

Week 9 Student Workbook

February 23 – March 1, 2026: The Evil Hand, the Witch Cake, and the First Examinations

Your Name: _____ Date Started: _____

This Week's Focus

Here is a question to sit with before you start this week: how many individual decisions does it take to turn a sick kid into a witch hunt?

This week you will count them. A physician who runs out of answers and reaches for the supernatural. A neighbor who tries to help and accidentally raises the devil, according to her own minister. Two little girls who finally say a name out loud. Four men who pick up a pen and file a legal complaint. And then a packed meetinghouse, three women under interrogation, and one of them who starts talking and cannot stop — and what she says convinces an entire colony that a satanic conspiracy is operating across Massachusetts.

Every one of those was a decision. Every one of them mattered. Let's go.

Daily Learning (February 23 – March 1)

February 23: Before Salem — Boston's Forgotten Victims

Here is something that might surprise you: Salem was not the beginning.

Massachusetts had been executing people for witchcraft since 1648. That is forty-four years before the first Salem arrest. The fears, the legal methods, the theological framework — all of it was already in place in Boston before it exploded in Salem in 1692. And eight of those earlier victims still have not been formally exonerated. Massachusetts Bill H.5154 is working to change that. It is now in the House Ways and Means Committee.

The episode opens in London on February 23rd, 1692, where Increase and Samuel Mather heard a woman claim her dead son's ghost had visited her. Increase Mather listened, but he was skeptical. He knew ghosts could be the devil in disguise. He had seen it before — a woman named Alice Lake, convicted of witchcraft in Boston around 1650, had reportedly been visited by the devil pretending to be her dead son.

Key Facts:

- Margaret Jones, a healer from Charlestown, was the first person executed for witchcraft in Massachusetts, hanged June 15th, 1648. Her neighbor Alice Stratton tried to defend her and was accused herself. Governor Winthrop recorded that a great tempest struck Connecticut the very hour Jones was hanged.
- Elizabeth Kendall was hanged in 1651 even though the child's own parents did not suspect her. They blamed the nurse for leaving the baby in the cold.
- Alice Lake denied being a witch but believed she deserved death for a different sin — concealing a pregnancy in her youth. She went to the gallows for the wrong crime.
- Anne Hibbens was hanged in 1656. Minister John Norton later said she was executed only for having more wit than her neighbors. Read that again.
- Goody Glover was hanged in 1688. Cotton Mather needed an interpreter because she spoke Gaelic. She could not fully participate in her own trial. Her case shaped everything Mather thought about witchcraft when he showed up at Salem four years later.
- Hugh Parsons, Eunice Cole, and Elizabeth Morse were convicted but not executed. Eunice Cole's New Hampshire exoneration attempt passed the house in 2022 but failed in the Senate. She is still waiting.

Quick Question: Anne Hibbens was hanged for having more wit than her neighbors. Goody Glover needed an interpreter to participate in her own trial. The Kendall child's own parents didn't suspect her. What do those three details, sitting next to each other, tell you about who was actually in danger in colonial Massachusetts — and why these eight people are worth remembering three hundred years later?

February 24: Two Words

Here is how fast things can change: two words.

Betty Parris was nine. Abigail Williams was eleven. Since January they had been barking like dogs, quacking like chickens, making sounds like sheep, hiding under tables, and moving toward the hearths and wells in the house. The family tried prayer. They tried fasting. They tried medicine. Nothing worked.

Around February 24th, a physician widely believed to be Dr. William Griggs examined the girls. He found no natural explanation. Minister John Hale recorded what the doctor concluded: at length, one physician gave his opinion that they were under an evil hand.

That's it. Under an evil hand. Before those words, this was a medical problem. After them, it was a legal and spiritual one. Two words redirected an entire community from medicine to the question of who was responsible.

Key Facts:

- Hale described what people saw: these children were bitten and pinched by invisible agents. Their arms, necks, and backs turned this way and that way and returned back again, so as it was impossible for them to do of themselves and beyond the power of any epileptic fits or natural disease to effect.
- Minister Deodat Lawson later observed the fits himself and wrote that the girls' motions were preternatural, both as to the manner, which is so strange as a well person could not screw their body into, and as to the violence also.
- Lawson also noticed: the eyes of some of them in their fits are exceeding fast closed, and if you ask a question, they can give no answer, and I do believe they cannot hear at that time, yet do they plainly converse with the appearances, as if they did discourse with real persons.
- Hale recorded the community's response with one sentence: the neighbors quickly took up and concluded they were bewitched.

Quick Question: The community had been watching Betty and Abigail suffer for weeks. The moment the doctor said evil hand, Hale tells us the neighbors immediately concluded bewitchment. They didn't debate it. They didn't wait for more evidence. What does that instant response tell you about what the community already believed before the doctor even opened his mouth?

