

Salem Witch Trial Mock Trial Information for Teachers

1. **The lesson intentionally includes two short – but different -- Salem Witch Trial mock trials, to provide students an opportunity to compare and contrast a trial before and after the Bill of Rights.**
 - a. The first mock trial demonstrates a trial during Colonial times, before the Bill of Rights.
 - i. For example, this trial is without the Sixth Amendment
 1. Right to counsel in one's defense
 2. Right to an impartial jury
 3. Right have witnesses testify in one's defense.
 - b. The second mock shows what a trial might be like today, with the protection of the Bill of Rights
2. **The lesson works well in conjunction with a study of Colonial America**, such as in a 5th or 8th grade classroom.

Salem Witch Trial

Mock Trial Script #1

Judge: Bailiff bring out the accused, Sarah Good.

Bailiff brings out defendant in handcuffs.

Judge: Sarah Good, thou art here accused that not having the fear of God before thine eyes thou hast had familiarity with Satan the grand enemy of God and man, and that by his instigation and help thou hast in a preternatural way afflicted and done harm to the bodies and his Majesty's subjects, Elizabeth Parris and Abigail Williams, for which by the law of God and the Colony of Massachusetts thou deservest to die by hanging. Sarah Good, thou hast heard the complaints against you. Is it true that you are a witch?

Sarah: Certainly not, Your Honor.

Judge: Have you seen the Devil, Sarah Good?

Sarah: Never, Your Honor!

Judge: If you are not a witch, how do you explain the contortions that young Elizabeth Parris and Abigail Williams go into in your presence?

Sarah: It must all be fake, Your Honor!

Judge: Did you visit John Putnam's farm two weeks ago?

Sarah: I did, Your Honor.

Judge: How do you explain the fact that a baby calf was born the day after your visit and that calf had a grossly deformed leg?

Sarah: I can't explain it, Your Honor. I had nothing to do with it, I swear!

Judge: Isn't it true Sarah Good that you have a witches' mark on your neck?

Sarah: Your Honor, I have had a small mole on my neck my entire life. It is NOT a witches' mark!

Judge: Silence! I have heard enough. I find that you are guilty of witchcraft and sentence you to be hanged in the town square next Saturday. Bailiff, take her away!

Salem Witch Trial

Mock Trial Script #2

The Court: Members of the Jury: The Defendant, Sarah Good, is charged with committing acts of witchcraft. The people of the Colony of Massachusetts are represented by the prosecutor, (Name). Ms. Good is represented by her lawyer, (Name).
Prosecutor – You may call your first witness.

Prosecutor: The people of the Colony of Massachusetts call Abigail Williams.

Clerk swears in Abigail Williams.

Prosecutor: How old are you, Abigail?

Abigail: I am 11 years old.

Prosecutor: Do you know the defendant, Sarah Good?

Abigail: I do.

Prosecutor: How do you know Sarah Good?

Abigail: She lives down the lane.

Prosecutor: What happened to you and your friend, Elizabeth Parris on January 20, 1692?

Abigail: Elizabeth and I were playing in the town square when that woman (pointing to defendant) came up and started chanting nonsense at us. She started pinching us and biting us. We got so scared, we ran away.

Prosecutor: What happened to you after this meeting with the defendant?

Abigail: It was the strangest thing. I started shaking and screaming uncontrollably. My mother and father could not get me to stop! I would go into these weird trances where I was almost unconscious for minutes at a time. It was so frightening I would. . . .
(witness goes into trance and stares off in to space)

Prosecutor: Abigail, Abigail, can you hear me? Your Honor, may the record reflect that the witness has gone in to a trance?

The Court: The record may reflect that the witness has not answered your question.

Prosecutor: No more questions, Your Honor.

The Court: Defense Counsel, you may cross-examine.

Defense Counsel: Abigail, are you with us?

Abigail: Yes, I am.

Defense Counsel: You can bring on those trances whenever you want, can't you, Abigail?

Abigail: Of course not!

Defense Counsel: Isn't it true that you first made these allegations against my client after your parents caught you going to the town square without their permission?

Abigail: Well, I guess that's true.

