The Salem Witch Trials
Video Viewing Guide

Name: [Key]

1. What was The Inquisition? How did this movement help foster witch hunts during the Middle Ages?
   A: A time period (14th C - 16th C) of 300 years when the Roman Catholic Church worked to expose and punish heresy.
   B: Puritans had roots in Catholicism as witchcraft is heresy.

2. Witch Hunts were sometimes more than an absolute belief that someone practiced witchcraft. How have witch hunts been used as tools to remove an enemy or for economic or political gain?

3. In order to convict someone of witchcraft, you first had to prove that he or she was a witch. What were some of the methods used to condemn witches?
   - Looking for the witches mark (test).
   - Piercing the mark checking for blood + pain. No pain or blood = witch
   - "Swimming a witch" - witches float (water being purer won't accept witch
   - Torture to elicit a confession.

4. Witchcraft hysteria gripped Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. Why was Salem particularly vulnerable to witch hunts?
   - Rigid Puritan beliefs - a theocracy was established; no separation of Church and state
   - Multiple power imbalances; charter revoked
   - Coast to forest 6 miles Geographic location (fear of forest)
   - Unenlightened courtroom practices. Satan is real, belief in FATE

5. The town of Salem, like Boston, strove to be an example of Puritan piety and order. How might the strict codes of the Puritan religion have fostered anxiety in the community?

   These strict codes became endless striving for purity with uncertain rewards. The uncertainty caused anxiety. Puritans believed in FATE. They were either destined to be the Elect or the Damned. This lack of control produced anxiety.
6. What is misogyny? How did it affect the witch hunts?

Misogyny is contempt for women. Puritans were misogynist. They believed women should be ABOVE ALL SUBMISSIVE. Women had to be silent, docile helpmates and mothers. Women were also seen as naturally lustful which would lead them toward the Devil. Also, women could not be ministers, so they were again more likely to follow.

7. The young women accused their neighbors on the grounds of spectral evidence. What was this spectral evidence? Why were specters so dangerous to use as evidence?

Spectral Evidence: fainting, chills, feeling pin pricks, seeing specters (visions) of beasts.

Specters were only evident to those making accusations. They were dangerous because they could not be proven. (Hearsay & histrionics but were accepted as fact.)

8. Tituba, the slave who entertained the young girls with stories of her childhood and voodoo, confessed to witchcraft. Why?

- It was easier for her to confess then repent than to deny accusations and be "tested."

- She knew that she (and Sarah Good) were easy targets and felt powerless to fight it.

9. Why did these young girls accuse so many people of witchcraft?

These young girls gained instant power when they accused someone. As women, as "children", as servants they were virtually powerless in Puritan society. The act of accusing was too tempting for them to resist.

10. Discuss the impact of the Salem Witch Trials on the American legal system.

- Spectral evidence was no longer allowed.
- Accused are now innocent until proven guilty.

Also in 1711, 22 verdicts of guilty were overturned; the rest happened in 1757.