

Hysteria and fear of the salem witch trials assignment

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Bianca Pena Dr. Coers English 1302. 040 Research Paper: Hysteria and Fear during the Salem Witch Trials The Salem Witch Trials was a mass hysteria of executions and accusations. The fear was caused by the hysteria of women being bewitched and bewitching others. This is such a controversial event, and it's hardly applicable to prove if the events leading to the Witch Trials were accurate. So I ask, " What were the causes of the Salem Witch Trials, and the events leading up to the causes? Although the question is simply asked and slightly vague, the answer concluded is definitely not an easy answer due to the perspectives and numerous events that led up to the trials. There were really no particular causes for the witch trials, but there were events that led to them such as "...politics, religion, family feuds, economics, and the imaginations and fears of the people..." (Sutter). Before the witch trials, there were political worries involving the residents of Salem and the new minister Reverend Samuel Parris.

The residents were outraged that their tax dollars went to Reverend Parris's unusually special privileged income and extra accommodations that ministers do not usually get. All this was arranged by the Putnam family, who was a leading figure family in Salem since most its members made up the population, who wanted power and "...hoped to solidify a separation from Salem town..." (Sutter). After the politics there were problems with the cold winter days. It was extremely cold for a time and what can the residents of Salem do except stay in their home and try to keep warm.

Rev. Parris had a small family. He was married, had a 9 yr old daughter, Betty, a 12 year old niece, Abigail Williams and a slave. Tituba the slave had a history of being able to tell fortunes. She was also from the town of <https://assignbuster.com/hysteria-and-fear-of-the-salem-witch-trials-assignment/>

Barbados, which is a superstitious town and is known for unusual happenings. During these cold days, Tituba would entertain the girls by “telling” them their fortunes and “...stories of witchcraft, demons, and mystic animals...” (Sutter). Following these main two controversies were of course the witch trials.

It was said that from the political issues of the special accommodations and higher income given to the minister caused the residents to want revenge thus starting the accusations of the witch trials. Also, to makes matters worse, with the newly known knowledge of witchcraft and demons exposed to the girls from Tituba, caused excitement for them and “play acting” this new knowledge was also know to possibly spark the Salem Witch Trials. Although no evidence has proved that these were the causes of the witch trials, evidence has proved that these were the main events that prequel to the trials.

Today, theories are still being tested and experimented to provide further information on the causes. In the article called Witch Madness, there is an explanation tested by a Californian graduate student who provides information that “... a fungus called ergot triggered the witch hunt” (Witch Madness). From her research on the fungus, “ergot produces a highly poisonous mold that thrives in certain weather conditions??? particularly when a cold winter is followed by a wet, warm summer, as was the case in Salem in 1692.

Rye, the main crop grown in Salem at the time, is particularly susceptible to ergot disease. If a person eats bread made from ergot-infected rye flower,

<https://assignbuster.com/hysteria-and-fear-of-the-salem-witch-trials-assignment/>

the result can be hallucinations, loss of bodily control, delusions, and even death" (Witch Madness). It makes perfectly good sense that if this fungus did exist during the 1692 period of Salem, that this would make a good cause for the hysteria in these girls and the hallucinations of seeing witches and witchcraft. Puritans believed witches made a pact with the devil to be given special powers and that they worked in league with him to sow evil" (Stefko). At this time the King of England was in charge of America, ambassadors sent charters and signed documents to ensure that we were living the same lifestyle as they were. Puritans were sent from England to be assimilated into the New England territory and to bring their beliefs. Puritans settled in Salem during the witch trials, they followed the bible strictly including what it said about witches.

In Exodus 22: 18, it is said that " Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Bible). They took this verse into strict consideration which is why there was the cause of all the executions and hangings on the accused. Of course some people don't believe that is the reason for the executions. Residents were fearful of the possibility of witches existing in Salem, the only way to rid their fear were to execute the accused so that there may be no possibility of witches existing in Salem.

During one of the first trials of the accused, Rebecca Nurse, the jury found her not guilty. When she was first suspected, she was believed to have said, " I am innocent as the child unborn, but surely, what sin hath God found out in me unrepented of that He should lay such an affliction on me in my old age" (Rebecca Nurse). She was known for her kindness and un-witchlike

character. As the Putnam family being a leading figure, they testified her for murdering 6 children and a women's husband by letting the hogs getting into their garden and trampling him.

Abigail and her gang went into convulsions making the audience believe that Rebecca was a witch and forcing the convulsions on the girls. The jury changed their verdict into guilty and she was eventually hanged. This trial just shows and proves the hysteria that emerged from witch trials. Even though the causes reluctantly have no evidence that witchcraft did exist, there are many theories and hypothesis that are tested to help tie in and piece together the results of the witch trials.

The causes range from the before math of the trials of the politic situations and the cold weather causing the ergot to the religious views and the hysteria sucked in the girls. Like my thesis, the question might seem easily understandable, but the answer is truly a hard answer that scholars might never find the answers to. We might just have to live with theories and hypothesis to form our own answer to what have happened and the causes.

Works Cited King James Version. The Holy Bible Exodus 22: 18: Wheaton Tyndale