Defense Counsel: You and Elizabeth wanted to find a way to get out of trouble, didn't you?

Abigail: No, that's not true. She did pinch us and bite us.

Defense Counsel: Did anyone ever find any marks on you from these alleged pinches and bites?

Abigail: No, there weren't any.

Defense Counsel: That's because you made the whole thing up, didn't you, Abigail?

Abigail: (Crying) No, I didn't. Please believe me.

Defense Counsel: No further questions of this witness, Your Honor.

The Court: Abigail, you may step down. Any additional witnesses on behalf of the people?

Prosecutor: The people of the Colony of Massachusetts rest, Your Honor.

The Court: Defense Counsel, do you wish to present any witnesses?

Defense Counsel: Your Honor, the defense calls the defendant, Sarah Good.

Clerk swears in Sarah Good.

Defense Counsel: Sarah, can you tell us a little about yourself?

Sarah: I am a poor peasant woman. I have to beg for food to support myself and I move around from house to house in Salem. I am a God-fearing woman. I attend church every Sunday.

Defense Counsel: Are you a witch, Sarah?

Sarah: Heavens no! I don't know why these children have falsely accused me. I have hardly ever talked to them in my life! This is so unfair!

Defense Counsel: Did you ever bite or pinch Abigail Williams on January 20, 1692?

Sarah: Of course not! In fact, she says this happened in the town square. I wasn't even at the town square on that day. I was hired by John Putnam to clean out his stables that day. I was at his place the whole day. These charges are false!

Defense Counsel: No further questions, Your Honor.

The Court: Prosecutor, you may cross examine.

Prosecutor: Sarah Good, how do you explain Abigail's uncontrollable trances and contortions?

Sarah: This is nothing more than a childhood prank. Who ever heard of someone who can go into a trance any time she wants! It is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard of! What kind of a court is this? Where is the real evidence against me?

Prosecutor: Your Honor, I would ask the defendant to stand and show the jury her neck.

Sarah stands and shows the jury her neck which has a small birth mark on it.

Prosecutor: Sarah Good, how do you explain that hideous witches' mark on your neck?

Sarah: If you are talking about this small birth mark, I can assure you I have had this since the day I was born. I can't believe you would try to call that a witches' mark. Half the people in this town probably have a birthmark on some part of their bodies. Are they all witches?

Prosecutor: No further questions, Your Honor.

The Court: Ms. Good, you are excused.

Defense Counsel: The defense rests, Your Honor.

The Court: We will now have the closing arguments of counsel. Prosecutor, you may proceed.

Prosecutor: Members of the jury. You have overwhelming evidence that this woman, Sarah Good, is indeed a witch. You have the testimony of Abigail Williams, a young innocent child who has been stricken with horrible afflictions ever since she came into contact with the defendant. Her body goes into uncontrollable seizures and trances. In fact, you witnessed one of her trances today. You heard that not only has Abigail been inflicted, but also her friend, Elizabeth Parris, has also been attacked by these mysterious illnesses. What other possible explanation is there other than witchcraft? We also showed you the hideous witches' mark on Sarah Good's neck. Again, what other reasonable explanation is there for that obvious sign from the Devil? Help rid Salem of this horrible creature before more of our children are stricken. Find Sarah Good guilty of witchcraft!

The Court: Defense counsel, you may give your closing argument.

Defense Counsel: Members of the jury: What has happened to this community? We have a couple of children who have been caught going to town without their parents' permission. In order to avoid getting into trouble, they make up this ridiculous story about being bitten and pinched by my client. Interestingly enough, there is not one mark on either child. Why? Because it is all a big act. Speaking of big acts, how about that so-called trance Abigail went into. You could see how fake that was, couldn't you? That is what the prosecutor calls evidence. I call it a big joke. Then the only other evidence they have is a birthmark on Sarah's neck. Can you believe it has come to this? If you have a birthmark, you are a witch! Members of the jury, we moved to this colony to get away from the harsh treatment of the royal King. We moved here so that we could practice our religions freely, and we could have our own system of justice. The ONLY justice in this case would be to find my client, Sarah Good, not guilty of this crime.

The Court: Jury instructions.