



AMERICAN
LITERATURE

Virus of fear: Witchcraft in Salem

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for American Literature

Target audience – American literature learners

Time required – 15 minutes

Activity

Explore the geographic context and spatial extent of the witch trials in the American colonies.
Play: *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller

English Standards

CCSS: ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS: ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will describe the distribution and spread of the witch trials of the late 1600s along the American colonies.
- Students will measure distances between isolated communities during the time of the witch trials and understand how information spread between these communities.

Map URL: <http://esriurl.com/litGeoInquiry2>

? Ask

Where was English settlement at the time of the witch trials?

- Click the link above to launch the map.
- With the Details button depressed, click the button, (Show) Content.
- ? What geographic area does the 1733 map cover? [*Eastern North America, Central America, and northern South America*]
- Pan to locate the title of the map; what is the title? [*A Map of the British Empire in America*]
- In the search field, type Massachusetts and then zoom to the Boston area.
- Where are the towns and cities? Why are they there? [*Along coastlines and rivers as livelihoods were tied to fishing and trade.*]

! Acquire

Where did the Salem witch trials take place?

- Locate the communities of Boston, Salem Town and Ipswich on the 1733 map.
- Click the checkbox to the left of the layer name, North America 1733. The layer will turn off.
- Turn on the layer, Salem Witch Trial Towns.
- ? Using the Measure tool, how far in miles are the towns from each other? [*Salem to Andover: 15 overland; Salem to Ipswich: 15 overland, 35 sea; Salem Town to Salem Village: 4 overland, 3.8 sea*]
- ? How long would it take to bring news and goods to the next town by horse at 2 mph to 5 mph? [*One to seven hours*]
- Turn off the layer, Salem Witch Trial Towns.

🔍 Explore

Where were the 19 accused in the Salem area hanged?

- Read aloud, “Gallows Hill in Salem Town was thought to be the location, but scholars have recently identified Proctor’s Ledge. Salem plans a memorial on Proctor’s Ledge to honor the victims of the accused and to remind us that yielding to hysteria and fear can have tragic consequences.”
- To locate Proctor’s Ridge, in the search field, type -70.909555, 42.517993.
- Zoom in to see today’s built environment surrounding Proctor’s Ledge.
- ? What business is adjacent to Proctor’s Ledge? [*Walgreens drugstore*]

more ►

Analyze

Where else did witch trials occur?

- Turn on the layer, Colonial Witch Accusations.
- Click the button, Bookmarks. Select American Colonies.
- The heat map layer, Colonial Witch Accusations, shows the density of witch accusations.
- ? What is the geographic distribution of the trials? [*Concentrations in areas that are present-day states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire*]
- ? How is the pattern different south of Connecticut? [*Fewer, more isolated*]
- Click on points in the layer, Colonial Witch Accusations. Read some dates and names of the accused.
- Turn on layer, The American Colonies population.

Act

What role did religion and population play?

- Click Massachusetts to select the state. A pop-up window will open.
- ? What are the values of the two rows: Religion and POP_ 1690 (population in 1690). [*Puritan, 49,504*]
- Click the other colonies to explore the dominant religion and population size.
- ? What generalizations can you make about population, religion, and the distribution of witchcraft accusations? [*Extreme Puritanism and higher population densities may have contributed to a fast-spreading virus of fear.*]

USE THE MEASURE TOOL

- Click Measure, select the Distance button, and from the drop-down list, choose a unit of measurement.
- On the map, click once to start the measurement, click again to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.
- Hint: Position the area of interest on the map so that it is not obscured by the Measure window.

SEARCH BY PLACE NAME

- In the Find Address Or Place field, type a place name or keyword.
- Choose a search option that appears below the field or click the Search button.

Next Steps

DID YOU KNOW? ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at <http://www.esri.com/schools>.

THEN TRY THIS...

- Explore the following Salem Witch Trials story map: <http://esriurl.com/Geo3211>.
- Explore more details of accused persons in the following table by Marc Carlson: <http://esriurl.com/Geo3212>.
- Consider: What social or economic factors might be catalysts for “witch trials” today?

TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of the following play.

- *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller