

Exploring the Salem witch trials

Use the internet and library books to research and answer the following questions. Parliament.uk has some additional background information on Witchcraft which you may find useful.

1. What methods were used to check if somebody was a witch? What problems can you see with these methods?
2. The term 'witchcraft' was used to excuse what actions? By whom? Think about the term 'witch-hunt' and its modern connotations. With a partner, see if you can think of any recent media victims of a 'witch-hunt'. Can you explain the origins of the word more clearly now?
3. Who were the Puritans and what did they believe in? Can you see anything problematic with regard to their teachings and ideology?
4. What evidence in the Charlestown trial of Margaret Jones 'proved' she was a witch? What did Margaret do to arouse suspicion?
5. What was Salem, and its community, like?
6. Why did people believe that women turned to witchcraft?
7. What can you find out about The Salem Witch Trials? (key events, key people, behaviours, etc.). Jot down some notes for future reference.
8. Why were Sarah Osburne and Sarah Good accused of witchcraft? What are the problems with these accusations?
9. What is a 'spectre' and what was the importance of them in witchcraft trials?
10. What happened if you spoke out to defend a woman accused of witchcraft?
11. What were some of the problems with the trials?
12. Why do you think accusing people of witchcraft took over the community and were so widely believed?