

# History of salem witch trials

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What Caused the Salem Witch Trial Hysteria? 1692 was a year packed with excitement and terror for the citizens of Salem, Massachusetts. Belief and accusations of people being witches/warlocks under the possession of the Devil swept across the town and wreaked havoc among its settlers. There are many possible ways to justify this madness. However, the 3 most valid and evidential reasons are: attention-seeking, jealousy (of one another and the amount of land owned), and lack of acceptance towards each other's physical flaws and behaviors.

Attention-seeking is bound to become an issue in a town such as Salem, merely due to the daily, mundane activities one must pursue in order to live properly. Document G states, " It was perhaps their original design to gratify a love of notoriety or of mischief by creating... excitement in their neighborhood. " This quote is relating to the behaviors that people were displaying which made them a suspect.

Document H revolves around the idea that maybe these young girls were acting out and faking the " convulsive attacks" that were believed to be evidence in order to give the public what they expected, or wanted. These young girls created an issue much larger than they'd planned to. They most likely were just trying to make themselves known and didn't understand the impact that their actions would have on the vulnerable minds of their town. Although attention-seeking seems to play the most obvious role in the hysteria, jealousy was also a major contributor.

Land ownership was a big deal in this time period (15th century), and the division between the farmers' and the residents' amount of property became a cause for vengeance (Document J). Documents K & L are perfect examples

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of people feeling the need for revenge. The Putnams must have believed that Rebecca Nurse did them terribly wrong when her family took over some of their land, so (as one of the wealthiest families in Salem); they used their word against hers by accusing her to be witch.

They probably wouldn't have done so if they did not genuinely believe she had something more than they had or she did something to personally attack them. This kind of resentment towards one another must've become a common issue in Salem, for it seems that many accusations came from people being jealous of each other. Along with jealousy, unacceptance and judgment of people's features and behaviors became a leading cause for someone to be called a witch. Document E uses statistics to show that a majority of the accused were middle-aged, married women.

This document's information alone gives clues related to sexism and discrimination of age and marital status. In Document M, Linda Capora el suggests that Ergotism, an illness caused by a parasitic fungus called "ergot," caused people to hallucinate, become delirious, and go through manic episodes. Perhaps these symptoms were misjudged to be evidence that someone was possessed. Or perhaps the people who ate and retracted the sickness from the food contaminated with ergot were the accusers, and they simply weren't in their "right mind. In any event, there was a massive amount of judgment and lack of acceptance to one another, and this played a key role in the chaos of the Witch Trials. Accusations of witchcraft and possession put a scare and a drive to defeat into the citizens of Salem, Massachusetts that year. 20 people were killed, and more than 100 people were accused. There's a multitude of different explanations as to why. All in

all, though, the whole thing could have been avoided if it weren't for people's desire for attention, envy, and judgmental mindsets.