordinary means

Quaker: member of the Society of Friends, founded by George Fox in 1647. Quakers believe an "Inward Light" can lead everyone to a personal experience of God.

Roundhead: Puritan, so-called because Puritan men typically had short hair

selectman: elected official in a New England town

set your cap: aim to marry someone

theocracy: a community governed by the church

whited sepulcher: someone who appears good but is really evil

Nautical Terms

brigantine: two-masted, square-rigged ship

capstan: machine for moving or raising heavy weights by rotating a cable around a vertical drum

deadlights: metal covers or shutters fitted to a port to keep out light and water

forecastle: part of the upper deck of a ship

hawser: large rope for towing, mooring, or securing a ship

ketch: a ship with sails in the front and in the back

pinnaces: light sailing ships

quarterdeck: stern (back) area of a ship's upper deck

A Time in HISTORY

The following timeline traces some of the major events that occurred before and during the settlement of Connecticut.



Puritans dressed simply.

1600

1614—Adriaen Block claims Connecticut for the Dutch

1620—Pilgrims arrive in Plymouth

1630—Puritans establish Massachusetts Bay Colony

1634—Wethersfield established

1636—Towns of Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor unite to form the Connecticut Colony

1637—Connecticut defeats Indians in the Pequot War

1639—Connecticut Colony adopts the first written constitution to create a government

1640—Wethersfield holds public election; first act of American independence

1647—Connecticut becomes the first New England colony to convict and hang a woman for practicing witchcraft

1649—King Charles I beheaded

1650

1650—Law requires towns with more than fifty families to hire a teacher

1654—The English drive the Dutch from Connecticut

1657—Shipbuilding begins at Derby

1660—English monarchy restored; Charles II crowned

1662—King Charles II grants Connecticut a charter allowing some self-government

1665—Connecticut and New Haven colonies unite

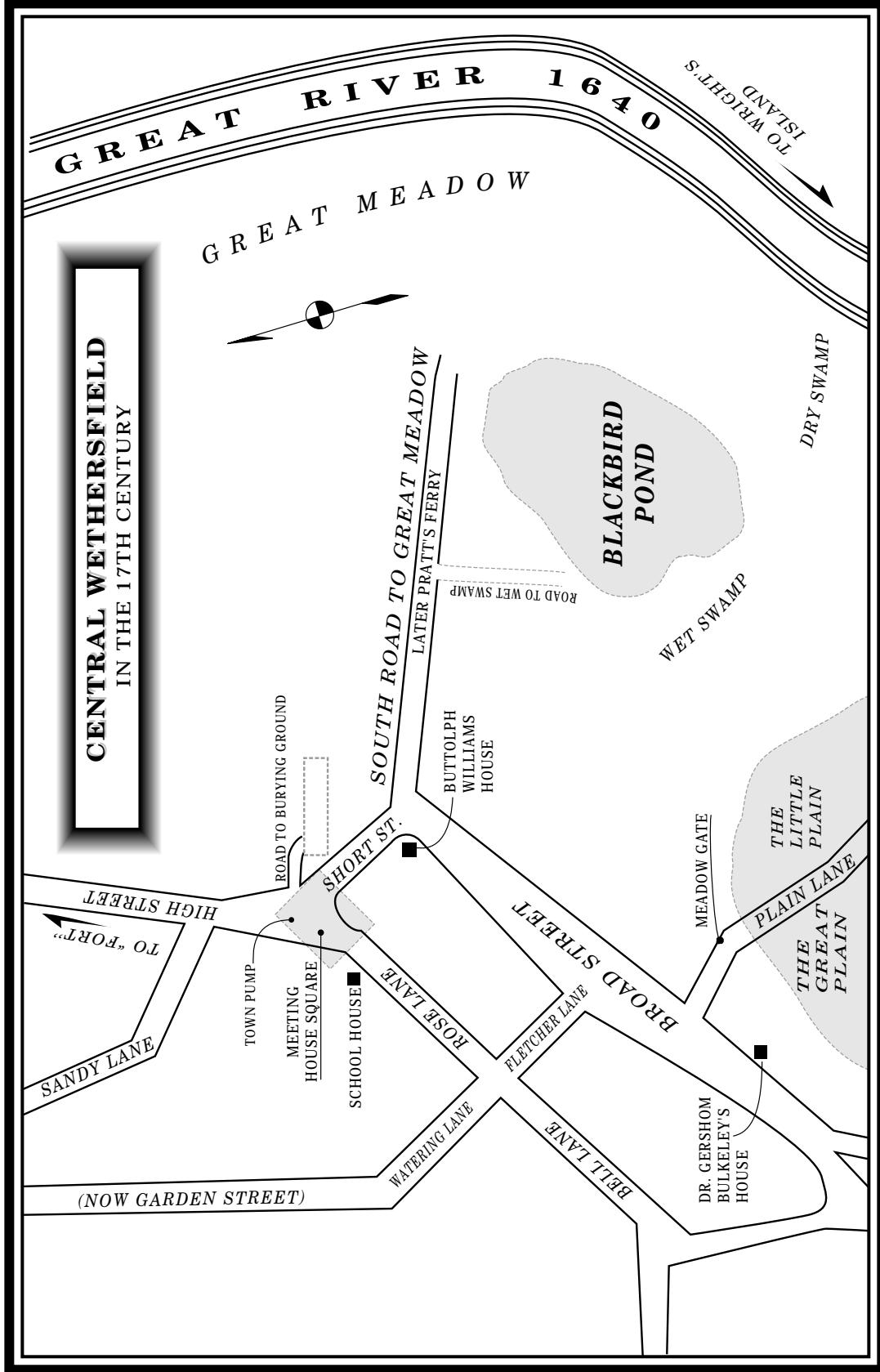
1687—Sir Edmund Andros, royal governor of New York, tries to take over Connecticut

1700

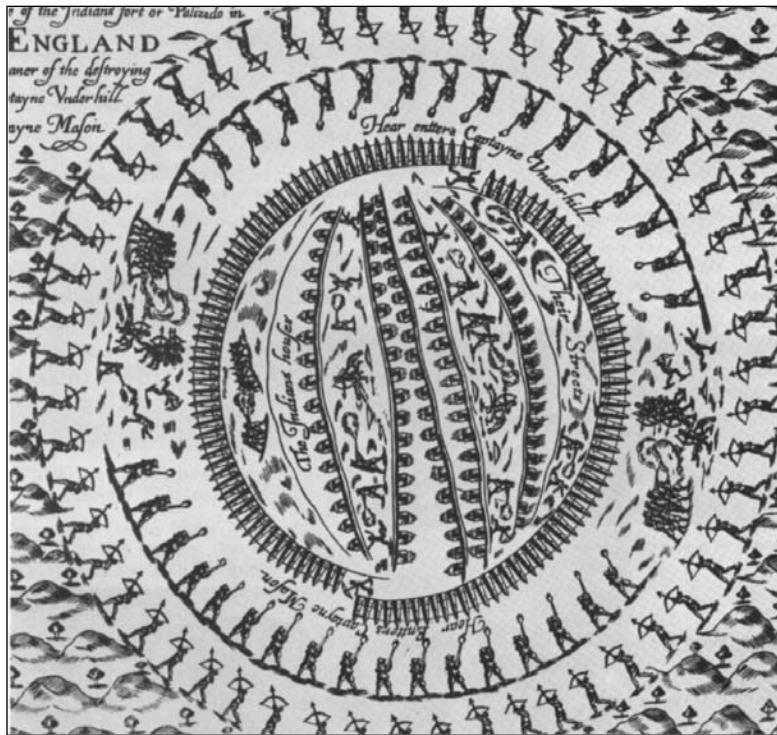
1692—Salem Witch Trials

The Geographical Picture

From a map showing 250 landowners in the village of Wethersfield 1640-1699



Courtesy, Wethersfield Historical Society



In 1637 the colonial forces of Captains John Mason and John Underhill attacked the Pequot fort. During the raid (shown above), 500 Pequots were burned alive. Those who tried to escape were shot. The Pequots' land then became property of the Connecticut colonists.

THE PURITANS COME TO CONNECTICUT

The first settlers in Connecticut were Puritans from Massachusetts. Their vision of a perfect society did not last, but their laws became models for the U.S. Constitution.

The land that became the colony of Connecticut was unexplored until 1614. In that year, a Dutch explorer named Adriaen Block discovered the mouth of the Connecticut River. He returned to Holland with stories of a land rich with timber, beavers, and other valuable resources.

The Dutch had established one of the largest trading empires in the world. They were quick to see the possibilities of wealth. In 1633, a group of traders sailed for America. Following Block's route, they found the fertile land he had described.

They built a small settlement and made contact with local Native Americans. Soon the Dutch were trading iron kettles, guns, and rum for nearly 10,000 beaver skins a year.

However, the Dutch weren't the only Europeans interested in this rich new land. In 1630, English Puritans established the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In 1631, a Sequin Indian chief told the Massachusetts settlers about rich cropland along the Connecticut River. Two years later, colonist John Oldham set out to see this valley. He found "many very

continued

The Puritans Come to Connecticut *continued*

desirable places upon the...river fit to receive many hundred inhabitants."

Oldham brought other settlers into the region. In the next few years, three new Puritan colonies were formed at Wethersfield, Windsor, and Hartford. The three settlements united to form the colony of Connecticut in 1636.

The settlers planted corn, rye, and turnips to eat. They also grew tobacco and onions to trade for English-manufactured goods and furniture.

At first, Native Americans in the area welcomed the newcomers. However, as the settlers killed their game and cut down their forests, the Pequots began to resent them. Many clashes occurred between the two groups. In 1637, the Puritans made an alliance with the Mohegans. Armed with superior weapons, the Puritans and their allies attacked the Pequot fort. The Pequots were all but wiped out, and the Puritans took control of the area. The settlers were convinced that God had ordained their victory.

Wethersfield, like the other Puritan colonies, was set up as a theocracy—that is, a government based on religious beliefs. All laws were based on the Puritan interpretation of the Bible. Thus, gambling, dancing, adultery, and swearing were more than sins; they were crimes, and the criminals were publicly punished. Whippings, brandings, and other punishments were common. One Puritan father flogged his daughter in the village square for going on a date without permission.

The Puritans came to America to find religious freedom, but they did not extend that freedom to others. They believed that tolerating other religions was being unfaithful to God's truth. So Quakers and other dissenters¹ were hounded from one settlement to another. Some were tied to a cart and whipped out of the village. Others were set in the stocks and fined. Some were even branded or had an ear cut off. If they appeared in the village again, they could be hanged.

The Puritans also punished those

believed guilty of witchcraft. At the time, witchcraft was a crime in most European countries. The colonists brought the fear of witches with them from England. Misfortunes such as illness or a dead cow could trigger a hunt for the witch responsible.

Witchcraft was punishable by death. The first witch executed in America was hanged in Connecticut in 1647. But the most famous American witch trials were held at Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. The accusations of a few young girls sparked a witch hunt that lasted nearly a year. Before the hysteria died, hundreds of people were accused of witchcraft and twenty "witches" had been executed.

Puritan leaders later decided the witchcraft hysteria was a punishment from God. The man who led them to Massachusetts, John Winthrop, said they came to America to build a "city on a hill."² The witch trials made it obvious that their dream of a holy society in the wilderness had failed.

But the Puritans did have a lasting influence on American government. They began public education by requiring every town of more than fifty families to hire a teacher. And one of their most important contributions was made by the minister who founded Hartford. The Reverend Thomas Hooker preached that people should be allowed to elect their leaders. In 1639, Hooker helped draft a code of laws for the newly-formed colony. These *Fundamental Orders of Connecticut* have been called "the first written constitution." They became a model for the United States Constitution. And they gave Connecticut its nickname—the Constitution State.

¹ dissenters: people who disagree; protesters

² In Matthew 5:14, Christ says that his followers' good example, like a city on a hill, cannot be hidden.

Puritan Beliefs

*The Puritans believed the English church was corrupt. They hoped to build a new society in America which would be governed by God's law. In **The Story of New England**, Monroe Stearns explains some basic Puritan beliefs.*

Except for the Common¹...and the gravestones, nothing remains of the Boston the early Puritans built. What stayed was the New England Way by which [Governor] John Winthrop and his people lived.

