

Salem Evidence A: “Discourse on Witchcraft” (ORIGINAL)

In the speech below, Cotton Mather, an influential leader of the Puritans, argues for the existence of witchcraft (1688).

It should next be proved *THAT* Witchcraft *is*.

The *being* of such a thing is denied by many that place a *great part* of their *small wit* in deriding the stories that are told of it. Their chief argument is that they never *saw* any witches, therefore there are *none*. Just as if you or I should say, we never met with any *robbers* on the road, therefore there never was any *padding* there. . . .

[T]here are especially two demonstrations that evince the being of that infernal mysterious thing. *First*. We have the testimony of *scripture* for it. *Secondly*. We have the *testimony* of *experience* for it. . . . Many *witches* have . . . *confessed and shown their deeds*. We see those things done that it is impossible any disease or any deceit should procure.

Source: Cotton Mather, “Memorable Providences relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions,” from *A Discourse on Witchcraft*, (Boston, 1689), pp. 4-9. Cotton Mather was one of the most influential religious leaders in America at the time.

Salem Evidence B: Testimony of Abigail Hobbs (ORIGINAL)

Below is the testimony of a teenager accused of witchcraft, Abigail Hobbs, on April 19, 1692.

The Examination of Abigail Hobbs , at Salem Village, 19 April, 1692, by John Hawthorn and Jonath. Corwin , Esqs., and Assistants.

[Judge:] Abig. Hobbs, you are brought before Authority to answer to sundry acts of witchcraft, committed by you against and upon the bodies of many, of which several persons now accuse you. What say you? Are you guilty, or not? Speak the truth.

[Abigail Hobbs:] I will speak the truth. I have seen sights and been scared. I have been very wicked. I hope I shall be better, if God will help me.

[Judge:] What sights did you see?

[Abigail Hobbs:] I have seen dogs and many creatures.

[Judge:] What dogs do you mean, ordinary dogs?

[Abigail Hobbs:] I mean the Devil.

[Judge:] How often, many times?

[Abigail Hobbs:] But once.

. . . .

[Judge:] What would he have you do?

[Abigail Hobbs:] Why, he would have me be a witch.

[Judge:] Would he have you make a covenant with him?

[Abigail Hobbs:] Yes.