

Salem Witch Trials Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:
What caused the Salem Witch Crisis of 1692?

Materials:

- Copies of Salem Summary Information
- Copies of Salem Evidence A, B, C, D
- Copies of Salem Graphic Organizer

Plan of Instruction:

1. Introduction: Ask students what they know about the Salem Witch trials. Put student answers on board.
2. Hand out Salem Summary information and have a student read it out loud.

Whole class discussion:

- Why do you think the people of Salem believed the girls' accusations of witchcraft?
 - Even if the people of Salem truly believed in witchcraft, why would there be so many accusations all at once, all of a sudden?
3. TRANSITION: We're going to look at some pieces of evidence that might help us answer the question: *What caused the Salem witch crisis of 1692?*
 4. Hand out Salem Evidence A, B, C, D, and Graphic Organizer. Have students complete ONLY THE TOP CHART FOR EVIDENCE A & B in pairs.
 5. Debrief:
 - What type of document is Evidence A?
 - What type of document is Evidence B?
 - Based on these two documents, why did the people of Salem believe the girls' testimony?
 6. Introduce Evidence C & D: *Explain that these two pieces of evidence tell us a little more about the HISTORICAL CONTEXT—in other words, what was happening in Salem at this time.* Have students complete the graphic organizer in pairs.
 7. Debrief:
 - Discuss Evidence C & D:

- What else was happening in 1692?
- Why might economic concerns have contributed to the witch crisis?
- How does the information in Documents C & D change your view of what caused the Salem witchcraft crisis?
- Ask students to share their paragraphs.

Citations:

Testimony of Abigail Hobbs, April 19, 1692, in *Verbatim Transcripts of the Legal Documents of the Salem Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692*, ed. Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum. <http://testetext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-salemname?specfile=/texts/english/salem/public/salem.o2w&act=text&offset=3207915&extreg=div3&query=hobabi>

Cotton Mather, "Memorable Providences relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions," from *A Discourse on Witchcraft*, (Boston, 1689), pp. 4-9. <http://books.google.com/books?pg=RA2-PA2&lpg=RA2-PA2&dq=mather+%22discourse+on+witchcraft%22&sig=rwWdjDW94kUMgnTViV3JCVGZbjo&ei=dGV4SrDGHYWotgP0y9DwBA&ct=result&id=7I9hAAAAMAAJ&ots=4kzbg3HNPb&output=text>

Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum. *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974.