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## The Salem Witch Trials And Puritans

The Salem Witch Trials took place in Massachusetts between the year 1692 to 1693. According to Smithsonian, 'more than 200 people were accused of practicing witchcraft—the Devil's magic—and 20 were executed' (Blumberg). It was a short amount of time to have pass for the number of people the puritans had executed. The puritans would execute those whom they believed were not Godly. While these acts can just be a regular human being act, they executed many innocent lives because they believed that being by yourself meant one was a witch, reading and writing meant one was a witch and even singing songs that were not from the church or about God meant one was a witch.

First off, Smithsonian states that 'Several centuries ago, many practicing Christians, and those of other religions, had a strong belief that the Devil could give certain people known as witches the power to harm others in return for their loyalty' (Blumberg). The way the puritans pronounced individuals as 'witches' is that they would have the traits as 'singing, reading, not conforming to puritan law, not getting along with your neighbor, spending time alone and writing' (Mrs. Jones). Back in those days, puritans would find normal things to be considered demonic or that someone was a witch. In all honesty, the puritans would probably think that if someone took a shower or bath five minutes longer than usual then they are a witch.

As a matter of fact, anything that was not known of from the bible seemed to be questionable to the puritans. A puritan minister wrote, 'The whole life of a Christian should be nothing but praises and thanks to God; we should neither eat nor sleep, but eat to God and sleep to God and work to God and talk to God, do all to His glory and praise' (Sibbes). For example, if someone were to sneeze 6 times instead of twice than the puritans would think that person is a witch. Many things that humans do today puritans would consider it to be dealt with the devil because they had such strict lifestyles. 'The Puritan lifestyle was influenced heavily by the church and Christian beliefs' (Douglas).

Besides, the puritan law was extremely strict and heavily influenced by the church and their puritan/Christian beliefs. A man was once put into pillory for kissing his wife on his doorstep stated on History of American Women 'A Captain Kimble, upon his return from a three-year voyage, kissed his wife on his doorstep, and he spent two hours in the pillory for his lewd and unseemly behavior'. If a man could not even kiss his wife on his property because of how strict the puritan law was, imagine how it was during the Salem Witch Trials. Many things were also forbidden for the puritans. Edcon states that 'According to the New England Historical Society, Puritans had prohibitions that included gambling, adultery, living with Native Americans, smoking in public, celebrating Christmas, and missing church services. Dancing was also forbidden because it was believed to lead to promiscuous behavior' (Edcon). Many of these things that were forbidden to the puritans was happening during the Salem Witch Trials.

Also, according to the New England Historical Society, 'The Puritans never incarcerated prisoners for a long time. They accepted capital punishment, though, for 12 crimes, including blasphemy, counterfeiting, and witchcraft. Puritan law recognized the principle that no one should be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process' (unknown). Puritans would punish those who would go against the puritan law by using stocks or pillory, ducking stool,

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whipping, a hot awl used to pierce the tongue, public humiliation and of course, execution. The puritans would punish people if they believed they were going against the strict puritan laws. Which resulted in many executions in just a short amount of time during the Salem Witch Trials.

Additionally, in the playwright 'The Crucible' written by Arthur Miller, 'There were two girls in Salem named Abigail Williams and Abigail Parris. They broke out in spastic fits. The doctor declared that they were fighting with the Devil. When the people of Salem heard or saw the afflicted girls accuse the minister of being a wizard or warlock. The people went hysterical making anyone who was accused go through a series of trials' (Nikki). God would not want the puritans to just go around and start killing people they assumed were witches so they had to go through trials which were the Salem Witch Trials. There was also spectral evidence allowed in that time. According to Nikki K, 'Spectral evidence is when someone feels the specter of the accused person hurting them, but only they can see the specter' (Nikki).

Furthermore, spectral evidence made it even more difficult back in the days because of the people denied than it would be considered that they are lying which is against the puritan law so than they would be executed. The Puritans also believed in predestination which according to Nikki K, 'Predestination means God has laid out your life before you, and he already made up his mind on whether you are going to heaven or hell. There is only one thing you can do to stop yourself from going to heaven which many women are believed to do. The one thing you can do is to sign the devil's book, to make sure that you go to hell. The reason why a woman would sign the devil's book is that Puritans believed women had a certain openness to the devil's deception' (Nikki).

Together with, Nikki also states that 'The Puritans argued that any form of supernatural power that did not come from God must come from the devil. Both witches and cunning folk deserved punishment for their magic because it implied a connection with the devil' (Nikki). That being said, even white magic was considered an implied connection with the devil. Therefore, when Betty in 'The Crucible' fell into a coma-like sleep, everyone thought that the devil had a hold of her or that she was possessed. Along with the girls that were dancing in the forest, dancing was considered to be unlawful as well which caused the whole trials to begin. Years later and once Massachusetts figured out that the 20 people that were executed were not witches, they tried to give back what they could to the families of the ones who were executed.

In conclusion, The Salem Witch Trials were influenced by religion. The puritans were the ones basically in charge and whatever was seen as unlawful to the puritan law was then deemed to be of the devil's work. There was not much to do if you were blamed to be a witch besides to 'flee Salem, accuse someone else, get pregnant, or plead innocent and await a trial' (Mrs. Jones). Without the puritans believing in the trials, it could have been a lot worse. While these acts can just be a regular human being act, they executed many innocent lives because they believed that being by yourself, reading and writing and even singing songs that were not from the church or about God meant one was a witch.