

The Salem Witch Trials and Halloween

(October 2019)

Salem, MA, is a city just north of Boston. It is known all over the world for its over-the-top Halloween celebration which attracts a number of fans every October. By the first of the month, there are bats and skeletons hanging in the windows, pumpkins on every step, and people in costumes. You will also spot witch décor everywhere you look—which is fitting because Salem’s nickname is America’s Witch City. This is fun and all, but do you know that Salem’s link to witches and to Halloween comes from a sad time in the city’s distant past?

In 1692, Salem was the setting for the witch trials. At that time, a bunch of girls began having “fits.” The public was quick to think the girls had fallen under the spells of witches. Panic soon hit and

everyone suspected everyone else. In the end, more than 200 people were sent to prison for being witches.

Twenty people were executed. Most were hanged on Gallows Hill. One man, Giles Corey, had a different punishment: crushing by rocks. Giles held out for three days, but then he passed away. Five other people lost their lives in prison. By May 1693, people were skeptical about the witch hunt and it soon ended. Those sad days are long over, but they are still a big part of Salem.

Salem is a fun spot to visit in October. There is a lot to do, see, and hear. You will even spot a lot of witches. Most of it is silly stuff. However, during all the fun, it is important to reflect on the sad, dark time in Salem's past. After all, the witch hunt is one of the main reasons Salem has such a strong link to witches and Halloween.

Teacher Resources

Please note: this non-controlled readable text passage features a ***description text structure***. As such, it is written to be ***at least 80% decodable at Substep 4.2***. A specific decodability score is listed below.

- This text passage is 80.07% decodable at Substep 4.2.

Text Easability Scores

If you would like to measure the text easability scores of this passage, please follow the directions below.

1. Visit the Coh-Metrix Text Easability Assessor website at <http://tea.cohmetrix.com/>. If you do not already have a login and password, create one. It is free and easy to sign up for access to the website.
2. Once you have created an account and sign in, you will be taken to a page with an empty, white text box. Copy and paste the text from this passage into the empty, white text box. Make sure you are only copying and pasting the body of the passage. Do not include the title, date, or any of the resources present in the passage.
3. When you have pasted the passage into the text box, click on the red button beneath the text box that says "Analyze." There will be a short delay and after a few seconds, you will see a bar graph appear to the right of the screen.
4. The bar graph will give you the percentages for several text characteristics including: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep cohesion.
5. Below the bar graph, the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level is also included for your benefit.
6. Lastly, a paragraph is provided that explains the meaning of the measurements of the text characteristics for your particular passage.
7. Once you have completed measuring your passage, you can click on the "Clear" button below the text box and measure another passage, if you wish.

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