February 25: The Witch Cake

Reverend Parris is away attending a lecture. His neighbor Mary Sibley sees an opportunity to help.

Her solution: rye flour, the urine of the afflicted girls, fireplace ashes, and the family dog. This was a witch cake — a real piece of English folk magic. The idea was that a witch maintained a supernatural connection to her victims through their bodily fluids. Feed those fluids to an animal, and you might identify the witch, break the spell, or force her to cry out in pain.

It did not work. The girls did not get better. They started naming people instead.

When Parris came home and found out what happened, he did not take it well. His verdict: the devil hath been raised amongst us, and his rage is vehement and terrible. In the Puritan worldview, going to folk magic to fight witchcraft was itself a sin. Mary Sibley had tried to help and had, according to her own minister, summoned the devil.

Key Facts:

- Historian Marilynne K. Roach places this on February 25th.
- Mary Sibley directed Tituba and John Indian, the Parris household's enslaved servants, to make the cake.
- Theories on how the cake worked varied: some thought it would physically harm the witch, others that it would break the spell, others that it would transfer the bewitchment to the dog.
- Parris confronted Sibley privately first, then publicly before the whole congregation.

Quick Question: Mary Sibley was trying to help. She used a method that had been used before in English folk tradition. Parris called it raising the devil. Here's the hard question: does it matter that she meant well, if what followed was the Salem witch trials? And what does it tell you about how dangerous it can be to act on incomplete information in a community that is already on edge?

February 26: The First Name

Here is where it becomes real. Somebody says a name out loud.

Before February 26th, the community had a medical diagnosis and a vague threat. After February 26th, they had a suspect. Betty and Abigail named Tituba as the source of their afflictions. Elizabeth Hubbard and Ann Putnam Jr. later testified they had already been afflicted by Tituba's specter since the day before — a full day before anyone said her name.

Key Facts:

- Around this date, a group of neighboring ministers and gentlemen visited Parris at the parsonage. They watched the girls. They concluded Satan was involved. And then they told Parris to sit still and wait upon the providence of God to see what time might discover.
- The ministers also spoke with Tituba. She admitted being involved in the witch cake. She told them her mistress in her own country was a witch who had taught her means to detect witchcraft. She never said which country.
- Tituba said she herself was not a witch.
- On February 26th, Betty and Abigail named Tituba. After six weeks of unexplained suffering in the Salem Village parsonage, the first witch accusation had been made.

Quick Question: The ministers told Parris to wait. He waited less than a week before three women were in custody. The ministers had the authority to advise. They did not have the power to stop what the girls' accusations and the men's complaints set in motion. What does that tell you about where the real power in this situation actually was, and who had it?

February 27: The Book with Nine Names

Here is where the accusations stop being about one person and start sounding like a conspiracy.

On February 27th, Ann Putnam Jr. claimed that the specter of Sarah Good had come to her in the night, tortured her, and vehemently attempted to get her to sign the devil's book. This was the first time the devil's book appeared in the Salem crisis. By the time Tituba finished her confession on March 1st, that book would have nine names in it — and the magistrates would be convinced they were facing a colony-wide satanic conspiracy.

Key Facts:

- The devil's book was a real theological concept that had been building in European and English thought for two centuries, from the Malleus Maleficarum to King James I's Demonology to the confessions extracted by English witchfinder Matthew Hopkins in the 1640s. By 1692 it was as familiar to Salem's magistrates as any passage of scripture.
- In the Puritan worldview, the book was a collection of diabolical contracts. You signed with your own blood or red ink and pledged your soul to Satan.
- One striking detail: the physical description of the book changed constantly throughout the trials. Color, shape, size, material — it was different every time someone testified about it.
- Elizabeth Hubbard also named Good and Osborne and claimed she had been chased by a wolf going to the Proctor's home. Accusers believed it was either Good shapeshifting or a beast Good had sent to attack her.
- When Tituba was examined on March 1st, she confirmed the wolf: I did see her set a wolf upon her to afflict her.

Quick Question: The devil's book was described differently every single time someone testified about it — different color, different size, different material. If you were a magistrate in 1692, would you have noticed that inconsistency? And if you did notice, what would you have done with it?

February 28-29: The Complaint

Heavy rains kept Governor Bradstreet from meeting. In Salem Village, the four afflicted girls kept suffering. And the patience of sitting still and waiting was completely gone.

