

Materials:

- Age-appropriate reading passage(s) about the Salem Witch Trials (e.g., articles from reliable sources like National Geographic Kids, historical websites, or excerpts from non-fiction books).
- Notebook or paper
- Pen or pencil
- Dictionary (online or print)
- Optional: Timeline template

Lesson Activities:

1. Introduction: What Do You Know? (10 mins)

Let's dive into a fascinating and mysterious time in American history: the Salem Witch Trials of 1692! What comes to mind when you hear 'Salem Witch Trials'? Let's jot down some initial thoughts or questions you have. We'll revisit these later.

2. Setting the Scene: Puritan Life (10 mins)

Before reading about the trials, it's important to understand the world where they happened. Briefly discuss Puritan beliefs: strong religious views, fear of the Devil, strict rules, and life in a small, isolated community. How might these beliefs have made people fearful?

3. Reading Adventure: Uncovering the Story (25-30 mins)

Now, let's read our passage(s) about the Salem Witch Trials. As you read:

- **Vocabulary Hunt:** Underline or list any unfamiliar words (like 'hysteria', 'accusation', 'spectral evidence', 'afflicted'). We'll look these up together afterward.
- **Who's Who?:** Pay attention to the key people involved (accusers, accused, judges).
- **What Happened?:** Focus on the sequence of events. What started the accusations? How did things escalate?
- **Main Idea:** What is the most important message or point the author wants you to understand about the trials?

After reading, we'll discuss: What were the main events? Who were some key figures? What did you find most surprising or confusing?

4. Word Wizards (10 mins)

Let's tackle those vocabulary words you found. We'll look up their meanings using the dictionary and try to use each one in a sentence related to the Salem Witch Trials.

5. Digging Deeper: Why Did It Happen? (15 mins)

Using clues from the text, let's think about **why** the witch trials might have happened. Was it just one thing, or a combination of factors? Consider:

- Fear and superstition
- Community tensions or rivalries
- Strict religious beliefs

- The power of suggestion

Let's discuss the evidence from the text that supports these ideas.

6. Wrap-up & Reflection (5 mins)

What did we learn about the Salem Witch Trials today? What reading skills did we practice (finding main ideas, understanding vocabulary, sequencing events, making inferences)? Let's look back at the initial thoughts and questions we wrote down. Have any of your ideas changed? Were any of your questions answered?

Optional Extension:

- Create a timeline mapping the key events of the Salem Witch Trials.
- Research one specific person involved (like Tituba, Abigail Williams, or Judge Hathorne) and write a short paragraph about them.
- Imagine you lived in Salem in 1692 (but were not involved in the accusations). Write a short diary entry about what you might see or hear.