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Keys to Comprehension



PRE-READING STRATEGIES

These are the first two steps to reading and thinking like an effective reader. This strategy will prepare you to approach a new story or article clued in to what to expect from the text.

1. Overlook:

Look over the entire article to establish the purpose and to identify the main idea.

Closely Examine:

- Titles
- Heading and subheadings
- Pictures and their captions

2. Question:

The second step is to ask yourself questions as you are looking over the piece of writing.

For Example:

- The title might be: *Three Events That Cause Earthquakes*.
Question: What are the three events that cause earthquakes?
- The heading for a section could be: *Stress Build-up*.
Question: How is stress a factor in earthquakes?
- The subheading for that section could be: *The World's Most Active Earthquakes*.
Question: Where are the most active earthquakes?
- Pictures and captions:
Question: What do the pictures show me? How do the captions explain the pictures?
- Word Boxes:
Question: Do I understand these definitions?



**Remember: Put the questions in your own words.
It helps you to comprehend and recall.**

Ask Yourself:

Line 35: In this sentence, what does the author want me to think about?

Lines 54-59: What more does this reveal about the girls' motives?

Lines 61-64: What logical conclusion can I draw?

The Witches of Salem

by Henrietta Elizabeth Marshall

We have all read stories about witches. They are exciting enough to read about, but we recognize that they are merely fictional characters in books.

5

More than two hundred years ago, however, many people believed in witches. It was generally very old people, people who had grown ugly and witless with age, who were accused of being witches. Bent

10

almost double, they walked about with a crutch, shaking and mumbling as they went. If anyone had an ache or a pain, it was easily accounted for—they were bewitched! The poor old crone was the witch who had “cast the evil eye” upon them. And sometimes these poor creatures were put to death for their so-called deeds of witchcraft.

15

People believed that these witches sold themselves to the Evil One, and that he gave them power to harm other people. What made them more dangerous was the fact that they did not need to go near people to harm them, but could do evil at a distance by thinking wicked thoughts, or saying wicked words. Suddenly, in 1692, whole towns and villages of New England were thrown into a state of terror by stories of witchcraft.

20

Odd Behavior

It started quite simply in Salem Village. The young niece and daughter of a minister named Samuel Parris suddenly began to behave in a most curious manner.

25

They would creep into holes, hide under chairs and benches, twist themselves into odd positions, and talk nonsense. Their parents did not know what to make of it, and so they called in the doctors. The doctors, too, did not understand what could cause this new and strange behavior; one of them said he thought that the children must be bewitched.

30

That was a terrible thought, and at once the minister called in all the other ministers from round about. All the neighbors, too, came crowding to the house, eager



Fear of a witch's power invaded many a Salem courtroom.

to hear about the dreadful happenings. And the children, finding themselves all at once people of importance and no doubt enjoying the fuss, went on more than ever with their mad antics.

A Woman Is Accused of Witchcraft

35 It was quite plain to everyone that the children were bewitched. However, who had done it? Every day the children were asked this question, until finally they accused a poor old Indian woman, who was a servant to the family. And

40 the poor old creature was beaten and terrified until she actually confessed that she was a witch.



An “afflicted” man has fallen to the floor during a witch’s courthouse trial.

45 Perhaps the children had had a grudge against the old woman, or perhaps they did not realize at first how cruel they were. Nevertheless, when they realized what excitement they caused, and how important they had suddenly become, they forgot

50 everything else. They became bolder now and accused other old women. Soon more and older girls joined them, and many innocent people, both men and women, were accused by them of witchcraft.

Some Are Put to Death

55 The girls did all sorts of things to make people believe in these accusations. As soon as an old woman was brought in, they would fall down on the ground screaming. If she moved, they would cry out that she was crushing them to death. If she bit her lip, they would declare that she was biting them. They would seem to fall down in fits or to be struck dumb. They so worked upon the superstitious fears of those present, that at length both judge and jury would condemn the old woman to death.

