

Name \_\_\_\_\_



## Salem's Fear

Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692 was a strict Puritan town where religion controlled almost every part of life. The people of Salem believed in hard work, obedience, and the constant battle between good and evil. Their religious leaders told them that the devil was always looking for ways to corrupt them. This fear made the town a perfect place for panic to grow.

Because Salem was a small and isolated town, people paid close attention to their neighbors. Everyone was expected to behave the same way, and anyone who acted differently was treated with suspicion. If someone missed church or argued with a neighbor, they might be seen as working with the devil. This strict way of life created fear and made it easy for people to turn against each other.

When a group of young girls started accusing others of witchcraft, the town's leaders believed them without question. They thought that if the devil was real, then witches must be real too. Instead of looking for real evidence, they assumed that anyone accused was guilty. People became afraid that they, too, would be accused, so they started pointing fingers at others.

The trials quickly got out of control. Salem's leaders, like Judge Danforth and Reverend Parris, refused to believe that the accusations might be false. They thought that questioning the trials would mean going against God. People who tried to speak the truth were punished. The strict rules of Puritan society made it impossible for anyone to defend themselves.

Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* shows how the setting of Salem helped the witch trials happen. In a town where fear ruled and religion was the law, it was easy for lies to become truth. The play teaches us that when people don't question fear and blindly follow leaders, innocent people can suffer.