The Salem Witch Trials

Bridget shivered and wrapped her coat tighter around her as the harsh wind blew. She passed a woman walking with a basket of eggs and when as Bridget smiled sweetly and waved the woman let out a small grunt of annoyance and turned her back on Bridget. Bridget Bishop was the first person to be hanged during the Salem witch trials. Twenty people died in total. One man was pressed to death and nineteen people were hanged. Bridget was very different than most Puritans. She ran a tavern, was married three times and fought with her three husbands openly. Following societal expectations was a vital part of the Puritan religion, and those who did not conform were thought to be working with the Devil. The people of Salem feared the Devil very much, and when witches were thought to be working with the Devil in Salem, panic arose. People supported killing those who were different. Many people in Puritanical Salem Massachusetts died because they were different, and the Puritans were afraid they could not control them easily.

Many people in Puritanical Salem did not conform to the societal beliefs and ended up losing their lives as a result. There were many rules and if citizens did not follow all of those rules, they were cast out. The religion of the Puritans was very strict and "the Puritan community rewarded conformity-you were expected to fit in and do what everybody else did" (Mills 15). The Puritans desire for conformity was so strong that they wanted to get rid of anyone that was different. The trials were an excuse for the people of Salem to expunge of all those people who were different. Witches were thought to be able to harm people and therefore were feared greatly. The Puritans feared the Devil and God equally and "they believed the Devil was real, and had the intent to

influence and harm" (Mills 16).People heard about and eye witnessed the fits the Afflicted girls were having. Even the town's doctor said the evil hand must be on them. People were terrified that a witch would harm them so they wanted the witches found. Panic arose when the Devil was thought to be among the people of Salem. Many people were accused of being witches and "people in seventeenth century New England believed that a witch was a person who had made a pact with Satan and therefore had strange and terrible powers"(Stevens 28). Holding trials was encouraged because citizens feared that the people working with the Devil would harm them. Because of the fear of the Devil and these religious beliefs, the Salem witch trials cost innocent people their lives. No one doubted the girls' affliction.

When the afflicted girls started having fits the people of Salem needed someone to blame; the people of Salem went to the outcasts because they were different. The majority of people in Salem were English, Tituba was not. They simply assumed she was responsible for the afflicted girls' fits. One of the first three people to be accused was Tituba and "Tituba's unfamiliar accent and unusual traditions and stories fascinated and frightened the Parris children"(Mills 18). When the girls started having fits, they needed someone to blame; Tituba was accused then because she had different customs and she was a slave. Tituba was targeted because of her uniqueness and the Puritans were quick to find her guilty. Similarly, Sarah Good preferred to live differently than others in Salem, and she was also very poor. People were easily convinced Sarah was a witch because "she smoked a pipe, was slovenly, and was a beggar"(Stevens 39). Among the other Puritans, Sarah did not fit in because she was not as neat and clean cut. Seen as a

blemish, Sarah lost her life in the trials because she, too, could not be changed. Another outsider, Bridget Bishop was different because she was not exactly like other women and people did not know what to do with her. She was accused because “she spoke for herself, was married three times and fought openly with her husband’s”(Mills 19). Within the Puritan community most women were only married one time and were refined but Bishop was not. This did not conform to the Puritan society’s beliefs, and made her difficult to control. Guilty of being outspoken, Bishop lost her life in the witch trials. Those accused in the witch trials died because they were unique, and their society could not control them easily.

Many people in Puritanical Salem, Massachusetts died because they were different than everybody else and the Puritans were afraid they could not control them easily. No further efforts to conform would save their lives. Pleading not guilty did not change the outcome of Bridget’s trial, in the end she was put to death. Bridget claimed she was innocent but “Bishop became the first person to be hanged on a hill that later became Gallows Hills” (Mills19). Many other people were tried for witchcraft, and unlike Bridget, pled guilty in hopes of conforming and being spared. None the less, they were found guilty and sent to jail or killed. More than a dozen innocent people were killed even though they did nothing wrong. The accusations lasted and “by September 1692, the jails were full and twenty people had been hanged”(Mills 19). These people did not follow Puritanical rules and were considered different because of it. As a result, they were tried and put in jail or killed. The trials held did not change the fates of the

accused. Guilty of being different, those who were unique were killed in Puritanical Salem.

Many people in Puritanical Salem, Massachusetts died because they were different than everybody else and the Puritans were afraid they could not control them easily. Fitting in and conforming was very important to the Puritans and their religion. Another Puritan belief was the belief of the Devil and when people thought witches were working with the Devil, the citizens of Salem were terrified and supported the trials. Innocence meant nothing for those who were different you were singled out. The religious restrictions negatively viewed the unique people of Salem but today, these same traits and uniqueness would be seen positively today.