Storm Of Witchcraft: Salem’s Witches

After reading A Storm of Witchcraft by Emerson W. Baker, and carefully dissecting it, I have understood her way of categorizing and crafting her book. Her overall layout of the book is split through chapters that aren’t in chronological order based on dates, but by different events and perspectives focusing on different topics; for example, the accused, the afflicted, judges, and finally the impact of the trials on America. Also, Baker had mentioned her theories and beliefs of what occurred in Salem. He believed the whole situation as a “perfect storm” colliding on social and political conditions due to many different personalities and beliefs clashing in together, creating the storm. In other words, what I understood for Baker’s book, was the reasoning about how this ‘storm’ abrupt. During this era, many of the Salem girls that had charges against them was from the majority of the people in their communities. Accusations were made about them that quickly carried and spread through surrounding communities which thus created this unfortunate historical event of the Salem Witch Trials. Throughout this book, Baker provided factual evidence and information from the trials that some went into detail and some she stayed away. For example, it wasn’t to my knowledge of the number of people accused of witchcraft, 156 people, just based on their appearance. As she mentioned, due to the appearance of being elderly, poor, or just being a female, you are marginalized to fit the description of witchcraft qualities. In addition, men were also marginalized such as powerful leaders, religious ministers and unfortunately throughout the era, nineteen were executed in front of the public throughout this fiasco.

Baker’s organization of this book was not in chronological order but based on her opinion on the political or social aspects during this time, accusers, accused, and judges that played a key role during this era. Besides, the majority of this book covered judges more than other characters. With that said, she separately discussed the judges before the Salem era, dealing with the legacy of the city and how locals dealt with the stigma beginning with relatives that were surfing through the fiasco throughout current day dilemmas. However, I believe she focused mainly on the judges due to them being superior and well informative people during this time, and their words stand higher than others. During this time, it wasn’t to my knowledge how well these judges were educated as compared to the rest of the population due to the reasoning and symptoms of women accused of witchcraft was ridiculous. Also, during this time, the population was very informative due to the majority having a Puritan philosophy belief system and being very knowledgeable of the Bible. Addicting to that, the majority of them were Harvard alumni and had practices and experience in the legal system previous to witchcraft accusations.

Therefore, on the topic of the judicial system, the consequences that came out of the event can be regarded for the understanding of our current legal system is remarkably similar. During these trials, witchcraft was stigmatized towards women that showed the slightest signs of twitching, spasms, stuttering, and lack of control of body movements. These symptoms that were attributed to witchcraft was seen as a conversion death. However, what is ironic, is the little information provided throughout the women that are accused and victims. However, during this time, it is seen as the first official government that covered up a case of freedom of the press and speech. In another perspective, it is the first case to promote anti-female perspectives within the judicial system. As Baker makes evident throughout, exaggerated women were often successful in manipulating men and accusing sexual assault claims on their words made in

court but failed and ended up falling short on compulsive evident and weren't enough based on their words said.

In addition to Baker's saying of the "American Experience", I believed she fell short on that end. There wasn't a clear logical thorough explanation of the Salem Witch Trials and the impact on American Experience since Baker attempted to structure her book through different perspectives instead of chronological order. In other words, I believe Baker, did not explore the impact the trials had on the American Experience, which what I thought was going to be about, based on the title. In addition, Baker failed to go into detail and depth of the trials themselves.

Going into reading this book, like many others, had only had background information of The Crucible, by Miller, based on High School information. However, according to Baker's, it is far from that and is seen separately on its route and far from what occurred. Similarly, the number of characters Baker had mentioned, exceeded more than my expectations, and ultimately left me confused in areas that sidetracked my process for understanding and comprehension that I wasn't able to grasp on the material and fully understand. On top of that, the structure of the book was confusing since it very wished washy. However, what saved me was the index in the end, that I became aware of towards the end of the book, which probably would've helped as I was reading along.

As a source of material for assignment, I would recommend for a High School class since it is very complex and confusing. I was first introduced into the Salem Witch Trials as a Junior in high school and proudly still retain the brief information until now. Even though I read the crucible as an English Assignment, it was very informative. However, A Storm of Witchcraft was very informative and went into detail throughout various characters that I wouldn't have known existed, based on my knowledge of the trials' junior year of high school.