60 Soon a kind of madness took possession of the people. Person after person was accused. Insults or quarrels ten or even twenty years old were remembered, and blamed on this person or that. No man or woman

65 was safe—terror and mistrust were everywhere. Parents accused their children, children their parents, husbands and wives turned against each other, until the prisons were

70 filled to overflowing.



Sometimes punishment included confinement in the stockade.

It was quite useless for the prisoners to declare that they were innocent. Few believed them. If any did, they hardly dared to say so, fearful that they, too, would find themselves accused and locked in prison.

75 One or two men escaped with their wives and fled beyond the borders of the colony. Twenty, however, were put to death by hanging, among them a minister. All of the twenty to the last declared their innocence.

The Madness Passes

80 This terrible madness lasted for a year. Then it passed as suddenly as it had come. The people awoke again to their right senses. The prison doors were opened and the poor, innocent people were set free. The wicked children who had accused them were never punished. One of them did repent bitterly, and years later openly acknowledged her sorrow for her share in the sad business.

85 The minister in whose house the persecution began, was punished. The people were so angry with him and the part he had taken, that they would have no more to do with him, and he was obliged to leave Salem village.

Tips for Answering the Objective Question

In this book, there is no guessing penalty. **Never** leave a blank. When unsure, eliminate answers you know are not correct. Then take an educated guess using the process of elimination.

Circle the letter next to the correct answer.

1. **Part A.** What can the reader conclude about the behavior of the girls BEFORE the doctor was consulted?
 - a. They had gone mad.
 - b. They were mysteriously ill.
 - c. They were bewitched.
 - d. They were playing a game.

1. **Part B.** Which statement from the passage best helps the reader understand this?
 - a. *"It was quite plain to everyone that the children were bewitched."* (line 35)
 - b. *"...suddenly began to behave in a most curious manner."* (line 24)
 - c. *"...no doubt enjoying the fuss, went on more than ever with their mad antics."* (lines 32-33)
 - d. *"The doctors, too, did not understand what could cause this..."* (line 27)

2. According to this article, which term below best describes the people of Salem in 1692?
 - a. most forgiving
 - b. easily influenced
 - c. very cautious
 - d. overly concerned

3. According to lines 36-42 of the passage, what was the most likely reason this woman was accused?
 - a. She was the one who had cast the spell.
 - b. The woman confessed to being a witch.
 - c. She would be least likely to defend herself.
 - d. The woman had been mean and abusive.

4. Under which heading of the story would you find information about the doctors' role?
 - a. Some Are Put to Death
 - b. The Madness Passes
 - c. Odd Behavior
 - d. A Woman Is Accused of Witchcraft

5. According to lines 30-33 of the passage, what caused the hysteria to grow?
 - a. The girls felt very important.
 - b. Many old women confessed.
 - c. Death of the witches brought a "cure".
 - d. The doctors said it was so.

6. With which statement about that time in Salem would the author most likely agree?
 - a. It was a necessary step in history.
 - b. It was a time we should forget.
 - c. It was a strange and interesting period.
 - d. It was not a time to be proud of.

7. **Part A.** When did the accusations of witchcraft finally end?
 - a. when one of the girls finally told the truth
 - b. after many people fled the colony
 - c. as soon as the people recognized their error
 - d. when the Ministers finally convinced the others

7. **Part B.** Which statement from the passage best helps the reader understand this?
 - a. *"The people awoke again to their right senses."* (line 79)
 - b. *"One of them did repent bitterly..."* (line 81)
 - c. *"...years later openly acknowledged her sorrow..."* (lines 81-82)
 - d. *"The minister in whose house the persecution began, was punished."* (line 83)

8. Why is this event still important to us today?
 - a. It proves that we cannot learn from history.
 - b. It tells us no one should get a death sentence.
 - c. It reminds us that kids will do anything to get attention.
 - d. It warns of the danger of acting on superstitious fears.