They agreed with one another on this Way. Their agreement was a holy covenant.² They desired "not to vary from the doctrine of faith and truth held forth by the churches of their native country." But they disliked the word Church. Each congregation made its own rules and called its own minister to preach in its meeting-house.

There they listened to long and learned sermons addressed to their intelligence, each man hoping to find some proof in them that God's Word spoke straight to him. Then, to the preachers who examined him, he could give evidence that he had been truly converted. They would make

him a full member of the congregation, and then he could cast a vote for the governor and the magistrates.³

Their "city on a hill"⁴ was a home they were building at a sacrifice and with hard toil. They meant to do as they wanted in it—welcome some guests, shut others out. Differences of opinion, criticism of their Way, offended them as a group....God's purposes were clear in the Bible. There neither was nor could be any other authority.

The Puritans knew who they were and where they were going. Those who disagreed with them were not only unwanted but of unsound judgement, hence dangerous.

...When the Quakers felt "moved" to go to Boston to preach their convictions...they were whipped, had their ears cut off, and were banished. The stubborn were hanged.

They tempted the Puritans to make them martyrs⁵, but the Puritans did not like to dignify the interfering Quakers with that

continued

¹Common: Boston Common, the nation's oldest public park

²covenant: solemn, binding agreement. The Bible describes several covenants between God and his people.

³magistrates: government officials, often judges

⁴"city on a hill": The Puritans wanted to build a model society, governed by God's laws. Their good example, like that of Christ's followers in Matthew 5:14, would be as obvious as a city sitting on a hill.

⁵martyrs: people who die for a religion or cause they believe in

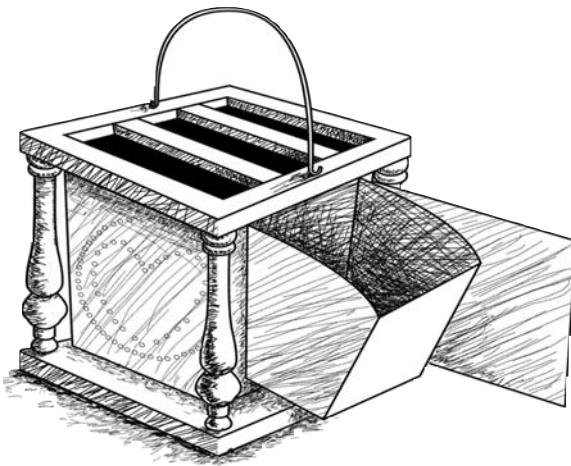
Basic Doctrines

Calvin and other Puritan reformers developed five ideas that became the basis of Puritanism.

1. **Predestination.** Most people are destined to be punished for all eternity. However, God will choose a few lucky people to go to heaven. These people won't be better than the rest, just more fortunate.
2. **Limited Atonement.** Jesus' death on the cross redeems some people from every nation on earth. But only a few will be saved.
3. **Total Depravity.** People are evil. They can't be good or learn to be good, even if they try.
4. **Irresistible Grace.** God will choose some people to become "saints." The people He chooses will not be able to resist.
5. **Perseverance of the Saints.** Those chosen by God will remain faithful until they reach heaven.

reward. The magistrates pleaded long and hard with Mary Dyer⁶ to stop her preaching and accept banishment, but she kept coming back; and at last they had to hang her on Boston Common.

The Puritans were fanatically single-minded about defending the unity of their "city upon a hill."

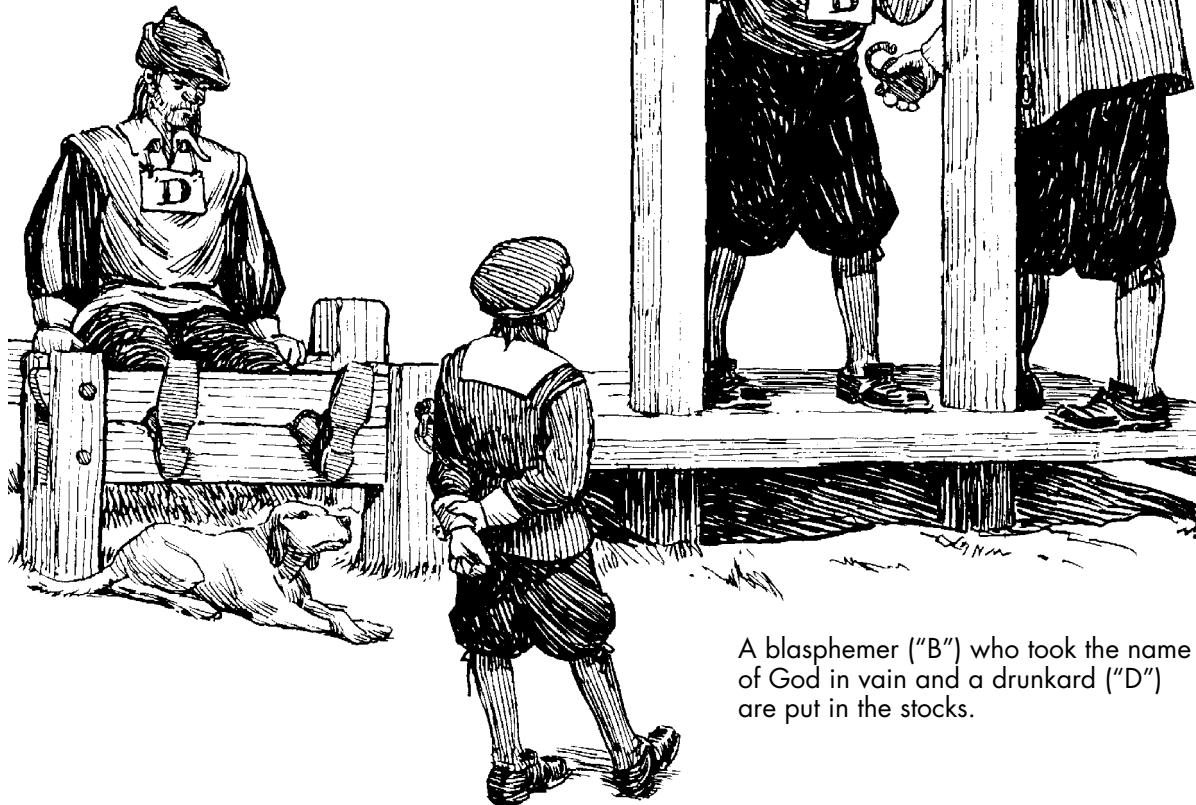


⁶*Mary Dyer:* was sentenced to death twice. The first time, she was pardoned after the hangman's rope had been placed around her neck. The second time, the sentence was carried out.

Church services during New England winters were often so cold that the communion bread froze. To keep warm during sermons more than two hours long, Puritans brought footwarmers to church. They filled the iron footwarmers with hot coals or rocks. However, some churches banned footwarmers because they were fire hazards.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

Among the Puritans



A blasphemer ("B") who took the name of God in vain and a drunkard ("D") are put in the stocks.

*Nat Eaton's punishment for disturbing the peace was quite common in the colonies. This excerpt is from **Curious Punishments of Bygone Days** by Alice Morse Earle.*

One of the earliest institutions in every New England community was a pair of stocks¹....Every village had them.

....The first malefactor set in [Boston's] new stocks was the carpenter who made them:

"Edward Palmer for his extortion in taking £1, 13s., 7d. for the plank and

woodwork of Boston stocks is fyned £5 & censured to bee sett an hour in the stocks."

...In Plymouth in 1665 "all persons being without the dores att the meeting house on the Lords daies in houres of exercise, demeaneing themselves by jesting, sleeping, and the like, if they shall

¹ stocks: wooden frame with holes for hands and feet

continued

Behold the villains rais'd on high!
(The *Post* they've got attracts the eye:)...
And to encrease their sad disgrace,
Throw rotten eggs into their face....
They on th' Pillory stand in view:
A warning sirs to me and you!

—Colonial ballad

persist in such practices [the tithing-man] shall sett them in the stocks."

[The pillory was set up in the public square.] Mr. Samuel Breck, speaking of methods of punishment in his boyhood in Boston, in 1771, said: "A little further up State Street was to be seen the pillory with three or four fellows fastened by the head and hands, and standing for an hour in that helpless posture, exposed to gross and cruel jeers from the multitude, who pelted them constantly with rotten eggs and every repulsive kind of garbage that could be collected."

...Lying, swearing, taking false toll, perjury, selling rum to the Indians, all were punished by whipping. [Young lovers were also in danger of being whipped. The Plymouth Laws of 1638 decreed] "that if any shall make a motion of marriage to any man's daughter or mayde servant, not having first obtayned leave and consent of the parents or master soe to doe, shall be punished either by fine or corporall punishment, or both, at the discretions of the bench..."

[Those being punished often wore labels describing their offense.] In 1636 William Bacon [of Boston] was sentenced to stand an hour in the pillory wearing

"in publique vew" a great D—for his habitual drunkenness....Quakers were ordered never to return after being banished from any town.

In the "Massachusetts Colonial Records" of the year 1657 read the penalty for disobediently returning: "A Quaker if male for the first offense shall have one of his eares cutt off; for the second offense have his other eare cutt off; a woman shalbe severely whipt; for the third offense they, he or she, shall have their tongues bored through with a hot iron." They were also to be branded with the letter R on the right shoulder.

Colonial Courting Customs



Houses in colonial New England were small and crowded. Young couples had a hard time finding a private place to talk. So sweethearts might "bundle" or use a courting-stick to have a quiet conversation

"Bundling" was the custom of going to bed fully clothed. Travelers often had to bundle with families who took them in for the night. And, during cold weather, courting couples in rural New England also bundled together. People began to make fun of the custom, and it died out by the 1800s.

This letter from a British officer stationed in America describes bundling.

*Cambridge, New England
Nov. 20, 1777*

[Bundling is also] termed tarrying. When a young man is enamored of a woman, and wishes to marry her, he proposes the affair to her parents (without whose consent no marriage, in this colony, can take place); if they have no objections, he is allowed to tarry with her one night, in order to make his court. At the usual time the old couple retire to bed, leaving the young ones to settle matters as they can, who having sat up as long as they think proper, get into bed together also, but without putting off their...garments, to prevent scandal. If the parties agree, it is all very well, the banns are published, and they married without delay; if not, they part...

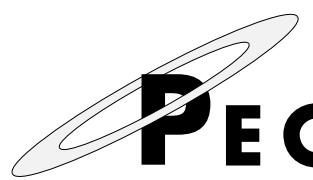
—Lieutenant Anbury

*Another unusual New England custom is described in **Social Life in Old New England**.*

[After bundling began to die out in Connecticut,] another and much better way was ultimately found to carry on the courtship...This was by the use of a "courting-stick," a hollow stick about an inch in diameter and six or eight feet long, fitted with mouth- and ear-pieces, by means of which lovers could exchange their tender vows while seated on either side of the fireplace in the presence of the entire family.

ABOVE: The wedding of Mary Wilder and Dr. Francis Le Baron in Plymouth, 1695.

Library of Congress



THE PEOPLE OF GOD

vs.

THE DEVIL

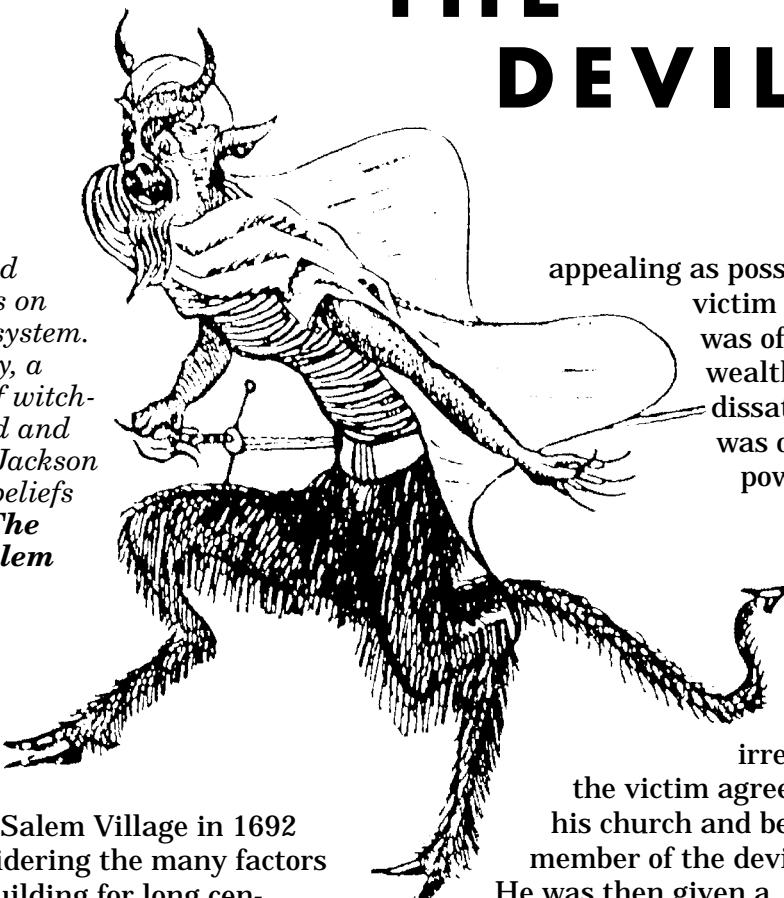
*The Puritans based many of their laws on the English legal system. In the 17th century, a colonist accused of witchcraft could be tried and executed. Shirley Jackson explains Puritan beliefs about witches in **The Witchcraft of Salem Village**.*

It is difficult to understand the seeming madness which swept Salem Village in 1692 without first considering the many factors which had been building for long centuries before....