According to historian Marilynne K. Roach, on the 29th in the parsonage, Tituba was supposedly visited by the devil and four witches who told her to hurt the children or else. At prayer time, the devil and Sarah Good appeared with animal familiars — birds, cats, a dog. One bird had a human head that turned into Sarah Osborne. Good and Osborne allegedly put Tituba on a pole, flew her to Thomas Putnam's house, and told her to kill Ann Putnam Jr. with a knife. When Tituba refused, they told her they would cut off her head.

Four men — Joseph Hutchinson, Thomas Preston, Thomas Putnam, and Edward Putnam — filed a formal complaint against Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne. The magistrates issued warrants. The three women were to be brought to Ingersoll's Tavern the next morning.

Quick Question: Three of the four men who filed the complaint were Putnams or directly tied to the Putnam household, where three of the afflicted girls lived. That is not a coincidence. What does it tell you about how the formal legal machinery of this crisis got started — and who had the standing to set it in motion?

March 1: The Day That Changed Everything

Here is a fact worth sitting with before you read anything else: every single person tried before the Court of Oyer and Terminer in 1692 was convicted. Every one. One hundred percent. So whatever happened in the Salem Village meetinghouse on March 1st, it was not a fair hearing. It was the beginning of the end for anyone who ended up in that room.

Constable George Locker arrested Sarah Good. Constable Joseph Herrick arrested Sarah Osborne and Tituba. Before questioning started, Hannah Ingersoll checked all three for witches' marks and found none. Then William Good announced his wife had a possible mark below her right shoulder.

The crowd was too big for Ingersoll's Ordinary. They moved to the meetinghouse. Magistrates John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin presided. Ezekiel Cheever was appointed recorder. Joseph Putnam kept his own account. What followed ran less like a legal proceeding and more like an interrogation, with Hathorne driving every question.

Key Facts:

- Sarah Good was first. She denied everything and scorned the suggestion she had hurt anyone. When pressed to name someone, she blamed Sarah Osborne. Her own husband William testified against her, saying she was an enemy to all good.
- Sarah Osborne denied knowing the devil. Then she said something that went to the heart of the entire crisis: I do not know that the devil goes about in my likeness to do any hurt. She was raising the question of whether spectral evidence — testimony that someone's specter had appeared and caused harm — could be trusted if the devil could use any innocent person's form without their consent.
- Tituba started by denying everything. Then she shifted. The devil came to me and did bid me serve him. She described a man in black, animal familiars including a hog and a great dog, a yellow bird, cats that tried to thrust her into the fire. She said Good and Osborne flew her on a pole to Thomas Putnam's house and told her to kill Ann Putnam Jr. with a knife.
- Most significantly: Tituba said the devil's book already had nine names in it. Some of the witches were in Salem. Others were in Boston.
- After the examinations, Tituba and Osborne went to Salem jail. Good spent the night at constable Herrick's house, escaped briefly, cut her arm, and returned to custody.
- That same day, Salem Village held a separate meeting about separating from Salem Town. Two entirely different crises, happening simultaneously.

Fill in the blanks:

Sarah Good was the _____ to be examined. She blamed _____ when pressed to name the real witch. Osborne's most significant statement was: "_____." Tituba said the devil appeared to her sometimes like a _____ and sometimes like a great _____. She said there were _____ names already in the devil's book. Some witches were in _____, others in _____.

Quick Question: Tituba said nine names were in the book and she couldn't read all of them. Some in Salem. Some in Boston. Think about what that does to a community that already believes it is under siege. What happens when people believe a threat is bigger than they can see — and they are responsible for finding the rest of it?

This Week's Big Ideas

Words do specific work. The physician said evil hand. Two words. The community concluded bewitchment within hours. That is not panic — that is a community that already had the framework ready and was just waiting for someone with authority to confirm it.

Trying to help is not the same as helping. Mary Sibley used a method she believed in to try to protect children she cared about. Parris said she had raised the devil. The girls started naming people. Every intention in the world doesn't change what actually happened.

Naming someone is a legal act. The moment Betty and Abigail said Tituba's name, the machinery started moving. Six weeks of suffering had a target. Within days there were warrants.

Confession made it bigger, not smaller. Tituba's confession did not end anything. Nine names. Some in Salem, some in Boston. The magistrates now believed they were looking at a colony-wide conspiracy. The crisis had no ceiling anymore.

Sarah Osborne asked the right question and nobody listened. I do not know that the devil goes about in my likeness to do any hurt. That is the question that should have stopped the trials. If the devil can appear as anyone without their consent, spectral evidence is worthless. The magistrates moved past it without pausing.

Boston's victims were real people. Margaret Jones. Elizabeth Kendall. Alice Lake. Anne Hibbens. Goody Glover. Hugh Parsons. Eunice Cole. Elizabeth Morse. Eight people. Most of them have been waiting longer than Salem's convicted for a legal acknowledgment that what happened to them was wrong. That is what Bill H.5154 is about.

