

PREVIEWING

NONFICTION

The Examination of Sarah Good

Salem Court Documents, 1692

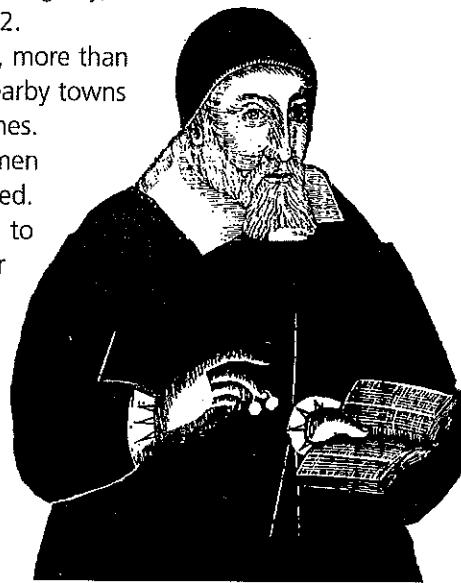
PERSONAL CONNECTION

Have you ever been accused of doing something that you didn't do, or do you know of someone else who was falsely accused? If so, how did you feel about the accusation? Why do you think it was made? Was it ever disproved? With your classmates, discuss the causes and effects of false accusations.

HISTORICAL CONNECTION

In 1692, the Massachusetts Bay Colony settlement of Salem was gripped by panic after a group of adolescent girls suffered mysterious symptoms such as convulsive fits, hallucinations, loss of appetite, and the temporary loss of hearing, sight, and speech. Diagnosed as being victims of witchcraft, the girls denounced certain townspeople for this crime, including a woman named Sarah Good. The selection you will read consists of excerpts from the court records of Sarah Good's preliminary examination on March 1, 1692, at the Salem meeting house. Good was later jailed, tried in court, and found guilty; she was hanged on July 19, 1692.

Between 1692 and 1693, more than 400 people in Salem and nearby towns were accused of being witches. Ultimately, 19 men and women were found guilty and hanged. When Puritan leaders began to doubt the accusers and their evidence, the Salem witch trials finally ended. Over the next 20 years, most of those falsely accused were pardoned and awarded financial compensation.



Richard Mather, Puritan minister.
The Granger Collection, New York.

READING CONNECTION

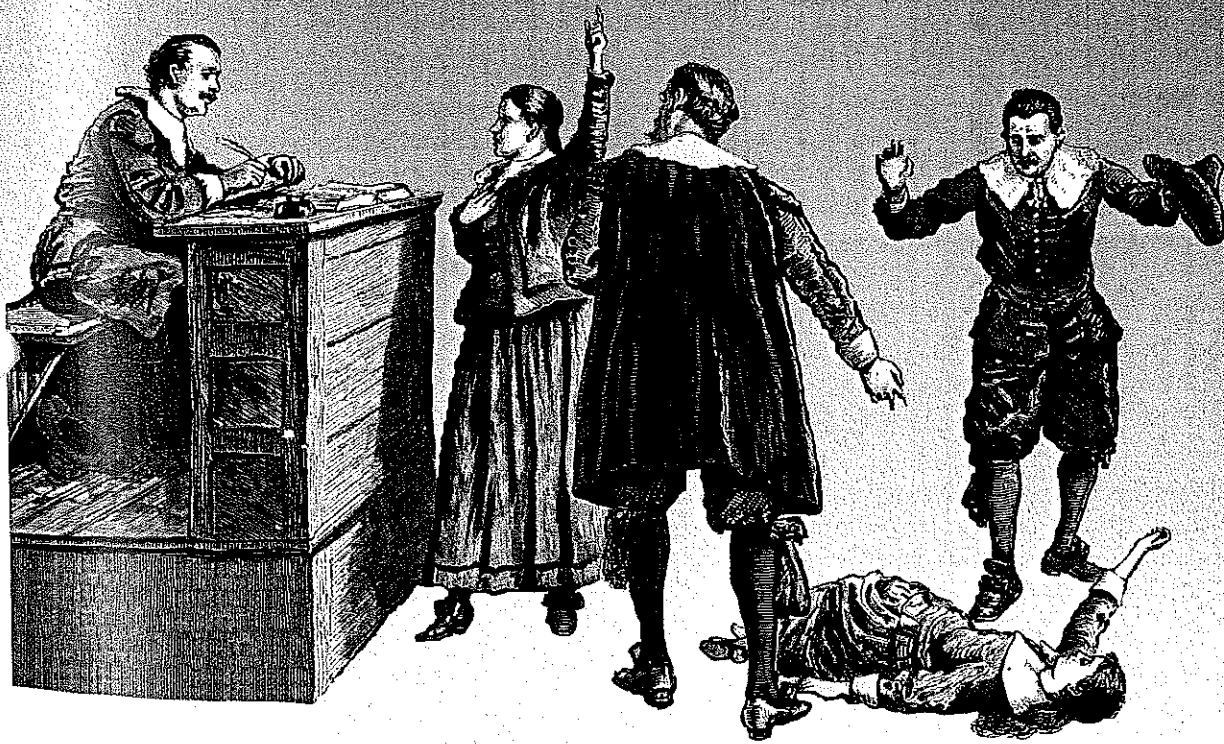
Reading Court Documents Court documents are a written record of what is said in a courtroom during a trial. Often these documents are difficult to read, but don't get bogged down in the formal terms they contain—*abovesaid*, *viz.*, and the like. When reading the summary of Sarah Good's examination, just try to answer this question for each paragraph: Who did what? Then compare the summary with the transcript of the examination, which provides the actual questions and answers, along with some interpretive comments by a court official.