...Everyone believed there actually was a devil, a created being whose efforts were directed toward the working of evil. It was important to know precisely how effective the devil could be, and, of course, how best to fight against him.

The devil was believed to carry on his war against heaven through the use of human beings....

The devil's methods were simple. He, or one of his demons, approached a human being with offers which were made as



appealing as possible. If the victim was poor, he was offered vast wealth. If he was dissatisfied, he was offered power, or love, or magical abilities.

These temptations often proved so irresistible that the victim agreed to forsake his church and become a member of the devil's "church." He was then given a...familiar,

who might seem to others to be only an ordinary cat, dog, or bird, but who was actually an evil being. The familiar was both a servant and a spy. He performed whatever evil he was ordered to do, but reported back to the devil regularly.

Once the victim had been fully initiated into his position as a follower of the devil, he was known as a "witch" or a "wizard." It is usual to think of women as witches, and men as wizards. However, there is no sharp distinction, and the records show that the words were often used interchangeably.

continued

The People of God vs. the Devil *continued*

The witch, who had bartered any hope of heaven in exchange for the devil's offer, found usually that the devil was a liar and a trickster. Vast wealth turned out to be a few cents, great power was only the delusion of madness.

But the witch had certain powers of magic. He could raise storms, start fires, cause sickness by the glance of an eye or the touch of a hand. He could harm humans and animals, and kill them if he chose. He could destroy crops, and cause hallucinations. In addition, the witch could remove any spell he had cast, and was able to heal sickness....

Witches were afraid of water and, naturally, of any true religious thing. Although they sometimes came to church to avoid suspicion, the church service was uncomfortable for them, and they sometimes secretly mocked the words and gestures. A witch was not able to pray. One of the great tests of witchcraft was to require the witch to say The Lord's Prayer. In demonic rites it was said backward, and a witch could not, however she tried, say it correctly. Many unfortunate people proved that they were witches because, during an examination, they became so frightened that they got the words confused.

By the end of the eighteenth century, more than two million people of "civilized" [Europe] had been executed for witchcraft.

In England the laws against witchcraft had become progressively more severe. In 1542, under English law, it was a crime to use "witchcraftes enchauntementes¹ or sorceries." In 1563, under Queen Elizabeth, a new Parliamentary act made the practice of witchcraft a crime punishable by exposure in the pillory² for a first offense, and punishable by death for a second offense.

When James I succeeded Elizabeth, however, his own superstition and fear produced an increase in general alarm over the subject. James wrote and published a treatise on witchcraft called *Demonologie*. It condemned the practice of

witchcraft in all its forms, and argued that only the most severe laws could restrain the witches. Thus, in 1604, the English Parliament under James passed a new act, making any practice of witchcraft punishable by death for a first offense. This law was in effect when the Puritans came to Massachusetts.

The Massachusetts colony was established during the period when witchcraft in England was one of the great topics of the day. Although the Puritans insisted that they had left England because of the oppressive nature of the English church, they did not want *liberty* of religion, but only conformity. They in turn persecuted all who differed from themselves in belief, and drove from their colony anyone who refused to accept their strict ways.

Just as the Puritans adopted a more stern view of religion, so their ideas about the devil became narrower. They saw the devil still as the enemy of mankind, but they thought that he was also the particular, personal enemy of the Puritans. They thought that since their religion was the truest, the devil was most anxious to destroy it.

Each individual among the Puritans felt that he was called upon to fight the devil personally. Also, they believed that most people outside the Puritan faith were helping the devil's cause because they were not strict enough. They knew that many people who believed themselves to be devout Christians nevertheless broke many religious laws and treated their religion carelessly. To the Puritans, neglect of their religion meant neglect of their whole pattern of life. The religious framework was the base of all their government and all their efforts to start a new home in Massachusetts.

¹enchauntementes: spells

²pillory: a punishment device which held a person's head and hands in a wooden frame

EDUCATION OF A PURITAN GIRL

*The early Puritans wanted every child to learn to read and write. This excerpt from **Old Days and Old Ways** by Imogen Clark describes colonial education.*



Bettmann

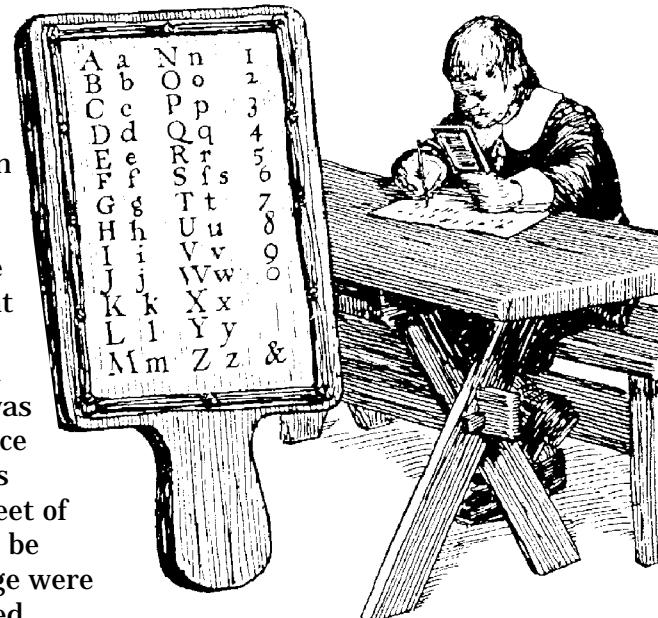
A Puritan girl dips candles.

All [Puritan children] must learn to read, one reason being that "it is the chief project of that old deluder Satan to keep the young from a knowledge of Scriptures."

...At an early age both girls and boys were sent together to a Dame school (usually in some private house) where, if the girls were not taught much book-learning, their needles were kept busy. As they grew older they were also fully instructed in all the housewifely arts. They learned to cook—to spin—to weave—and knit....Fine knitting was very well paid for, and was a matter of much pride to the knitter. Fine embroidery, too, was a delight to New England women and girls....The Puritan girl knew much about gardening, she was also kept busy in the Still-room where she helped her mother with the

medicines of the time, and with conserves and preserves;¹ and when autumn came she did her share at making candles. Often these were of wax and were made in moulds....Tallow candles were more tedious to make as they had to be dipped, but from the first the Colonists had learned to manufacture an inflammable wax from the little green berries of the bay-berry bush....

In much of the education of Puritan children there was a large element of religion. Their primers² taught religious rhymes; they read from the Bible, the Catechism, the Psalm-book, and that dismal rhymed horror "The Day of Doom"....The Horn-book, which was the first book used by all the scholars, was a thin piece of wood about four or five inches long, and two inches wide [holding a] printed page covered with a thin sheet of yellowish horn, transparent enough for the letters to be read through it....At the two upper corners of the page were crosses, so that to read the Horn-book was often called "reading a criss-cross row." At the lower end of the wooden frame was a small handle pierced with a hole through which a string was passed, and the Horn-book was hung about the neck, or at the side.



A Puritan boy learns the alphabet from his horn-book.

¹conserves and preserves: fruits made into jams and jellies or cooked in a syrup

²primers: small books for teaching children to read

Quakers in America

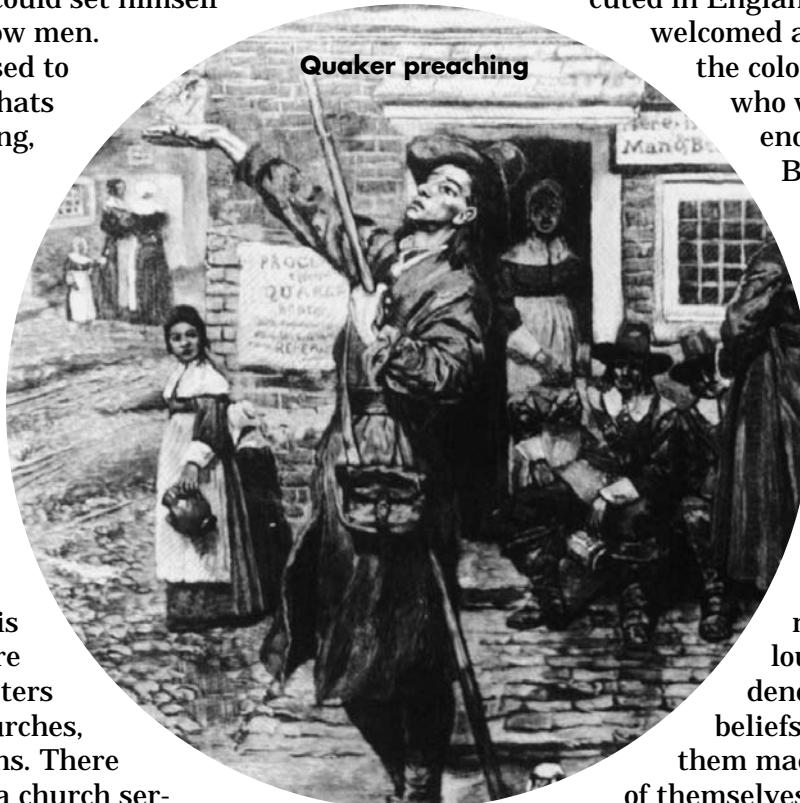
*Hannah Tupper is persecuted because she is a Quaker. The following excerpt from ***Life in Colonial America***, also written by Elizabeth George Speare, tells about Quaker beliefs.*

The Quakers, like the Puritans, had broken away from the Church of England, but they went far beyond the Puritans in their beliefs. Their ideas were very startling to the people of that time. They held that since all men were equal before God, no man could set himself above his fellow men.

Quakers refused to take off their hats even to the king, and they addressed everyone by the simple "thee" and "thou" generally used only for servants and children. Each man was free to understand the truth in his own way. There were no ministers in Quaker churches, and no sermons. There was not even a church service that Puritans could understand. The Friends, as they called themselves, merely met and sat together in silence, each worshipping in his own heart. From time to time one of them would be specially moved to break the silence to share some inspiration with the others. They felt no need for the sacraments of communion and baptism. They

turned to the Bible...and waited quietly for the "light within" to tell them what to do.

Such beliefs outraged almost everyone—Anglicans, Catholics and Puritans alike. Quakers were harshly persecuted in England and not welcomed anywhere in the colonies. Those who were rash enough to land in Boston suffered fines and imprisonment, whipping, and even death. It must be admitted that they did not suffer all this with meekness. They loudly denounced Puritan beliefs, and some of them made spectacles of themselves and interrupted Puritan meetings. One Quaker and his wife were tied to a cart and whipped over the Massachusetts border five different times, and each time returned. Their consciences had convinced them that they must suffer this persecution till public opinion was aroused and their people were allowed to worship in peace. Mary Dyer, one of their



continued

number, was condemned to be hanged with two fellow Quakers, but was pardoned at the last moment and banished from Massachusetts instead. She deliberately came back again to certain death.

In England...[William Penn,] the young son of an aristocrat, sacrificed a chance for a brilliant career to work for the Quaker cause. He failed to win a place for the Friends in England, so he used his influence at court to obtain a grant of land in the New World.

