GECMUN XIII

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Crisis Committee #1

Exposing the identity of illicit sorceresses during the Salem Witch Trials

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Committee Introduction

The committee takes on the role of a tribunal assembled by the Massachusetts Bay Colony to confront a terrifying surge of witchcraft allegations sweeping through Salem and its surrounding communities in the late 17th century– events that would later become known as the Salem Witch Trials. As reports of sorcery multiply at an alarming pace and fear begins to take hold of the population, the colony finds itself facing a crisis that threatens not only public order, but also the deeply rooted religious and social foundations upon which its communities were built.

While this committee draws inspiration from the historical Salem Witch Trials, it should be viewed as **historical fiction**. Certain characters, events, and supernatural elements have been modified or expanded to encourage dynamic debate and engaging crises. Delegates should fully immerse themselves in the beliefs and worldview of 17th century New England rather than applying modern perspectives.

The committee will operate as a continuous crisis committee, where delegates proxy individual historical figures rather than nations.

Unlike general assembly committees, delegates will represent individual people– each with their own authority, motivations, ambitions, loyalties, and hidden objectives. Delegates should therefore speak using personal pronouns such as I, me, and my throughout debate. Additionally, the committee will begin with a round robin, allowing each delegate to introduce themselves, explain their position regarding the suspected witchcraft, and outline their proposed course of action.

One of the defining characteristics of a crisis committee is the incorporation of crisis updates. Throughout committee, members of the Secretariat may interrupt debate to announce unexpected developments that immediately alter the course of events. These updates may include new accusations of witchcraft, mysterious deaths, escaped prisoners, public unrest, religious revelations, discoveries of suspicious evidence, or other unforeseen incidents. Delegates should be prepared to adapt their strategies as new information emerges. It is important to remember that not all information presented during committee will necessarily be reliable. Farcical evidence and even personal agendas may all influence the events of Salem, requiring delegates to carefully evaluate the credibility of every claim before acting upon it.

In addition to updates, delegates will have the opportunity to submit crisis notes directly to the dais. Unlike public directives, which are documents debated and voted upon by the committee, crisis notes (AKA private directives) are communications visible only to the submitting delegate(s) and the dais. Crisis notes may take many forms, including but not limited to: personal letters, confidential requests, covert investigations, private interrogations, attempts to gather intelligence, or other actions that delegates wish to undertake outside of formal committee proceedings in secrecy. The results of these actions will be determined by the Backroom and communicated privately whenever appropriate; depending on the circumstance, the private directive may be material to upcoming crisis updates.

During committee, operations will be divided between the Frontroom and the Backroom. The Frontroom is the committee itself, where delegates debate, negotiate, draft directives, and vote on the collective decisions alongside the dais. The Backroom consists of members of the Secretariat responsible for processing directives, responding to crisis notes, coordinating delegate actions, and

preparing future crisis updates based upon the committee's decisions. Every action taken by delegates has the potential to influence the progression of the committee and shape future events.

Delegates will gradually uncover testimony, witness statements, physical evidence, confessions, rumours, and other forms of intelligence relating to suspected acts of witchcraft. However delegates should not assume that every accusation is truthful or that every suspect is guilty. Likewise, they should not dismiss every claim as mere superstition. Determining which evidence is credible and deciding how to respond to it will be one of the committee's greatest challenges. Rash decisions may fuel panic and injustice, while excessive caution may allow genuine threats to continue unchecked.

Not only that, delegates should immerse themselves in the beliefs and worldviews of 17th century New England while recognizing that certain historical events and supernatural elements have been altered for the purpose of this conference. Within this committee, the existence and extent of witchcraft remain uncertain. Delegates must determine for themselves whether accusations stem from fear and hysteria or genuine acts of sorcery, as the truth will unfold only through committee proceedings and crisis updates.

For the purposes of committee, all information contained within this topic guide should be regarded as factual. Committee will take place in March 1692, shortly after the first formal accusations of witchcraft in Salem Village. Any real-world events occurring after this point should not be assumed to take place, as the future of Salem will instead be determined entirely by the action and decisions of the delegates.

This committee is designed to reward critical thinking, adaptability, diplomacy, and creativity. Every speech, directive, crisis note, alliance, and decision will influence the development of committee and the ultimate fate of Salem; consider carefully your course of action and take into account all underlying uncertainties within the conference.

Agenda Introduction

The year is 1692, and the Salem Witch Trials have developed beyond a series of isolated accusations into a broader crisis of law, religion, and political authority. What began with allegations of witchcraft has rapidly expanded as accusations spread between Salem Village and surrounding communities. As the number of suspects increases, colonial authorities face the difficult task of determining which accusations warrant investigation, what constitutes credible evidence, and how the courts should respond without allowing fear and suspicion to further destabilize the community.

