

# Example by StudyDriver

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## The Period of Salem Witchcraft Trials Example

Before the start of the American legal system, allegations were the precedent for right and wrong. In the late 1600's the Puritans of New England were figuring out how to civilly resolve disputes between villagers. The Puritans had a strong belief in the devil and witchcraft, creating an atmosphere of fear and suspicion. Justice was not given to those accused of witchcraft, instead anyone displaying strange behavior was presumed as guilty. The Salem Witchcraft Trials was a substantial period in history because it illustrated the dangers of superstitions and prejudiced assumptions, which led to the execution of innocent people.

There are many events that led up to the Salem Witch Trials. In 1233, when witchcraft was not familiar to anybody, Pope Gregory formed the medieval interrogation to bring justice against the growing heresy (Linder, 2009) to arrest, try, convict and execute heretics. Pope Gregory's inquisition carried on to the point where he insisted on torturing the heretics during trial, which came to a stop in 1258 when Pope Alexander IV forced their inquisition to confine their investigations to just cases of heresy without torture. The Church allowed the inquisition to investigate Witchcraft, which lead to attempting to prove that witches are heretics (Robinson, 2001). Years later, in 1347, the mysterious Bubonic Plague also known as Black Death, struck in Europe killing over twenty million

people. It began with a crowd of townspeople welcoming home the ships full of sailors returning from the Black Sea, although the sailors inside ships were not quite the same. Most of the sailors aboard returned dead and the ones that remained were near death and covered in large black boils on every inch of their body.

Little did they know that this strange disease was contagious. By the time they figured it out, the disease was already spread among the citizens, and it was too late. No one could ever figure out what had happened to the sailors when they were out at sea, the people then got lost under the misapprehension that this incident was curse from the dark acts of witchcraft. This point in time demonstrated how ignorance could lead to superstition. Pope Innocent VII officially declared witches were real in 1484. Later, in 1530, King Henry of England separated his nation from Roman Catholicism, which resulted in creating the church of England because he did not believe in witches (Linder, 2009). English settlers who strongly believed in witchcraft landed in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. A couple years later, in 1630, the settlers called themselves Puritans, and began to settle in Salem Village, Massachusetts (Linder, 2009).

The era of the Salem Witch Trials held in the colony of Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 was a dark time and had devastating historical implications. The Salem Witch Trials were a series of witchcraft cases brought before local magistrates to declare innocence or guilt. There were one-hundred-forty-one people imprisoned, nineteen people were executed and two more died from causes directly related to the investigations. The trials in Salem, Massachusetts accounted for one quarter of all the people executed for witchcraft in New England (Callis, 2005).

The trials began on February 1st in 1692 when three female suspects were brought before local magistrates accused of the crime of witchcraft. On March 1st later that year, they were interrogated for several days. When it all ended in May of 1693, the remaining victims were released from jail (Blumberg, 2007).

Even though there were many people and families that were affected by the Trials that lived in Salem, it all began with just three young girls. First, the minister Samuel Paris nine-year-old daughter, Elizabeth Betty Paris. The second young accuser was Abigail Williams, who was eleven years old and the niece of Samuel Paris. The third girl was Ann Putnam, who was also eleven years old. All of these girls began to have fits, including uncontrollable

outbursts of screaming, shouting and entering into trances which the local doctor, William Griggs, diagnosed as bewitchment on the girls. Later, more girls in the village started having these same symptoms; acting odd and accusing more people of witchcraft. Some of these girls names were Mercy Lewis, Elizabeth Hubbard, Mary Walcott and Mary Warren (history.com, 2011). There were many innocent people who were accused of being of a witch and some of them were even executed for it.

Tituba was the first to be accused; she was a former slave who now worked for Samuel Parris. Samuel Paris bought her when he was no longer married so that she could help maintain the Parris household on a day-to-day basis. Tituba had one child and was married to John Indian who also worked for Paris. The Paris family moved to Salem Village around 1689 and Parris daughter, Betty, began having strange fits and symptoms. Betty later participated in the making of a witch cake. A witch cake was a mixture of rye and Betty's urine, which was baked and fed to their dog in the belief that Betty's afflicter would be revealed. Later, when her father found out about the creation of the cake, he was enraged. But shortly after the girls named Tituba as a witch and Parris beat Tituba until she confessed. Therefore, Tituba was the first witch to confess in Salem. In her confession, she apologized to Betty and told her how much she loved and cared about her. Because of Titubar's confession, instead of executing her right away, Tituba helped the girls with key evidence against accused witches she named Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. Later, Tituba and her husband, John, spent 13 months in jail, until an unknown person spent 7 pounds for Tituba and her husband to be released and come to work for him. Historians today still do not have any further information on where they went (Linder, 2009).

Another ordinary innocent citizen who was accused of being a witch is Bridget Bishop. Bridget Bishop was the first person in Salem to be accused and hanged for being a witch. Bridget Bishop has been just like any other older woman that loved to gossip, but when it came to witchcraft she protested I have no familiarity with the devil (National Geographic, 2011) which the court still neglected to believe, and she then was hung (National Geographic, 2011).

Sarah Good was the next accused citizen. Sarah was one of the first three women that were ever accused of witchcraft in Salem. She was questioned on February of 1692. When Sarah protested to the judges, she was found innocent. But, when they questioned her young daughter, her timid answers made the judges change their mind and pronounced Sarah as guilty. Sarah was pregnant at the time of her trials, so they waited to execute her after she had given birth. Sadly, the infant died in her womb while Sarah was in prison. So, in July of 1692, Sarah herself was hanged. Sarah's final words were if you take my life away, God will give you blood to drink (National Geographic, 2011).

These events are an excellent example of how false information can travel quickly, pollute the minds of the masses, and be very harmful to society as a whole. Had superstition not been so prevalent in this time, it is hard to say whether or not these innocent women would have been treated so heinously.

## References

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