Penn set about the organization of his new settlement with care and skill. Every detail was planned in advance. Though the king's grant was vague, Penn did not try to claim a vast territory he could not use....The beautiful land he had obtained, the sober and industrious people he brought with him, and his own masterly planning guaranteed success from the very start.

Philadelphia was planned according to Quaker principles. Each man was to have space and freedom, and no man's house should be bigger than his neighbor's. The streets were laid out in rectangular order, crossing each other at right angles, with here and there space left for public parks. In William Penn's plan the government, too, was based on the Quaker faith.

Every man could vote, every religion was welcome, and capital punishment was limited to just two crimes, treason and murder. In their new city the Quakers tried to live quietly, peaceably, and moderately. They did not

condemn worldly goods as did the Puritans, but they did not set themselves above each other by any special display. When they prospered, as they very shortly did, they did not flaunt their wealth. Their clothes, their houses, and their furniture were all of good quality, but they preferred simple lines and sober colors.

It is not surprising that the Quakers very soon began to speak out against the system of slavery at a time when Christians in other colonies could see nothing wrong in it. The Pennsylvania Assembly prohibited new slaves from coming into the colony, and Quakers who owned slaves were urged to grant them

freedom. Quakers also were among the first colonists to be concerned with the education of both Negro and Indian children, and many devout Friends dedicated their lives to preaching and teaching among their dark-skinned brothers.

William Penn's town grew rapidly. Shipbuilding and trade brought great wealth to the merchants, and an ever-increasing population brought shops and industries, taverns and public buildings. By the middle of

the eighteenth century, fifty years after William Penn's death, Philadelphia was the largest city in the English colonies.

“ We...utterly deny...all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever... and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world. ”

George Fox, 1660

SLAVERY IN BARBADOS

*Kit remembers the British colony of Barbados for its mild weather, beautiful scenery, and luxurious lifestyle. But for slaves on this West Indian island, life was far from ideal. This excerpt is from **Rum, Slaves, and Molasses: The Story of New England's Triangular Trade**.*

In the last half of the eighteenth century, when the [slave] trade was at its height, most American slavers put in first at one of the British islands of the West Indies because of the higher prices paid for their human cargoes. Barbados was one of the chief slave ports because it lay nearest to West Africa. One of the long chain of small islands—the lesser Antilles—that runs north and south, it lies about a hundred miles east of the others, on the very edge of the Caribbean Sea, with the Atlantic Ocean lapping at its eastern coast.

...Laboring in the cane fields was hard, exhausting work. The working day was long—from sunrise or earlier to sunset, and on moonlit nights in harvest time well into the night....

The juice squeezed from the canes was purified by adding lime and then boiled in big stone pots, turning into thick, sweet molasses. Some was crystallized into [brown] sugar....

The Sugar Islands had their own distilleries to make rum from molasses but...New England rum was then by far the best in quality, and most of the

molasses went into big hogsheads to be shipped north. New England distilleries were demanding more and more molasses so that the rum distilled from it could be exchanged for more and more slaves on the Guinea Coast.

Some slaves in the West Indies worked willingly enough. They were accustomed to a hot climate. They had plenty to eat, for they raised vegetables and tropical fruit of all kinds in their own gardens....Their masters gave them a small supply of working clothes each year....

If this had been all there was to life as a slave in the Sugar Islands, the blacks might have been happy enough, but for two things: they were slaves, and on most plantations they were punished severely for small offenses and with terrible ferocity for higher crimes....

The leader of runaway slaves was to be pinched three times with red-hot iron tongs and then hanged....Any slave who knew of others' plans to run away and did not tell his master was to be branded on the forehead and receive a hundred stripes.¹

...If a runaway slave was gone twelve weeks or more, one leg was to be chopped off. If he stayed away six months his sentence was death unless his owner pardoned him; then he only lost a leg.



The Triangular Trade route

¹stripes: blows with a whip

The Charter Oak

King James II sent Governor Andros to America to suppress the colonists' growing independence. Andros demanded that Connecticut give up its charter. Legend says the defiant colonists hid their charter in an old oak tree.

In 1662, King Charles II of England granted the early Connecticut settlers their own charter. This charter was a legal document that gave the settlers some very important rights. The charter allowed the colonists to make their own local laws, as long as these didn't conflict with English law. For example, the settlers were able to choose their own governor and elect 12 officials to help him manage colony affairs.

When King Charles died in 1685, his brother James became king. One of James' first actions was to make all his American possessions into one colony. It would be easier for James to control one large colony. The new king appointed Sir Edmund Andros as the governor of the Dominion of New England. Connecticut now became just another "jewel in King James' crown."

The colonists were furious. They vowed to maintain their charter and their freedom. When Governor Andros took over in 1687, he demanded the charter be sent to him. The colonists pretended that they were willing to comply. They simply asked for time to appeal to the king.

Andros waited all summer to receive the charter, but it never arrived. He finally wrote to Connecticut's Governor Trent. Andros announced that since the charter had not come to him, he would come to the charter.

In October of 1687, Governor Andros arrived in Hartford to meet with the colony's officials. They greeted him politely and began a long formal meeting in the Council Chamber. Andros read the documents which gave him the right to claim Connecticut's charter. Governor

Trent replied with a speech which lasted nearly all afternoon. The room began to grow dark. Finally, Andros asked for the charter. Governor Trent laid it on the table. Then everything went dark.

No one knows exactly what happened that day. Legend says that one of the settlers grabbed the charter, blew out the candles, and escaped through a window. Thinking quickly, he hid the charter in the hollow of an old oak tree. His neighbor tied her fierce dog to the tree, in the hopes of keeping searchers away. By the time the candles were lit again, the table was bare. Governor Andros lost his chance to take the charter.¹

Andros had been tricked, but he didn't let this stop him. He took control of the colony and appointed his own men to the council. Connecticut no longer ruled itself.

But King James, a Catholic, lost his throne in the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688. His daughter Mary and her Protestant husband William became King and Queen of England. Governor Andros was arrested and sent back to England by the people of Boston.

Rejoicing, the people of Connecticut brought their charter out of hiding. Until a new constitution was adopted in 1818, the charter was the highest law in the state.

The oak tree that protected the charter became a local monument. The tree stood until 1856, when it toppled over during a windstorm.

¹ Stories handed down by the Wadsworth family say that Captain Joseph Wadsworth took the charter. He hid it in the oak at the suggestion of Mrs. Samuel Wyllys.

The CONNECTICUT CHARTER



The King of England, Charles II, granted Connecticut its charter (shown above) in 1662. This charter allowed the settlers to establish a colony and gave them unusual rights to self-government. The state was governed by the charter for more than a century and a half. It is now the state's most precious relic of its early history.

Now know yea that in consideration thereof and in regard the said Colony is remote from other the English Plantacons in the Places aforesaid And to the end of the Affaires and Busines which shall from tyme to tyme happen or arise concerning the same may bee duely Ordered and mannaged Wee have thought fitt and att the humble Peticion of the Persons aforesaid and are graciously pleased to Create and Make them a Body Politique and Corporate with the powers and Priviledges herein after menconed

And further wee will and Ordeine...that for the better ordering and managing of the affaires and businesse of the said Company and their Successors there shall bee one Governour one Deputy Governour and Twelve Assistants to bee from tyme to tyme Constituted Elected and Chosen out of the Freemen of the said Company...to take care for the best disposeing and Ordering of the Generall busines and affaires of...and the Government of the People thereof

And further Our will and pleasure is...That all and every the subjects of us our heires or Successors which shall goe to Inhabite within the said Colony and every of their Children which shall happen to bee borne there or on the Sea in goeing thither or returneing from thence shall have and enjoye all liberties and Immunities of free and naturall Subjects...as if they and every of them were borne within the Realme of the England

And wee doe further of our especiall grace...give and Graunt unto the said Governor and Company of the English Colony of Conecticutt in New England in America and their Successors that itt shall and may bee lawfull...from tyme to tyme to Make Ordaine and Establish All manner of wholsome and reasonable Lawes Statutes Ordinances Direccrons and Instruccrons not contrary to the lawes of this Realme of England

FASHION & FRILLS



The Puritans wanted to live simple lives, free of excess and corruption. Their first churches did not even have steeples. Devout Puritans also dressed plainly. Those who dressed too richly were fined. The law below was enacted by the Massachusetts General Court in 1639.

Whereas there is much complaint of the excessive wearing of lace, & other superfluities tending to little use or benefit, but to the nourishing of pride & exhausting of mens estates, & also of evill example to others, it is therefore ordered by this Court, & decreed, that henceforward no person whatsoever shall p[re]sume to buy or sell, wthin this jurisdiction, any manner of lace, to bee worne or used within our limits.

And that no taylor, or any other person whatsoever, shall hereafter set any lace or points upon any garments, either linnen, wollen, or any other wearing cloathes whatsoever....And that hearafter no garment shalbee made wth short sleeves, whereby the nakedness of the arme may bee discovered in the wearing thereof; & such as have garments already made wth short sleeves shall not hereafter were the same, unless they cover their armes to the wrist wth linnen, or otherwise: And that hearafter no person whatsoever shall make any garment for weomen, or any of ther sex, wth sleeves more then halfe an elle¹ wide in the widest place thereof, so proportionable for biger or smaller persons.

¹elle: measure of length, usually used for cloth. An ell equals 45 inches.

Plagues & Remedies

These extracts from a colonial woman's diary describe an outbreak of small-pox in Salem. The diarist, Mary Vial Holyoke, was born in 1737. Only three of her twelve children lived to adulthood.

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Jan 8, 1764 | First wore my new Cloth riding hood. |
| 9 | My Daughter Polly [four years old] first confined with the quinsy. ¹ Took a vomit. |
| 10 | Nabby Cloutman watch'd with her. |
| 11 | Very ill. Molly Molton watched. |
| 12 | Zilla Symonds watched. |
| 13 | My Dear Polly Died. Sister Prissy came. |
| 14 | Buried. |
| 15 | Small pox began to spread at Boston. |
| 19 | Mrs. Fitch came from Boston for fear of small pox. |
| 21 | Town meeting for guarding the town from small pox. |
| 22 | Dr. Lloyd Came from Boston to See Stephen Higginson. |
| 25 | Mr. Appleton moved to the pest house with the small pox which proved to be Chicken Pox. |
| 27 | First heard of their inoculating ² at Boston. |
| Mar. 9 | The Dr. [her husband] came home [from Cambridge] and brought news of 5 or 600 being inoculated at Boston. |
| 10 | Sally Bernard went to Point Shirley to be inoculated. |
| May 4 | Mr. Atherton brought the Dr. [her husband] home from having the Small Pox. 2 in 3 Dies with it in the natural way.... |

¹quinsy: inflammation of the throat, with fever

continued

²Inoculation protects against disease by injecting weak or dead germs into the body. Two famous Puritan ministers, Cotton and Increase Mather, encouraged people to be inoculated against smallpox.

Few colonial doctors had medical degrees. They learned medicine by studying with another doctor. They also studied books of remedies or "receipts," such as those below. These books were popular because most colonists had to make their own medicines.

**Comfortable Juleb
for a Feaver**

Barley Water & White Wine each one pint, Whey one quart, two ounces of Conserves of Barberries, and the Juyces of two limmons and 2 Oranges.

An Indian Receipt

The Indians cure their wounds with [hellebore], anointing the Wound first with Raccoons greese, or Wild-Cats greese, and strewing upon it the powder of the roots...The powder of the Root put into a hollow Tooth, is good for the Tooth-ach.

**Prescription to Cure
Sleeplessness**

Bruise a handful of Anis-seeds, and steep them in Red Rose Water, & make it up in little bags, & binde one of them to each Nostrill, and it will cause sleep.

To Cure Deafnesse

Take the Garden Dasie roots and make juyce thereof, and lay the worst side of the head low upon the bolster & drop three or four drops thereof into the better Ear; this do three or four dayes together.

A QUAKER STANDS TRIAL

Quakers could not obey a 1675 Massachusetts law that required oaths of fidelity to the King of England. Margaret Brewster warned Governor Leverett that enforcing the law would bring disaster. She came to Boston's South Church to urge worshippers there to repent. Mrs. Brewster was the last Quaker woman sentenced to whipping.

Governour: Are you the woman that came into Mr. Thatcher's Meetinghouse with your Hair fruzled, and dressed in the Shape of a Devil?

