



Fear is the quicksand of humanity. In 1692, mass hysteria led to the hanging of nineteen innocent people in Salem. Join historians as they piece together what really happened.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Grades 9 - 12

United States History, Language Arts - Literature (The Crucible by Arthur Miller)

United States History – Standard 4. Understand how political, religious, and social institutions emerged in the English colonies

- Understand how gender, property ownership, religion, and legal status affected political rights (e.g., that women were not allowed to vote even if they held property and met religious requirements)
- Understand characteristics of the social structure of colonial America (e.g., the property rights of single, married, and widowed women; public education in the New England colonies and how it differed from the southern colonies, different patterns of family life; different ideals among diverse religious groups, social classes, and cultures; different roles and status of men and women)
- Understand the similarities and differences in colonial concepts of community (e.g., Puritan's covenant community, Chesapeake colonial emphasis on individualism)

Language Arts - Standard 6. Use skills and strategies to read a variety of literary texts

- Analyze the use of complex elements of plot in specific literary works (e.g., time frame, cause-and-effect relationships, conflicts, resolution)
- Understand relationships between literature and its historical period, culture, and society (e.g., influence of historical context on form, style, and point of view; influence of literature on political events; social influences on author's description of characters, plot, and setting; how writer's represent and reveal their cultures and traditions)
- Make connections between his or her own life and the characters, events, motives, and causes of conflict in texts

Resource - [McREL Content Knowledge – Standards & Benchmarks](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ☞ *In Europe, during the 16th & 17th centuries, 50,000 – 80,000 people were accused and killed for being witches. 80% of them were women. Why? How did religion play a part in the “witch hunts”?*
- ☞ *Explain how the “witch hunts” began in Salem, Massachusetts. How were they different than the “witch hunts” in Europe?*
- ☞ *Describe a person who fit the description of a “typical” witch?*
- ☞ *In Salem, the accused were to be tried by a jury of their peers. Did it work out that way?*

- 🗨️ Explain the comment by one of the accused, “I didn’t know I was a witch, but I must be because these important people say I am”. Can you think of an example of this from your own life?
 - 🗨️ For the accused the options were to confess to witchcraft and live, or deny it and likely be publicly executed. Why didn’t more of these people confess and save their own lives? What were the religious implications? What did it mean for your salvation if you confessed?
 - 🗨️ How did the Salem witch hunts finally come to an end?
 - 🗨️ Many years after the trials, the accusers regretted what they did. One comments, “The devil made me do it”. Is this an acceptable excuse? Have you ever heard someone use an excuse like this? Should it excuse people from their actions?
 - 🗨️ Arthur Miller wrote The Crucible during the McCarthy trials involving Americans accused of communist activities in the 1950s. What point was he trying to make?
 - 🗨️ What do the words: Salem, Shalom, and Salaam, have in common?
 - 🗨️ What are the lessons learned from the tragedy of the Salem witch hunts?
 - 🗨️ Do we have any “witch hunts” going on today?
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ACTIVITY

Confess or Die

It is 1692 and you are accused of witchcraft. Write two letters. One letter is to your accusers explaining your guilty or not guilty plea. The other letter is to your family explaining your choice.