The central issue facing Salem is therefore not simply the identification of alleged witches, but the reliability and legitimacy of the process through which individuals are being accused and prosecuted. Testimonies regarding supernatural encounters, particularly spectral evidence or sorcerers' familiars, have been accepted despite their inability to be independently verified. Confessions have sometimes led to further accusations, creating an expanding network of suspects. The absence of consistent standards for evidence has allowed personal disputes, rumours, and existing community tension to enter judicial proceedings, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish legitimate accusations from fabricated or politically motivated claims.

The consequences of these proceedings have fallen disproportionately upon individuals with limited social or political protection. Poor women, elderly women, servants, enslaved individuals, religious outsiders, and members of families involved in local disputes have been particularly vulnerable to accusation. At the same time, social status has not provided complete protection. Several respected members of the community have also been accused, demonstrating the extent to which the growing accusations can cross established social boundaries. The committee must therefore consider how the prosecution of witchcraft affects not only individual suspects, but also families, religious communities, property ownership, and the broader stability of Salem.

The crisis is further complicated by divisions among Salem's existing political and religious factions. Four major factions have emerged within the community: Reverend Samuel Parris' supporters, the Anti-Parris faction, Putnam's supporters, and Porter's supporters. **Reverend Samuel Parris' supporters** generally consist of those who support Parris' position as minister of Salem Village and favor the preservation of his religious authority. They tend to view the accusations of witchcraft as a serious spiritual threat and have an interest in strengthening the legitimacy of the investigations and the authority of those leading them. **The Anti-Parris faction** is composed of residents who oppose Parris' influence, particularly his unofficial reign over the church and his multiessential role in community affairs. The opposition is rooted not only in religious disagreements but also disputes over financial obligations and the direction of the village, making witchcraft accusations another potential field to challenge Parris. **Putnam's supporters**, associated with the influential Putnam family and its allies, hold considerable social and political influence within Salem Village. The faction has strong connections to families involved in the accusations and has an interest in protecting its position within the collective Salem residents while supporting measures that it believes will address the threat of witchcraft. In contrast, **Porter's supporters** are aligned with the Porter family and other residents who have often found themselves on the opposite side of the village's existing local rivalries. Their interests reside in limiting the political monopoly of competing families and thwarting actions that are based on factional interests rather than impartial justice.

These factions are not simply divided over whether witchcraft exists; they also represent competing positions on religious authority, political influence, family interests, community leadership, and the legitimacy of the proceedings themselves. Their rivalries have influenced community disputes and may also affect how accusations are made, supported, or challenged. As a result, determining the identity of alleged witches are aligned with the larger struggle over political and societal authority within Salem.

Letter from the Chairs

Hello delegates, this is Shinho (Kyle) Lee, who will be serving as your crisis director in GECMUN XIII! I am a rising junior at Korea International School Jeju, and I am thrilled to see all of you in this potentially chaotic committee we will build together. As I enter my 6th year participating as a member in the MUN community, I will make sure that fun and inclusion are prioritized in this conference. I hope we chairs can assist all you delegates to the greatest extent possible in writing public/private directives and making speeches. In my truest intention, I hope to see all of you show malicious and creative ways to witch hunt each other in the trials. See you soon!

Greetings delegates, my name is Eric Jang, and I am a rising sophomore at St. Johnsbury Academy Jeju. I'm truly honored to be serving as your head chair for the Crisis #1 Committee! This will be my 5th year in my MUN journey, and my 8th chairing experience. All of us chairs are looking forward to the creativity, diplomacy, and growth you will demonstrate throughout the duration of the conference. I hope this committee will serve as a meaningful experience for your MUN journey and a fun one as well. Good luck in your preparations and see you at the conference!

Good to see you, delegates! My name is Victoria Kang, and I am delighted to serve as your deputy chair for this crisis committee as a rising senior at Daegu International School. We've chosen for you to handle an unconventional and truly erratic theme: the Salem Witch Trials. While your speeches and debates shape Salem's public opinion, the choices you make behind closed doors may prove even more consequential. In a town divided by fear, faith, and personal ambition, even the smallest action can change the course of the crisis. As members of Salem seeking to prosecute witchcraft, you are encouraged to fully embrace your roles, think strategically, and remember that in a society governed by suspicion, appearances are rarely what they seem.

Best regards,

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Key Terms

Affliction
Physical or psychological suffering believed to have been caused by witchcraft. Reported symptoms could include fits, pain, strange movements, loss of speech, or visions.