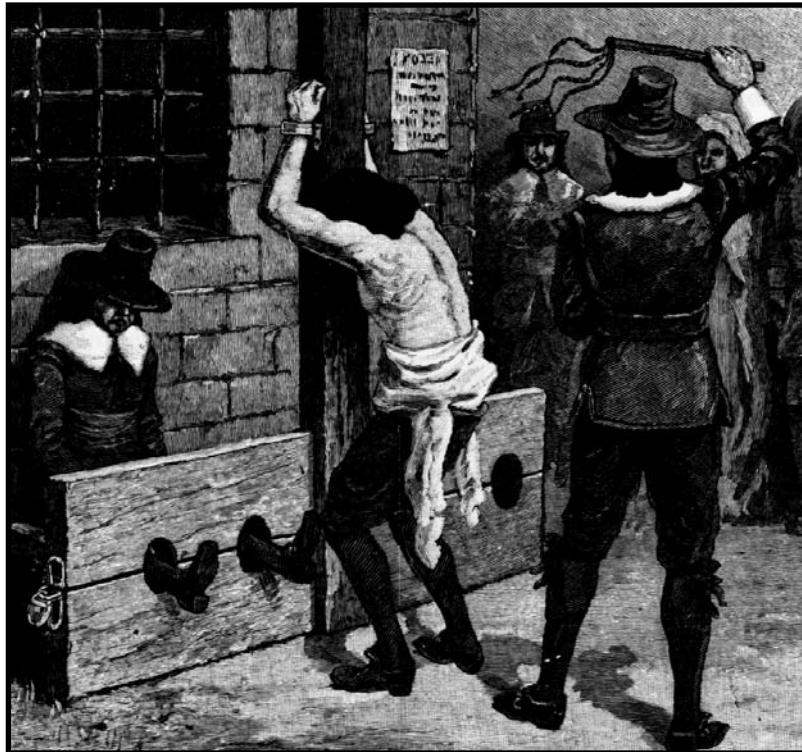
M. Brewster: I am the Woman that came into Priest Thatcher's House of Worship with my Hair about my Shoulders, Ashes upon my Head, my Face coloured black, and Sackcloth upon my upper Garments.¹

Gov. What made you come so?

M.B. I came in Obedience to the Lord.

Gov. The Lord! The Lord never sent you, for you came in the Shape of a Devil incarnate....

M.B. Governour! I desire thee to hear me a little, for I have something to say in Behalf of my Friends² in this Place: I desire thee and thine Assistants to put an End to these cruel Laws that you have made to prosecute my Friends for



Quakers were often punished for their religious beliefs.

meeting together to worship the True and Living God! Oh Governour! I cannot but press thee again and again, to put an End to these cruel Laws that you have made to fetch my Friends from their peaceable Meetings, and keep them three Days in the House of Correction, and then whip them for worshipping the True and Living God: Governour! Let me intreat thee to put an End to these Laws, for the Desire of my Soul is, that you may act for God, and then would you prosper, but if you act against the Lord and his blessed Truth, you will assuredly come to nothing....

The Clerk read the Sentence as follows, *viz.*
Margaret Brewster, You are to have your Clothes stript off to the Middle, and to be tide to a Cart's Tail at the South Meetinghouse, and to be drawn through the Town, and to receive twenty Stripes upon your naked Body.

M.B. The Will of the Lord be done: I am contented....I am glad that I am worthy to be a Sufferer in this bloody Town, and to be numbered amongst my dearly and well-beloved Brethren and Sisters, that sealed their Testimonies with their Blood.

¹Wearing sackcloth and ashes is a sign of repentance. Margaret Brewster compared her witness to the prophet Jonah's visit to Nineveh.

²Friends: fellow Quakers; members of the Society of Friends

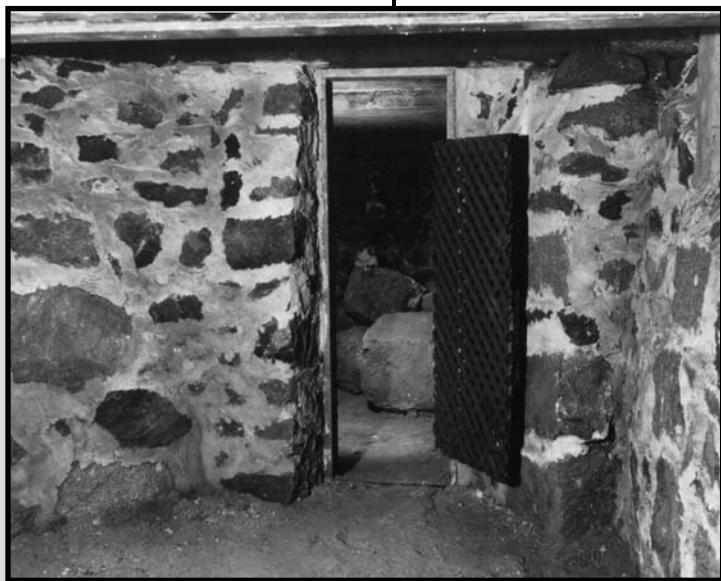
APPEAL

From an Accused Witch

I petition¹ to your honors not for my own life, for I know I must die, and my appointed time is set, but...that no more Innocent Blood be shed, which undoubtedly cannot be avoided in the way and course you go in. I question not but your honors do to the utmost of your powers in the discovery and detecting of witchcraft and witches, and would not be guilty of innocent blood for the world. But by my own Innocency I know you are in the wrong way. The Lord in his infinite mercy direct you in this great work, if it be His blessed will, that innocent blood be not shed.

I would humbly beg of you that your honors would be pleased to examine some of the confessing witches, I being confident there are several of them have belied² themselves and others, as will appear, if not in this world, I am sure in the world to come, whither I am going. And I question not but yourselves will see an alteration in these things. They say myself and others have made a league with the devil....I know and the Lord He knows they belie me, and so I question not but they do others. The Lord alone, who is the Searcher of hearts, knows that as I shall answer it at the Tribunal Seat³ I know not the least thing of witchcraft, therefore I cannot, I durst not belie my own soul. I beg your honors not to deny this my humble petition from a poor dying innocent person, and I question not but the Lord will give a blessing to your endeavors.

Gentle Mary Easty was one of those accused of witchcraft at the Salem trials. She knew that admitting guilt would save her life. But she refused to lie. After being sentenced to death, she wrote this appeal to the judges. Goody Easty was hanged in 1692.



The interior of the old jail used to house witches in Salem, Massachusetts.

¹*petition*: make a formal appeal

²*belied*: gave a false impression of

³*Tribunal Seat*: God's throne, where Puritans believed they would be judged after death

— 20th-Century — “WITCH TRIALS”

In 1692, young girls in Salem, Massachusetts, accused more than 150 people of witchcraft. By the time the Salem witch trials were over, twenty innocent people were dead. In the early 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy led another “witch hunt.” This time the targets were suspected Communists. Thousands of politicians, military personnel, actors, teachers, even plumbers, were publicly accused of working against the U.S. government. Many people’s lives and reputations were ruined.



Sen. McCarthy produces evidence against accused Communists.

Bettmann

...The great difference between our Western Christian world and the atheistic Communist world is not political, ladies and gentlemen, it is moral....

Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between Communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of Communism have selected this as the time. And, ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down—they are truly down....

Ladies and gentlemen, can there be anyone here tonight who is so blind as to say that the war is not on? Can there be anyone who fails to realize that the Communist world has

said, “The time is now”—that this is the time for the showdown between the democratic Christian world and the Communist atheistic world?...

continued

...In my opinion the State Department, which is one of the most important government departments, is thoroughly infested with Communists.

I have in my hand 57¹ cases of individuals who would appear to be either card-carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist party, but who nevertheless are still helping to shape our foreign policy.

One thing to remember in discussing the Communists in our government is that we are not dealing with spies who get thirty pieces of silver² to steal the blueprints of a new weapon. We are dealing with a far more sinister type of activity because it permits the enemy to guide and shape our policy....

[It] will end only when the whole sorry mess of twisted, warped thinkers are swept from the national scene so that we have a new birth of national honesty and decency in government.

—**Senator Joseph McCarthy**



In late 1954 the Senate voted 67-22 to officially condemn McCarthy's behavior. McCarthy died three years later.

Senator Margaret Chase Smith was one of the first to speak out against McCarthy. The following is from the "Declaration of Conscience" that she delivered to the Senate in 1950.

Those of us who shout the loudest about Americanism in making character assassinations are all too frequently those who, by our own words and acts, ignore some of the basic principles of Americanism—

The right to criticize.

The right to hold unpopular beliefs.

The right to protest.

The right of independent thought.

The exercise of these rights should not cost one single American citizen his reputation or his right to a livelihood merely because he happens to know someone who holds unpopular beliefs. Who of us does not? Otherwise none of us could call our souls our own.

Otherwise thought control would have set in.

—**Senator Margaret Chase Smith**

¹People who heard the speech disagree on whether McCarthy said 57, 205, 207, or 208.

²The reference is to Judas, who received thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus Christ.

A PURITAN POET

Part of Anne Bradstreet's poem "Contemplations" is quoted in ***The Witch of Blackbird Pond***. Some of her poems are letters to her husband or advice to her children. Others are formal reflections on nature and God. Bradstreet thought of herself as a simple Puritan housewife. But she was the first American poet to have a book published in England.



Anne Bradstreet

To My Dear and Loving Husband

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee:
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole mines of
gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor aught but love from thee give recom-
pense.
Thy love is such I can no way repay,
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persever,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

continued



Meditations

For My Dear Son Simon Bradstreet

...You once desired me to leave something for you in writing that you might look upon when you should see me no more. I could think of nothing more fit for you, nor of more ease to myself, than these short meditations following. Such as they are I bequeath to you: small legacies are accepted by true friends, much more by dutiful children. I have avoided encroaching upon others' conceptions, because I would leave you nothing but mine own; though in value they fall short of all in this kind, yet I presume they will be better prized by you for the author's sake. The Lord bless you with grace here, and crown you with glory hereafter, that I may meet you with rejoicing at that great day of appearing, which is the continual prayer of

Your affectionate mother

March 20, 1664 A.B.



5

It is reported of the peacock that, priding himself in his gay feathers, he ruffles them up; but, spying his black feet, he soon lets fall his plumes: so he that glories in his gifts and adornings should look upon his corruptions, and that will damp his high thoughts.



10

Diverse children have their different natures: some are like flesh which nothing but salt will keep from putrefaction; some again like tender fruits that are best preserved with sugar. Those parents are wise that can fit their nurture according to their nature.



14

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant: if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome.



53

He that is to sail into a far country, although the ship, cabin, and provision be all convenient and comfortable for him, yet he hath no desire to make that his place of residence, but longs to put in at that port where his business lies. A Christian is sailing through this world unto his heavenly country, and here he hath many conveniences and comforts; but he must beware of desiring to make this the place of his abode, lest he meet with such tossings that may cause him to long for shore before he sees land. We must, therefore, be here as strangers and pilgrims, that we may plainly declare that we seek a city above, and wait all the days of our appointed time till our change shall come.

