

Salem Witch Trials: A Psychological Manifestation Stemming from Gender/Societal Inequality

As an avid amateur historian, I adore learning about past experiences and cultures experienced worldwide, but especially in the United States. From the time that I was a child, I have been fascinated by the Salem Witch Trials. What seems from the outside looking in as a fantastic story fit for a feature film by the likes of Stephen King, was an actual, horrific occurrence that started from the minds and mouths of children. Children, as young as twelve years of age, were responsible for one of the worst recorded events of mankind, leaving twenty dead and countless others disgraced. Through analytical research of primary documents pertaining to court records, quotes from accusers and the accused, along with research of societal expectations specific to gender and age in the colonial period, I will pose the question that the origin of the Salem Witch Trials does not stem from other worldly dimensions, but instead from a rebellious act against societal expectations and norms set forth for women and children of the respective era. Essentially, a psychological manifestation of frustrations and fears set forth by restrictive and oppressive norms that proved to be physically, emotionally, and mentally detrimental to all involved. By examining the psychological cause of such an impactful happening, our society can recognize the signs of provocation, and avoid a repeat of this occurrence.

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