

Some facts about the Salem witch trials
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Over 150 people (78% women) were accused of witchcraft in Salem, Massachusetts, 1692.

19 people were hanged (14 women and 5 men), and one man was pressed to death because he would not say whether he was guilty or innocent.

Nobody was burned at Salem, but they did burn “witches” in Europe.

The Salem witchcraft crisis happened in Puritan New England. All of the people who lived there were very religious Christians. They were called Puritans, and they lived in a “world of wonders.” Earthquakes, comets, floods, thunderstorms, sickness: everything could be explained by the mysterious workings of either God or the devil.

A witch was defined as a person who signed the devil’s book, thus giving the devil permission to use her shape to go around harming other people.

Many of the accusers were young girls, but there were some adults who accused others of witchcraft as well.

All kinds of evidence was used against suspected witches to prove they were evil and on the devil’s side. They were accused of harming animals, making people sick, and even pinching people as they slept. Evidence against accused women included charges of unladylike behavior, like yelling at their husbands in public.

The court also accepted spectral evidence. Accusers claimed to see the specters (ghosts) of accused witches, and they said the specters were hurting them. Obviously, this kind of evidence was hard to disprove because nobody else ever saw the specters.

Surprisingly, all of the women who confessed to witchcraft in Salem lived, and all of the women who denied the witchcraft charges were hanged.

There were no actual witches in Salem, Massachusetts. In other words, no women ever signed the devil’s book and had their shapes going around harming other people. Even the women who confessed to the crime were innocent.