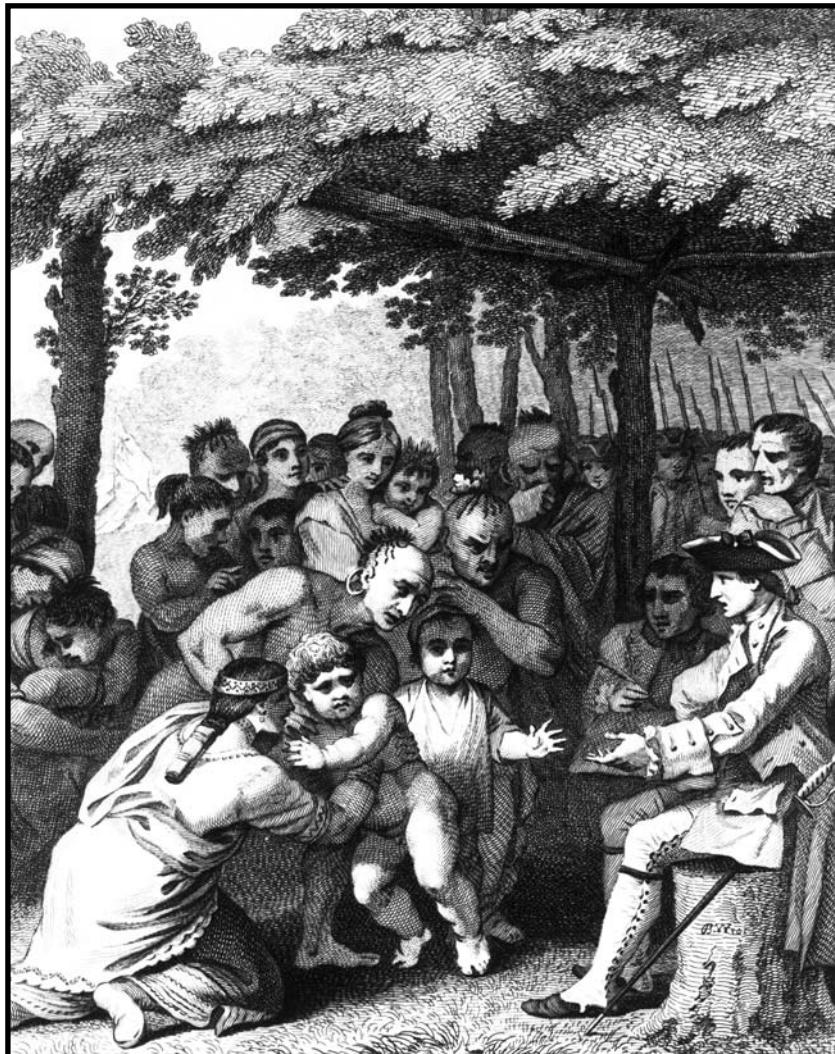
AN INDIAN CAPTIVE

Mary Rowlandson's story is one of America's most famous "captivity narratives." Mrs. Rowlandson was the wife of the pastor at Lancaster, Massachusetts. She was taken prisoner during King Philip's War in 1676. Mrs. Rowlandson wrote the story of her captivity as "a memorandum of God's dealing with her."

I had often before this said, that if the Indians should come, I should chuse rather to be killed by them then taken alive but when it came to the tryal my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous Bears, then that moment to end my dayes; and that I may the better declare what happened to me during that grievous Captivity I shall particularly speak of the severall Removes¹ we had up and down the Wilderness.

The First Remove

Now away we must go with these barbarous creatures, with our bodies wounded and bleeding, and our hearts no less than our bodies. About a mile we went that night....This was the dolefullest night that ever my eyes saw. Oh the roaring, and singing and dancing, and yelling of those black creatures in the night, which made the place a lively resemblance of hell....To add to [my sorrow,] my thoughts ran upon my losses and sad bereaved condition. All was gone, my



Library of Congress

In 1764, Colonel Bouquet led an expedition to ransom settlers captured during Indian raids. Some captives did not want to leave the families which had adopted them.

Husband gone (at least separated from me, he being in the Bay; and to add to my grief, the Indians told me they would kill him as he came homeward) my Children gone, my Relations and Friends gone, our

¹Removes: moves from place to place. Mrs. Rowlandson describes 20 "removes" during her eleven weeks with the Indians.

continued

House and home and all our comforts within door, and without, all was gone, (except my life) and I knew not but the next moment that might go too. There remained nothing to me but one poor wounded Babe, and it seemed at present worse than death that it was in such a pitiful condition...and I had no refreshing for it, no suitable things to revive it....

The Second Remove

But now, the next morning, I must turn my back upon the Town, and travel with them into the vast and desolate Wilderness, I knew not whither. It is not my tongue, or pen can express the sorrows of my heart, and bitterness of my spirit, that I had at this departure: but God was with me, in a wonderfull manner, carrying me along, and bearing up my spirit, that it did not quite fail. One of the Indians carried my poor wounded Babe upon a horse; it went moaning all along ["I shall dy, I shall dy."] I went on foot after it, with sorrow that cannot be exprest. At length I took it off the horse, and carried it in my armes till my strength failed, and I fell down with it: Then they set me upon a horse with my wounded Child in my lap, and there being no furniture upon the horse's back; as we were going down a steep hill, we both fell over the horse['s] head, at which they like inhumane creatures laught, and rejoiced to see it, though I thought we should there have ended our dayes, as overcome with so many difficulties. But the Lord renewed my strength still, and carried me along, that I might see more of his Power; yea, so much that I could never have thought of, had I not experienced it.

The Third Remove

[Six-year-old Sarah died of her wounds and was buried in the wilderness.] In the morning when they understood my child was dead they sent for me home to my master's wigwam (by my master must be understood Quanopin, who was a Sagamore,² and married King Philip's

wife's sister; not that he first took me, but I was sold to him by another Narraganset Indian, who took me when I first came out of the garrison.)

....I cannot but take notice of the wonderful mercy of God to me in those afflictions, in sending me a Bible. One of the Indians that came from Medfield fight, had brought some plunder, came to me, and asked me, if I would have a Bible, he had got one in his basket.

The Twentieth Remove

The chief and commonest food was ground-nuts. They eat also nuts and acorns, artichokes, lilly roots, ground-beans, and several other weeds and roots, that I know not.

...They would eat...all sorts of wild birds which they could catch; also bear, venison, beaver, tortoise, frogs, squirrels, dogs, skunks, rattlesnakes....

...we went to Boston that day, where I met with my dear husband, but the thoughts of our dear children, one being dead, and the others we could not tell where, abated our comfort....The twenty pounds, the price of my redemption, was raised by some Boston gentlemen, and Mrs. Usher....

...I see, when God calls a person to anything, and through never so many difficulties, yet He is fully able to carry them through and make them see, and say they have been gainers thereby....If trouble from smaller matters begin to arise in me, I...say, why am I troubled? It was but the other day that if I had had the world, I would have given it for my freedom, or to have been a servant to a Christian. I have learned to look beyond present and smaller troubles, and to be quieted under them. As Moses said, "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exodus 14:13).

[After the Rowlandsons' surviving children were ransomed, the family lived in Boston. Eventually they moved to Wethersfield.]

²Sagamore: Algonquian word for chief

The Legend of the New England Wizard

The judges at Salem accused Giles Corey of witchcraft. But Corey knew he was innocent. He also knew that if he confessed, his children could not inherit his lands. For many years, Corey's ghost was said to appear at the spot where he died.

Granger
Collection



Both Giles Corey and his wife, Martha, were accused of witchcraft. Martha was hanged. Giles, who refused to answer the charges, was pressed to death.

Giles Corey was a Wizzard strong,
A stubborn wretch was he;
And fitt was he to hang on high
Upon the Locust-tree.

So when before the magistrates
For triall he did come,
He would no true confession make,
But was compleatlie dumbe.

"Giles Corey," said the Magistrate,
"What hast thou heare to pleade
To these that now accuse the soule
Of crimes and horrid deed?"

Giles Corey, he said not a worde,
No single worde spoke he,
"Giles Corey," said the Magistrate,
"We'll press it out of thee."

They got them then a heavy beam,
They laid it on his breast;
They loaded it with heavy stones,
And hard upon him prest.

"More weight!" now said this wretched man;
"More weight!" again he cried;
And he did no confession make,
But wickedly he dyed.

Voices from Other Works

*If you enjoyed **The Witch of Blackbird Pond**, you may enjoy other works about colonial America and people who are unjustly accused.*

One night when [John] came home he was very upset. Witch Glover had been hanged that morning. He went to the hanging. Everybody went. They even closed the tavern.

... "It was horrible," John said. "She wasn't anything but an old crazy woman. And they hanged her. Horrible. Then afterward they all came into the tavern..."

"...They said she witched the Godwin children. Just before she died she said hanging her wouldn't cure them. You should have seen the crowd of people gawking at her...."

—Ann Petry
Tituba of Salem Village

"That's it," Sam had finished, "that's the whole truth. I can see how it looked to Mr. Levine-Griffin when he walked in and just me and Rob were there. And the stuff. But he wouldn't listen to us. He made up his mind against us as soon as he came in. It was as if we had long criminal records. As if we had done such awful things here...and told so many lies, that there was no way we *could* be believed. But that's not true. You know that's not true." Sam looked straight at the headmaster.

—Nat Hentoff
Does This School Have Capital Punishment?

"Witch-hunting disappeared years ago, almost everywhere except in Ridgeford. Here they still believe in them. Whenever something bad happens, like drouth or a plague of crickets, they blame it on a witch. And they search until they find one."

"Who are these searchers?" [asked Sarah.]

"My father is one," Isaac said. "He and the rest will search until they find someone they think is a witch. It happened six years ago....They tied [Melanie Medwick] to the tail of a cart and whipped her out of Ridgeford."

—Scott O'Dell
Sarah Bishop

Were there no witches at all in Massachusetts in 1692? According to modern law there were none, none at least among the condemned. The ghost of little Ann Putnam, the only accuser who came to her senses and tried to make amends, may still ask, "Was it I? Was I all unwittingly the true witch?"

—Marion Starkey
The Visionary Girls

I went on. "I cannot abide half the rules, you see."

"What rules?" [asked my father.]

"These Puritan ordinances we must live under. I try to be a good Puritan, but I fear I never will be. I cannot see, Father, why a man should sit in the stocks all day for kissing his wife in public. Or why some local Indians are fined for gathering wood on the Sabbath. Or why slanderous speech earns someone a whipping."

...[He replied,] "Such thoughts are best kept within these walls."

—Ann Rinaldi
A Break With Charity

continued

Voices from Other Works *continued*

"If [pressure groups] keep getting stronger, what's to stop some Government official—somewhere down the line—from telling you not to wear anything red because that's the Communists' color?"

There were some giggles in the audience.

"Oh, you think it can't happen here?" Dickinson said. "Well, let me tell you something. In 1919 twenty-four state legislatures passed a law saying that if you hung a red flag out of the window, you were committing a criminal act. The next year, eight more state legislatures did the same thing. And so did some cities. Before that nonsense was all over, fourteen hundred Americans were arrested for breaking the Red Flag laws, and about three hundred of them wound up in prison. No Government craziness is impossible if people just let it happen. Freedom does not come with any guarantees, you know. You can lose it just by not paying attention to those who are taking it away from you."

—Nat Hentoff

The Day They Came to Arrest the Book

"You thought you were so special!" Ross told [the students.] "Better than everyone outside of this room. You traded your freedom for what you said was equality. But you turned your equality into superiority over non-Wave members. You accepted the group's will over your own convictions, no matter who you had to hurt to do it....

"If our experiment has been successful...you will have learned that we are all responsible for our own actions, and that you must always question what you do rather than blindly follow a leader, and that for the rest of your lives, you will never, ever allow a group's will to usurp your individual rights."

—Todd Strasser

The Wave

...Respected men of the cloth hung upon our every word, so that we [girls] tried to satisfy them....We could go to any extremes of behavior, secure in the knowledge that we were "possessed." ...As we screamed and shrieked and ran about the room, always filled with onlookers, we cried that one witch or another was "trying to get her hands on my throat!"

And if it was often Abigail, though sometimes Anne Putnam, who began these fits, they were swiftly joined by the rest of us....When one girl screeched, in a moment we all screeched. When one girl threw herself to the floor and rolled in apparent agony, so did we all. When one saw the "shape" of witches, they were visible to each of us....To be there, wherever we poor "possessed" girls were, was to share in the hysteria.

—Patricia Clapp
Witches' Children

Suggested Reading and Viewing List

If you enjoyed reading ***The Witch of Blackbird Pond***, you may want to explore other works about how societies affect individual freedom. The following list offers some suggestions for further reading and viewing.