Also, feel free to make inferences. Imagine what tone of voice people spoke in and what the motives for their remarks or actions were. Form your own judgments about the courtroom events.



The EXAMINATION of SARAH GOOD

SALEM COURT DOCUMENTS, 1692



SUMMARY

SALEM VILLAGE, MARCH THE 1ST, 1691-92.

Sarah Good, the wife of William Good of Salem Village, Laborer. Brought before us by George Locker, Constable in Salem, to Answer, Joseph Hutchinson, Thomas Putnam, etc., of Salem Village, yeomen¹ (Complainants² on behalf of their Majesties) against said Sarah Good for

Suspicion of witchcraft by her Committed and thereby much Injury done to the Bodies of Elizabeth Parris, Abigail Williams, Ann Putnam, and Elizabeth Hubbard, all of Salem Village aforesaid according to their Complainants as per warrants.

1. yeomen (yō'mən): farmers who cultivate their own land.
2. complainants (kəm-plā'nənts): people who make a complaint or file a formal charge in court.

Sarah Good upon Examination denieth the matter of fact (viz.) that she ever used any witchcraft or hurt the abovesaid children or any of them.

The above-named Children being all present positively accused her of hurting of them Sundry³ times with this two months and also that morning.

Sarah Good denied that she had been at their houses in said time or near them, or had done them any hurt. All the abovesaid children then present accused her face to face, upon which they were all dreadfully tortured and tormented for a short space of time, and the affliction and tortures being over, they charged said Sarah Good again that she had then so tortured them, and came to them and did it, although she was personally then kept at a Considerable distance from them.

Sarah Good being Asked if, that she did not then hurt them who did it. And the children being again tortured, she looked

upon them And said that it was one of them we brought into the house with us. We Asked her who it was: She then Answered and said it was Sarah Osborne, and Sarah Osborne was then under Custody and not in the house; And the children being quickly after recovered out of their fit said that it was Sarah Good and also Sarah Osborne that then did hurt & torment or afflict them—although both of them at the same time at a distance or Remote from them personally—there were also sundry other Questions put to her and Answers given thereunto by her according as is also given in.

JOHN HATHORNE } ASSISTANTS
JONATHAN CORWIN }

3. sundry (sūn'drē): various.

TRANSCRIPT

THE EXAMINATION OF SARAH GOOD BEFORE THE WORSHIPFUL ASSISTANTS JOHN HATHORNE, JONATHAN CORWIN.

Q. Sarah Good, what evil Spirit have you familiarity with?

A. None.

Q. Have you made no contract with the Devil?
Good answered no.

Q. Why do you hurt these children?

A. I do not hurt them. I scorn it.

Q. Who do you employ then to do it?

A. I employ nobody.

Q. What creature do you employ then?

A. No creature, but I am falsely accused.

Q. Why did you go away muttering from Mr. Parris, his house?

A. I did not mutter, but I thanked him for what he gave my child.

Q. Have you made no contract with the devil?

A. No.

H[athorne] desired the 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.

Q. 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?

I do not torment them.

Q. Who do you employ then?

A. I employ nobody. I scorn it.

Q. How came they thus tormented?

A. What do I know? You bring others here and now you charge me with it.

Q. Why, who was it?

A. I do not know, but it was some you brought into the meeting house with you.

Q. We brought you into the meeting house.

A. But you brought in two more.

Q. Who was it then that tormented the children?

A. It was Osborne.

Q. What is it you say when you go muttering away from persons' houses?

A. If I must tell, I will tell.

Q. Do tell us then.

A. If I must tell, I will tell. It is the commandments. I may say my commandments I hope.

Q. What commandment is it?

A. If I must tell, I will tell. It is a psalm.

Q. What psalm?

After a long time she muttered over some part of a psalm.

Q. Who do you serve?

Q. *Why do you hurt these children?*

A. *I do not hurt them. I scorn it.*

A. I serve God.

Q. What God do you serve?

A. The God that made heaven and earth, though she was not willing to mention the word *God*. 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 would be one very quickly. The worshipful Mr. Hathorne asked him his reason why he said so of her, whether he had ever seen anything by her. He answered no, not in this nature, but it was her bad carriage⁴ to him and indeed, said he, I may say with tears that she is an enemy to all good.

SALEM VILLAGE, MARCH THE 1ST, 1691-92

WRITTEN BY EZEKIEL CHEEVER

4. carriage: conduct.