



# Digital History

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## Witchcraft in Salem

### ★ Interpreting Primary Sources

#### Reading 1:

It pleased God in the year of our Lord 1692 to visit the people at a place called Salem Village in New England, with a very sore and grievous affliction, in which they had reason to believe, that the sovereign and holy God was pleased to permit Satan and his instruments to affright and afflict these poor mortals in such an astonishing and unusual manner.

Now, I having for some time before, attended the work of the ministry in that village, the report of those great afflictions came quickly to my notice....My concern was augmented when it was reported, at an examination of a person suspected for witchcraft, that my wife and daughter, who died three years before, were sent out of the world under the malicious operations of the eternal powers....

1. One or two of the first that were afflicted, complaining of unusual illness....
2. They were oftentimes very stupid in their fits, and could neither hear nor understand....
5. They affirmed that they saw the ghosts of several departed persons....
6. Persecution by the dragons of Hell, the persons afflicted were harassed at such a dreadful rate, to write their names in a devil book....
8. Sundry pins have been taken out of the wrists and arms of the afflicted; and one in time of examination of a suspected person, had a pin run through both her upper and lower lip when she was called upon to speak....
13. Sometimes in their fits, they have had their tongues drawn out of their mouths to a fearful length, their heads turned very much over their shoulders; and had their arms and legs etc. wrested, as if they were quite dislocated, the blood hath gushed plentifully out of their mouths, for a considerable time together....

Deodat Lawson, *Christ's Fidelity the only Shield against Satan's Malignity*, 1704

#### Reading 2:

The examination of Sarah Good before the worshipful Assts John Harthorn, Jonathan Curran

(1) Sarah Good, who with her husband had been very familiarly with

(H) Saran Good what evil spirit have you ramiiarity with?  
 (G) None.  
 (H) Have you made no contract with the devil?  
 Good answered no.  
 (H) Why do you hurt these children?  
 (G) I do not hurt them. I scorn it.  
 (H) Who do you employ then to do it?  
 (G) I employ no body  
 (H) What creature do you employ then?  
 (G) no creature but I am falsely accused....  
 (H) desired the [afflicted] children all of them to look upon her and see if this were the person that had hurt them and so they all did look upon her, and said this was one of the persons that did torment them-- presently they were all tormented.  
 (H) Sarah Good do you not see now what you have done, why do you not tell us the truth, why do you thus torment these poor children?  
 (G) I do not torment them....  
 (H) how came they thus tormented?  
 (G) what do I know you bring others here and now you charge me with it....  
 (H) who was it then that tormented the children?  
 (G) it was [Sarah] Osborne.  
 (H) What is it you say when you go muttering away from persons houses?  
 (G) if I must tell I will tell.  
 (H) do tell us then  
 (G) if I must tell, I will tell it, it is the commandments. I may say my commandments I hope....

Her answers were in a very wicked spiteful manner. Reflecting and retorting against the authority with base and abusive words and many lies she was taken in it was here said that her husband had said that he was afraid that she either was a witch or could be one very quickly.

March 1, 1691-2

### ★ Questions To Think About

- 1. Did Puritans really believe in witchcraft and the supernatural?**
- 2. Why did residents of Salem believe that a witchcraft epidemic was taking place?**
- 3. Why do you think most accused witches were women?**

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