

Salem Witch Trials: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>The Salem Witch Trials was a roughly year-long period of mass hysteria. Incensed by the idea witches were among them, townsfolk turned on each other, killing 20 of their own neighbors. During this time, outcasts among Salem suffered the most harshly.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
<p>Psychology, Sociology, History (U.S.), Ethics, Philosophy, Government</p>	<p>30-40 minutes</p>
Video link:	
<p>https://academy4sc.org/video/salem-witch-trials-a-wicked-deadly-spell/</p>	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define outgroup bias and the role it played in the Salem Witch Trials. • Explain how the Salem Witch Trials quickly spiraled into mass hysteria and bloodshed. • Identify modern-day witch hunts and how psychological concepts affect them. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
<p>Outgroup bias, Personal bias</p>	
Materials Needed	
<p>Worksheet, Paper strips equal to the number of students</p>	
Before you watch	
<p>Turn & Talk: What are personal biases? How do they affect people?</p>	
While you watch	
<p>1. During which year did the Salem Witch Trials occur?</p>	

2. Define outgroup bias.
3. How many people were hanged during the trials?

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Why do you think the adults in Salem sided with the children who accused people of witchcraft?
2. What do you think divides people most these days? Race? Gender? Politics? Or something else?
3. Identify a moment in history or your own life in which someone had a personal bias against someone else because they were different.

Activity Ideas

- Make strips of paper with the word "Townsperson" on it equal to the number of students in the class. Pass one out to each student and explain that the paper lists whether they have been assigned the role of "Townsperson" or "Witch." Students must try to form the largest group possible. Townspeople earn a point for each townspeople in their group, but if they have a witch in their group, they lose all points. Witches earn a point for each additional person, witch or townspeople, that is a part of their group. Students cannot show each other their paper until all groups have been formed. Come up with a small random number and claim that there are that many witches in the game. Additionally, state that roles were not assigned randomly and that each witch shares a trait with one of the twenty victims murdered during the Salem Witch Trials. If students need further incentive to try their best at the game, teachers could claim that this activity will be graded as a test based on their point scores or that those with the highest score get a prize. Once the groups have been finalized, reveal the ruse and debrief.
- Have a class debate on whether it was ethical for accused witches to accuse other people in order to save themselves. You can have students first spend a few minutes researching Tituba or another accused woman who named fellow devil worshippers if you like. Have students explain their reasoning.
- Individually fill out the Worksheet, and then check answers as a group.

Sources/places to learn more

1. Cooper, Micaela Rene. "Mass Hysteria In The Salem Witch Trials." *The Odyssey Online*, Odyssey, 17 Oct. 2019, www.theodysseyonline.com/mass-hysteria-salem-witch-trials.



2. Editors, History.com. "Salem Witch Trials." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, LLC, 4 Nov. 2011, www.history.com/topics/colonial-america/salem-witch-trials.
3. McVean, Ada. "The History of Hysteria." *Office for Science and Society*, McGill University, 31 July 2019, www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/history-quackery/history-hysteria.
4. Miller, Arthur. *The Crucible*. Oxford University Press, 2019.
5. Theodore. "Outgroup Bias (Definition + Examples)." *Practical Psychology*, Practical Psychology, 9 Jan. 2020, practicalpie.com/outgroup-bias-definition-examples/.