Novels

A Break with Charity: A Story About the Salem Witch Trials by Ann Rinaldi. Susanna English recalls the malice, fear, and accusations of witchcraft that tore her village apart in 1692. Based on historical evidence about a real colonial family. Gulliver Books, 1992. [RL 6 IL 6-9]

Colony of Fear by Lucy Jane Bledsoe. When young Samuel Roberts arrives in Stonesbury, Massachusetts, he doesn't know that before long he will be on trial for witchcraft. Fearon, 1989. [RL 4 IL 7-12]

Constance: A Story of Early Plymouth by Patricia Clapp. A fifteen-year-old girl travels from London to Plymouth and settles down to colonial life. Lothrop, 1968. [RL 6 IL 6-9]

Cromwell's Boy by Eric Christian Haugaard. A thirteen-year-old spy's wit and horsemanship make him invaluable to the Puritan forces fighting against King Charles. Houghton Mifflin, 1990. [RL 5 IL 5-9]

A Gathering of Days by Joan W. Blos. A fourteen-year-old New England girl uses her journal to deal with her feelings about life, her father's remarriage, and the death of her best friend. Macmillan, 1982. [RL 6 IL 6-10]

Goodness and Mercy Jenkins by Bianca Bradbury. An orphan girl has difficulty adjusting to a Puritan household. Ives Washburn, 1963. [RL 7 IL 6-9]

My Name Is Not Angelica by Scott O'Dell. A compelling account of the great Caribbean slave rebellion of 1733. Houghton Mifflin, 1989. [RL 6 IL 4-7]

Sarah Bishop by Scott O'Dell. After Sarah's father is killed by raiders, she takes refuge in the wilderness. A friendly Quaker protects her from trial for witchcraft. Based on a true story. Houghton Mifflin, 1980. [RL 4 IL 6-12]

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne. A young colonial woman is punished by her community with a scarlet letter A. Bantam, 1986. [RL 8 IL 9+]

Tituba of Salem Village by Ann Petry. The gripping and true story of a slave from Barbados who was the first person to stand trial for witchcraft in 1692. Harper, 1991. [RL 5 IL 5-10]

The Visionary Girls: Witchcraft in Salem Village by Marion G. Starkey. Fictionalized explanation of the Salem witch trials. Little, 1973. [RL 6 IL 6-9]

The War Between the Classes by Gloria D. Miklowitz. Amy and her classmates find themselves questioning the humiliations and abuse they're tolerating or inflicting on one another in a school experiment in which students are put into "social classes" according to specific rules. Dell, 1986. [RL 5 IL 6-12]

continued

Suggested Reading and Viewing List *continued*

Nonfiction

Colonial Life by Bobbie Kalman. Meet the hardworking people of a colonial community and discover the roles that religion and education played in people's lives more than two hundred years ago. Crabapple, 1992. [RL 4 IL 3-7]

Daily Life: A Sourcebook on Colonial America edited by Carter Smith. This work describes and illustrates daily life in colonial America through a variety of contemporary images. Millbrook, 1991. [RL 6 IL 5-9]

God and Government: The Separation of Church and State by Ann E. Weiss. This book traces the history of American attitudes towards religion. Houghton Mifflin, 1990. [RL 7 IL 7+]

The Salem Witchcraft Trials by Karen Zeinert. What caused the witchcraft madness at Salem? This book gives several possible causes and describes what happened after the trials. Franklin Watts, 1990. [RL 7 IL 6-10]

William Penn: Founder of Pennsylvania by Ronald Syne. This biography of William Penn gives ample background of the Penn family, the Quaker faith, Pennsylvania, and the Puritan Revolution in England. Morrow, 1966. [RL 8 IL 5-7]

Witchcraft of Salem Village by Shirley Jackson. Describes the trials, executions, and aftermath of the Salem hysteria. Random, 1987. [RL 9 IL 6+]

The Young Colonials, a History by Robert Carse. A collective biography of seven young American colonists. Norton, 1963. [RL 8 IL 6-10]

Short Works/Dramas

"The Black Cat" by Edgar Allan Poe. A man commits the perfect crime, but his guilty conscience drives him mad.

The Crucible by Arthur Miller. The award-winning dramatization of the Salem witch trials.

"The Minister's Black Veil" by Nathaniel Hawthorne. What terrible secret does the town's minister hide beneath his veil?

"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" by Jonathan Edwards. A famous sermon on sin by a noted Puritan preacher.

"Young Goodman Brown" by Nathaniel Hawthorne. On a dark journey through the forest, a young man discovers the sins hidden in his neighbors' hearts—and the suspicion hidden in his own.

Poetry

"The Day of Doom" by Michael Wigglesworth

"To My Dear and Loving Husband" by Anne Bradstreet

"Upon a Spider Catching a Fly" by Edward Taylor

Viewing

The Puritan Experience. The first part of this series, "The Puritan Experience," dramatizes the Higgins family's departure from England after they dare to criticize the "impure" Anglican Church. In the award-winning "Making a New World," 18-year-old Charity Higgins is captured by Native Americans and later put on trial for witchcraft. LCA, 1975. (VHS, approx. 30 min. each, color)

A Visit with Elizabeth George Speare. Shows a little of Wethersfield. (VHS, Authors and Artists Series 5-96426)

continued

Suggested Reading and Viewing List *continued*

Three Sovereigns for Sarah. Ten years after the Salem witch trials, Sarah Cloyce seeks to prove that she and her two executed sisters were truly innocent of practicing witchcraft. Stars Vanessa Redgrave. Prism Entertainment Corp. (VHS, 152 min., color)

Witchcraft in America: Behind the Crucible. Examines the Salem Village hysteria of 1692, presenting the practices and beliefs concerning witchcraft in England and Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. Educational Video Network. (VHS, 21 min., color)

Using Latitudes in Your Classroom

*The following discussion topics and activities are suggestions for incorporating pieces from **Latitudes** into your curriculum. Most suggestions can be adapted for independent, small group, or whole class activities. In addition, the list includes activities that can be done before, during, and after reading the novel. The variety of choices allows you to modify and use those activities that will make **The Witch of Blackbird Pond** meaningful to your students.*

About the Author

1. Invite students to compare the way Speare writes to the way they research and write reports.
2. Have students identify stories Speare might find to write about if she visited their birthplaces.
3. Interested students could find out more about how Speare or a favorite author writes historical fiction. Speare gives detailed explanations of how she works in *Something About the Author*.
4. Encourage students to compare *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* to the setting(s), theme(s), and characters in any of Speare's other works. Students who have read other books by Speare might present book talks encouraging classmates to become more familiar with this author.

Critics' Comments

1. Ask students to bring recent reviews to class. Reviews might be about books, movies, new albums, concerts, and so on. Pose the following types of questions to the students.
 - What makes you agree or disagree with the comments?
 - What is an "informed" opinion?
 - When are critics' comments important?
 - Would a negative review keep you from reading a book, seeing a movie, or going to a concert? Explain.
2. Invite students to write their own critical statements about *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. Remind them to support their opinions with evidence from the book. Then post unsigned comments written on large sheets of paper around the room. The class can discuss the different reactions.
3. Invite students to form groups of two to present "thumbs up/thumbs down" oral reviews of the book for the class. Remind students that a convincing review not only states an opinion but also provides evidence for that opinion. Retelling parts of the story may help support opinions.
4. Elizabeth George Speare explains why she writes about history in her "Laura Ingalls Wilder Award Acceptance" (*Horn Book*, July-August 1989). She comments, "I do not believe that a historical novel should gloss over the pain and ugliness. But I do believe that the hero with whom a young reader identifies should on the last

continued

Using Latitudes *continued*

page not be left in despair but should still be standing, with the strength to go on to whatever the future may hold." After students have read the novel, help them evaluate how well the ending meets Speare's own criteria for a good historical novel.

Voices from the Novel

1. Before reading the novel, ask students to speculate about who the witch of Blackbird Pond might be. Help them list everything they know about the colonists' belief in witches. After reading the novel, discuss the meaning of the title. You might also discuss whether anyone could be treated today as Hannah was.
2. In small groups, students could list likenesses and differences between Kit's life in colonial Connecticut and their own lives. Then groups could share their information and list questions they'd like to investigate as they read the novel.
3. As students read, encourage them to pick one or two quotes in the book that they find significant. In a short journal entry, students could explain why the passages are significant to them. They could also design a bulletin board display using the quotations they select.
4. After reading, have students write or retell the story from different points of view. Students might use the viewpoints of Judith, Nat, Hannah, Mercy, or one of the elder Woods. Note how the interpretation of the story changes with each point of view.

A Time in History

1. Note the historical events on the timeline that provide the setting for the novel. Ask students what they know about these events. Encourage interested students to find more information in texts or resource books. Also ask students how these events might have involved or affected a sixteen-year-old girl living during this time. Have them support their conclusions.
2. Have students find out more about events on the timeline. They might research the early explorers, Dutch settlements in the New World, or the conflicts between Native Americans and settlers.
3. Suggest that students make a timeline of what was happening in the other colonies and Europe in the late 17th century.
4. Ask students if they think Elizabeth George Speare created a historically accurate picture of Connecticut during the 17th century. Encourage them to explain and support their opinions with historical facts.

The Geographical Picture

1. Before students study the map, remind them of current events that will change maps. (You might suggest that they compare different maps of eastern Europe from 1938-1946.) Ask them what information they would expect to find on an old map. Help them develop criteria for determining whether that information was reliable.

continued

2. Ask students to list all the information they can find from the map. Help them use the information to draw conclusions about life in colonial towns. Remind them that what is missing—for example, hotels and taverns—can be as important as what is shown.
3. Invite students to create a map showing the first settlements in Connecticut.

The Puritans Come to Connecticut/Puritan Beliefs

1. Before reading these selections, introduce or review the word *theocracy*. Ask students if they know of any governments which are theocracies. List as many countries as students can think of. After reading, discuss whether our government can be called a theocracy.
2. As students read one or both of these selections, ask them to list all the Puritan beliefs they find. Have them look for evidence of these beliefs as they read the novel. They can add any new Puritan beliefs they find in the book to their list.
3. Ask students to decide which group of people they know about are most unlike the Puritans. Then ask them to make a 2-column chart contrasting the Puritans with the group they chose. The chart could be expanded by having students list the strengths and weaknesses of each group.
4. Help students compare and contrast the government of early Connecticut with the government of their own state today.

Crime and Punishment Among the Puritans

1. Before reading this selection, ask students to imagine that they are the founders of a new society—perhaps they are the first colonists on Mars. You might ask small groups of students to construct the laws they would need and define punishments for lawbreakers. After reading, students could compare their views about laws to the Puritans. They might also reflect on whether their laws are as close to those of our country as the Puritans' laws were to those of England.
2. After students read the selection, ask them to list all the crimes which are punished. Then analyze which of these crimes are still punishable by law. Discuss why the laws and punishments have changed.
3. In Chapter 16, Speare describes the prank for which Nat was put in the stocks. Ask students how such a prank would be handled today. Help them evaluate which approach would be more effective.
4. You might wish to explore with students some of the Puritan ideas that have become part of the American legal system. Separation of church and state, equal justice for all, and antitrust legislation are found in *The Massachusetts Body of Liberties*, written in 1641.

continued

Colonial Courting Customs

1. Introduce students to the concept of historical context. Remind them that some old customs seem silly. But those customs met people's needs at the time. Help students list the reasons bundling was common.
2. Customs change as times change. Ask students to list other old customs that they know about. Why might these customs have changed or died out? Which of our customs might seem silly in the 21st century?
3. Interested students might interview their grandparents or other senior citizens about courting customs of their youth.
4. Students might choose a character in the novel who is having courtship problems and compose a letter that an advice columnist might write to Kit, William, Judith, Mercy, John, or Nat.

The People of God vs. The Devil

1. Before students read this selection, you might share this quote from Cotton Mather. "The New Englanders are a people of God settled in those, which were once the devil's territories....The devil immediately tried all sorts of methods to overturn this poor plantation." As students read, ask them to look for ways the Puritans believed the devil attacked them. After reading, discuss the devil's "methods" and the ways the Puritans fought back.
2. Discuss with students why the Puritans felt more threatened by witchcraft than other Christians did. Help them analyze what other factors might have encouraged the Puritans to believe in witchcraft.
3. Interested students might explore New England superstitions about the devil.

Education of a Puritan Girl

1. As students read Chapters 4 and 6, ask them to note the chores that Kit is asked to do. After they have read this selection, help students compare what Puritan girls had to know with their chores and lessons today.
2. Invite students to speculate on whether someone studying American education today would notice any difference between the education given to boys and to girls. You might refer interested students to the 1993 AAUCW study which showed that teachers call on boys more often than on girls.
3. Interested students might explore the education given to colonial boys in grammar school or study when higher education became available to girls.

Quakers in America

1. After students have read this selection, help them compare Quaker and Puritan beliefs.
2. Discuss why the Puritans persecuted the Quakers, especially when they had been persecuted themselves. Help students think of other

continued

Using Latitudes *continued*

instances in which one persecuted group persecutes another and discuss why they might do so. You might mention the Crown Heights riots between blacks and Orthodox Jews in Brooklyn.