Vocabulary

Evil hand:

Sympathetic counter magic:

Devil's book:

Spectral evidence:

Preternatural:

Familiars:

Witch's mark:

Preliminary examination:

Weekly Reflection

1. Anne Hibbens was hanged for having more wit than her neighbors. Goody Glover needed an interpreter to participate in her own trial. The Kendall child's parents blamed the nurse, not Kendall. Sit with those three details. What kind of community produces those outcomes, and what does it mean that eight people from that era still have no formal exoneration?

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2. Mary Sibley tried to help. Parris said she raised the devil. The girls started naming people. Pick a side: was Parris right to blame Sibley publicly, or was he scapegoating someone who acted in good faith? Defend your answer with evidence from the episode.

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3. The ministers told Parris to wait. He waited less than a week. What does that gap tell you about who actually had the power to stop or slow the Salem crisis at this point, and why they didn't use it?

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4. Sarah Osborne raised the question of whether the devil could appear in her likeness without her consent. The magistrates didn't engage with it. If spectral evidence is only valid if the devil cannot use innocent people's forms, what happens to every accusation in Salem the moment you take Osborne's question seriously?

5. Tituba said nine names were in the book and she could not read all of them. Some in Salem, some in Boston. What has she just done to the scope of this crisis, and could she have predicted what that claim would set in motion?

Share Your Learning

Did you:

- Tell someone that Salem was not the beginning — and name at least one Boston victim
- Explain what evil hand meant in 1692 and what those two words actually did
- Describe the witch cake and what Parris said when he found out
- Explain why Tituba's nine names expanded the crisis beyond Salem Village
- Share Sarah Osborne's question about the devil and spectral evidence
- Post using #SalemWeek9

What did you share? How did people respond?

Progress Check

Week 9 of approximately 75 weeks | approximately 12% complete | January 2026 – May 2027

You completed Week 9.

You now understand:

- Why Boston's eight witch trial victims matter and why they still need exoneration
- How a physician's two-word diagnosis shifted an entire community from medicine to law
- What the witch cake was, what belief it was based on, and why Parris condemned it
- How the first accusation was made, and what it meant that a specific name was finally spoken
- What the devil's book was and why Ann Putnam Jr.'s February 27th claim mattered
- Who filed the formal complaints, what the warrants meant, and who had the standing to do it

- What happened in the meetinghouse on March 1st and why Tituba's nine names changed everything

Next week: The hunt for additional witches begins. New accusations multiply. The crisis that started in one parsonage is about to spread across the community.

Your Badges

#SalemDailyStudent #SalemWeek9 #SalemDescendantPathStudent (if applicable)

Post your progress using: #SalemDailyStudent #SalemWeek9 #ThingAboutSalem

You crushed Week 9. See you next week.

Resources and Links

This Week's Content Video Playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCliis4vjMIUgg3wcA0pXeYQ/> Salem Witch Trials Daily

Course Playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIz3vKHO9eBqIfjWd4e0mZpuXlrzaE-3>

Podcast: The Thing About Salem at <https://aboutsalem.com> Salem Witch Trials Daily Hub:

<https://aboutsalem.com/salem-witch-trials-daily/>

Previous Week Week 8 Blog: <https://aboutsalem.com/week-8-blog>

Useful Websites The Thing About Salem: <https://aboutsalem.com> The Thing About Witch Hunts:

<https://aboutwitchhunts.com> Sign the petition: <https://www.change.org/witchtrials> Find My

Massachusetts Legislators: <https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator> Massachusetts

Witch Trials: <https://massachusettwitchtrials.org/> Peabody Essex Museum Salem Witch Trials

Collection: <https://pem.quartexcollections.com/collections/salem-witch-trials-collection> Primary

Sources: <http://www.17thc.us/primarysources/accused.php>

Books Bernard Rosenthal, ed., Records of the Salem Witch-Hunt:

<https://bookshop.org/a/90227/9781107689619> Emerson W. Baker, A Storm of Witchcraft:

<https://bookshop.org/a/90227/9780190627805> Marilynne K. Roach, The Salem Witch Trials: A

Day-by-Day Chronicle: <https://bookshop.org/a/90227/9781589791329> Mary Beth Norton, In the

Devil's Snare: <https://bookshop.org/a/90227/9780375706905>

Support the Project End Witch Hunts is a nonprofit. Donate: <https://endwitchhunts.org/donate/>

Help seek justice for accused witches: www.change.org/witchtrials Massachusetts exoneration

project: <https://massachusettwitchtrials.org/>