3. Have students trace Hannah Tupper's life as described in the novel. Then help them compare her life to the treatment of Quakers described in this selection. Discuss whether Speare's portrayal of Hannah was historically accurate.
4. Interested students might investigate how the U.S. military dealt with the pacifism of Quakers who were drafted during the Vietnam War.

Slavery in Barbados

1. Before students read this selection, you might review the concept of balance of trade.
2. After students have read the selection, help them trace the Triangular Trade.
3. Ask students to reread Nat and Kit's conversation about the slave trade in Chapter 2. Then remind them that the first draft of the Declaration of Independence abolished slavery. Help them use information from the novel and these selections to deduce why slavery was not abolished.
4. Interested students might find out more about what brought an end to the Atlantic slave trade. They might also research the colonies of escaped slaves on Barbados or the slave rebellion in 1733.

The Charter Oak/The Connecticut Charter

1. Before reading these selections, ask students to imagine how Americans would react today if someone wanted to take away the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Discuss what the consequences would be if someone did abolish them. Have students predict whether and how Americans would resist.
2. After reading this selection, ask students to make a timeline of the events described.
3. Ask students to compare the story of the Charter Oak to the discussion about the Charter in Chapter 7 of the novel. Which piece do they think tells more about the importance of the Charter? Encourage them to support their opinions.
4. Students might put Uncle Matthew in the "hot seat." Choose someone to assume the character of Uncle Matthew—a student, a guest, or yourself. Then encourage students to ask "Uncle Matthew" questions about the controversy over the Charter. (You might want to have students write down their questions first so that "Uncle Matthew" can research any that are difficult.)
5. Students might compare the Connecticut Charter to the U.S. Constitution or their own state constitution.

continued

Fashion and Frills

1. Have students identify several modern groups who try to show their values by the way they dress (i.e., gangs, businesspeople, rock groups). They might construct a drawing of a typical member of one of the groups, showing the meaning of each significant item of clothing.
2. Remind students of Kit's question in Chapter 12: "Why do [these Puritans] want life to be so solemn?" Invite students to argue in favor of simplicity in dress from a Puritan's viewpoint. Ask them to think of other groups that favor uniformity and simplicity in dress, such as doctors and nurses, private school students, and the military. Do "Puritanical" beliefs influence these styles of clothing?
3. Kit's attitude toward clothes is very different from that of her Puritan cousins. Ask students to predict how Kit would have been treated if she had continued to wear her fancy clothes. Discuss why her Uncle Matthew was so upset by her gift of clothes in Chapter 4.
4. Interested students might explore how wealth influenced what a Puritan was permitted to wear.

Plagues and Remedies

1. Before students read these selections, invite them to share folk remedies they know about.
2. As students read these excerpts, encourage them to list any facts they learn about colonial medicine. After reading, have them compile everything they know about colonial medicine. (Encourage them to refer to their notes from this selection and to Speare's description of treating the "mysterious fever" in Chapter 17.) Finally, help them draw conclusions about medical treatment in colonial times.
3. Discuss how the people of Wethersfield reacted to the fever in Chapter 17. Ask students if that reaction is believable and if a similar reaction would be possible today. Students might consider issues such as fear of AIDS victims like Ryan White.
4. Interested students might research how herbal remedies are being used today. They might also explore how people learned that vaccination could prevent smallpox.

A Quaker Stands Trial

1. Help students analyze the conflicting points of view in this passage. You might have them make a 3-column chart showing Margaret Brewster's actions, her interpretation of her actions, and the Puritans' interpretation of her behavior. Ask students to explain the differences among the views.
2. After reading this excerpt, students might contrast the way the Puritans see Hannah with the way Kit and the narrator view her.
3. Discuss whether Margaret Brewster's visit to the church could be considered civil disobedience. Explore the channels for protesting an unjust law today.
4. Students might re-create Kit's or Margaret Brewster's trial. Afterwards, a student or guest lawyer could point out how much of the "evidence" would be admissible in courts today.

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Appeal from an Accused Witch/20th-Century “Witch Trials”

1. Before students read these selections, you might want to remind them of any current controversies that are being “tried in the headlines” or that might be called “witch hunts.” You might discuss whether the public is deciding people are guilty before all the evidence is in.
2. After students have read McCarthy’s comments, discuss how the “red scare” of the 1950s was like the colonists’ fear of witches. Was the evidence against suspected Communists any stronger than the evidence against Mary Easty and other accused witches? Do students see any differences between the two “witch hunts”?
3. Mary Easty’s petition suggests that the judges were too ready to believe any accusations of witchcraft. Help students identify her solution to the problem and list other ways of combating “witch hunts.”
4. Students might want to debate this proposition: television journalism keeps us safe from “witch hunts” today.

A Puritan Poet

1. Before students read these poems, ask them to name poets or songwriters who represent American values today. After students have read these selections, ask them whether Bradstreet could be considered a representative of Puritan values. Encourage them to defend their opinions.
2. Bradstreet calls her poems “obscure” and “lowly lines.” But they survive more than 300 years after her death. Ask students why they think Bradstreet’s poetry is still read today.
3. Students might try rewriting Bradstreet’s *Meditations* in modern language. They might also try creating their own maxims.

An Indian Captive

1. Help students analyze Mary Rowlandson’s point of view. What is her attitude toward Native Americans? What Puritan values and beliefs are reflected in her writing?
2. Suppose you could interview the Indians who captured Mary Rowlandson—how might their story differ from hers? (You might remind students that she was captured during King Philip’s War, which was a desperate attempt to stop colonial encroachment on native lands.)
3. Students might be interested in knowing about “white Indians,” captives adopted into Native-American families. Benjamin Franklin estimated that over 70% of these captives came to prefer the Native-American way of life. Famous “white Indians” include Mary Jemison and John Tanner.
4. Students might compare Mary Rowlandson’s narrative with Speare’s description in Chapter 20. Ask them to evaluate the historical accuracy of Speare’s treatment of this topic.

continued

The Legend of the New England Wizard

1. Before reading, ask students to describe how most people today think of the “witches” tried at Salem. Then help them analyze the viewpoint of the ballad. Invite them to think of other situations which are viewed very differently by the people of the time and later historians. Examples that students might consider include past and present views of the slave trade, the Vietnam War, and the Holocaust.
2. Students might look for other music of the period, such as hymns or ballads. As they share the music, students might discuss what the song(s) show about the Puritans. The riddling ballad “The Devil’s Nine Questions” might be of special interest.
3. Interested students might want to compare Giles Corey to Corliss Lamont, who was indicted after refusing to reply to his accusers at one of Senator McCarthy’s loyalty hearings.

Voices from Other Works

1. With students, cluster or map similar themes or conflicts in the quotes, such as the cost of being different or the power of false accusations.
2. Encourage students to identify and write about the connections they see between *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* and the works quoted.
3. Invite students to read one of the books quoted and share their reactions with the class.
4. Discuss modern issues that are similar to those in the book. Topics might include religious freedom, respect for different cultures, and victims of prejudice and persecution.

Student Projects

The suggestions below will help you extend your learning about pre-revolutionary America. The categories give choices for researching, writing, speaking, and visual activities. You are also encouraged to design your own project.

The Historian's Study

1. If possible, find out when and how some of your ancestors came to America—why did they come, where did they settle, what did they do when they got here?
2. Investigate one of the following topics related to slavery.
 - slaves in New England
 - free blacks in New England
 - New England's role in ending the slave trade
 - New England's opposition to slavery
3. Find out about attempts to repair the damage done by the Salem witch trials. You might research the apologies made by Judge Samuel Sewall, the jury, and the state of Massachusetts.
4. Research the early history of Wethersfield. You might research the Hartford controversy, the Wethersfield Massacre, or the four people tried for witchcraft in the village. Some information is available from the Wethersfield Historical Society, 150 Main St., Wethersfield, CT 06109. (The Society also has a slide program on *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, available for viewing within the state.)
5. Study some important early dissenters who left the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
 - Thomas Hooker
 - Anne Hutchinson
 - Mary Dyer
 - Roger Williams
6. Find out more about the Native Americans who lived in Connecticut when the settlers came. You might research the Matabesecs, Sequins, Nipmuc, Pequot, or Wampanoag.
7. Find and share the story of a “white Indian.” White Indians were captives who were adopted into Native-American families. Many, like Mary Jemison and John Tanner, preferred the Native-American way of life.
8. Research Dutch colonization in the New World.
9. Make one or several timelines showing what was happening in the other colonies during the 17th century. You might also make a timeline showing how events in England influenced the events in the novel.

continued

Student Projects *continued*

10. Elizabeth George Speare found material for this novel in the Wethersfield archives. Research the history of your community. Look for early records, newspapers, diaries, and photos. You may also be able to interview local history experts. Then share your discoveries with your class. You might make a scrapbook, prepare a display for your library, or invite a speaker to talk about local history.

The Artist's Studio

1. Make a collage showing Kit's two worlds—Barbados and Connecticut.
2. Show the way Puritan men, women, and children dressed. You might draw or make a Puritan costume.
3. Create an image that captures the peace Kit found in the meadow.
4. Design a cover for a new edition of *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*.
5. Create a family album for your favorite character from the novel, either with pictures from magazines or your own illustrations. Include captions for the pictures.
6. Pretend you are a courtroom artist for a national news organization. Illustrate Kit's trial.
7. Draw or make a model of one of Nat's ships.
8. Make a diagram showing the changing relationships between the young couples in the novel.
9. Map Kit's voyage from Barbados.
10. Create a work based on designs used by American Indians in Connecticut.

The Writer's Workshop

1. Create a cookbook of colonial recipes. Besides foods, you might include directions for making soap and medicines.
2. Suppose that *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* has one more chapter. What do you think will happen to the main characters? What will their lives be like?
3. Imagine that you are a Puritan colonist in Connecticut writing to a friend in England. Describe your life and give your friend advice about whether or not to come to America.
4. Many New England legends, like "The Devil and Daniel Webster," tell of making a bargain with the devil. Sometimes the bargain is fulfilled, but the devil doesn't always get his due. Write a story showing the dangers of making a bargain with the devil.
5. Write a poem based on one of your favorite passages from the novel.
6. Write an advertisement to encourage new colonists to come to Connecticut from England.
7. Describe the coming of the settlers from an American Indian's point of view.
8. Rewrite Kit's trial in Chapter 19 as a newspaper story.
9. Write an editorial urging people to be reasonable about a "witch hunt"—the Salem witch trials, the McCarthy hearings, or a contemporary issue.

continued

10. "About the Author" lists the questions Speare asks herself as she begins to write. Pick a time in history. Then write a short story that responds to Speare's questions.

The Speaker's Platform

1. Imagine you are a colonist at the meeting with Andros. Defend Connecticut's right to its charter and the powers it gives. Explain how a continuation of the terms of the charter will benefit both England and the colonies.
2. Choose a scene from the novel and present it as a Readers' Theater.
3. Give a speech defending Kit at her trial.
4. Find a legend from one of the Indian peoples native to Connecticut. Retell the legend for your class.
5. Make a collection of home remedies by interviewing family members and others who know about folk medicine.
6. Prepare a newscast of important events in the American colonies in the 17th century. You might present your news program as a panel or videotape.
7. Debate the following proposition: Each individual should have complete freedom of expression. You might consider whether the Puritans would have been right to discourage Hannah's religion if it had really included hurting children.
8. Interview a Congregationalist minister or someone knowledgeable about government or religion to find out what Puritan beliefs and values are influencing Americans today.
9. Develop a multimedia presentation about a topic related to this novel. You might design your project so that other classes could use it to learn about your topic.

**Sample selections from
The Witch of Blackbird Pond LATITUDES**

About the Novel

About the Author

Story Synopsis

Critics' Comments

Voices from the Novel

Glossary

About the Period

A Time in History

The Geographical Picture

The Puritans Come to Connecticut

Puritan Beliefs

Crime and Punishment Among the Puritans

The People of God vs. the Devil

Education of a Puritan Girl

Quakers in America

Slavery in Barbados

Primary Sources

The Connecticut Charter

Plagues and Remedies

Fashion and Frills

A Quaker Stands Trial

Appeal From an Accused Witch

Comparative Works

20th-Century "Witch Trials"

A Puritan Poet

An Indian Captive

Suggested Reading and Viewing