Anglicanism
The religious traditions of the Church of England. Earlier tensions between Anglican institutions and Puritan reformers contributed to the establishment and religious character of Puritan New England.

Capital Crime
An offense punishable by death. Under the legal tradition governing Massachusetts, witchcraft could be treated as a capital offense.

Confession under Duress
An admission obtained through intense psychological, social, or physical pressure. Each respective evidence obtained is significant in evaluating the reliability of confessions during the witchcraft prosecutions.

Congregationalism
The dominant system of church organization in Puritan New England, in which individual congregations governed many of their own religious affairs. Church membership and standing greatly affected social authority and reputation.

Court of Oyer and Terminer (May – October 1692)
A special court established to hear witchcraft cases during the Salem crisis. It conducted trials, accepted controversial forms of evidence including spectral evidence, and sentenced accused individuals before being dissolved amid growing concerns over its proceedings.

Covenant
A solemn agreement carrying profound religious significance in Puritan thought. The concept applied to relationships between individuals, communities, and God, while fears also existed concerning an opposing covenant with Satan.

Devil's Compact
An alleged agreement between a person and the Devil, supposedly granting supernatural powers in exchange for loyalty or service.

Dissenters
Individuals or religious groups who rejected or challenged established religious authority. In a society that strongly valued religious conformity, dissent could lead to suspicion, punishment, or social exclusion.

English Witchcraft Act of 1604
An English statute that made certain forms of witchcraft and alleged dealings with evil spirits serious criminal offenses. It formed part of the broader English legal tradition influencing colonial attitudes toward witchcraft.

Examination
A preliminary judicial questioning of an accused person before the magistrates. Examinations could be public and often involved testimony from accusers, scrutiny of the suspect's behavior, and considerable pressure.

Familiar Spirit
A supernatural entity believed to assist or serve a witch, sometimes appearing in the form of an animal or another creature.

King William's War (1689 – 1697)
An ongoing colonial conflict, a portion of a larger European tension between England and France for control. The war consisted of bloody frontier raids from the French and their indigenous allies, while the colonists launched retaliatory expeditions to capture French strongholds. Fierce competition over lucrative fur trade and shifting alliances drove the conflict into a stalemate.

Magistrate
A government official possessing judicial authority who could question suspects, issue warrants, hear complaints, and conduct preliminary examinations.

Maleficium
Harm allegedly caused through magic or supernatural means, including illness, injury, crop failure, or death. Claims of unexplained misfortune could contribute to suspicions of witchcraft.

Massachusetts Bay Colony
The English colonial society in which Salem Village existed. Its legal traditions, Puritan religious culture, and political circumstances shaped the environment surrounding witchcraft accusations.

Naming Names
The practice of an accused or confessed witch identifying other supposed participants. This could create chains of suspicion and cause accusations to spread rapidly.

Puritanism
A Protestant religious movement that sought to purify the Church of England of practices considered insufficiently reformed. Puritan beliefs strongly shaped Massachusetts society, emphasizing strict morality, communal discipline, divine providence, and the constant danger of sin and Satanic influence.

Quakers
Members of the Religious Society of Friends, a Christian movement whose beliefs and practices conflicted with Puritan orthodoxy. Their persecution illustrates the wider climate of religious intolerance in colonial Massachusetts.

Spectral Evidence
Testimony claiming that the spirit or apparition of an accused person had appeared to and harmed someone. Such claims became highly significant and controversial in the Salem witchcraft proceedings.

Theocracy
A system in which religious authority and government are closely connected. Massachusetts was not

strictly a pure theocracy, but religious beliefs profoundly influenced its laws, government, and social order.

Witch
A person believed to have entered into a relationship or covenant with the Devil and received supernatural powers in return. In the context of the trials, being called a witch was an accusation rather than proof of actual supernatural activity.

Witchcraft
The alleged use of supernatural powers, particularly through a relationship with the Devil, to cause harm or undermine Christian society. In 17th century Massachusetts, witchcraft was regarded as both a religious threat and serious crime.

Witch's Mark
An unusual bodily mark or physical feature that some authorities believed might indicate a person's relationship with witchcraft or the Devil. These features included warts, moles, birthmarks, and skin tags. If the spot did not bleed when pricked, it was considered physical proof of a demonic pact.

Historical Background

In the city to be called in the future “Danvers,” located near the suburbs of Boston, lies a town named “Salem Village”, demographically consisting of approximately 600 men coming from the British Isles and South America in 1692.

Reportedly, the first case of this inexplicable anomaly began with Puritan pastor Samuel Parris finding his daughter Betty Parris and niece Abigail William experiencing a bizarre form of seizure and expressing uncanny actions. The occurrence of this oddity led multiple professions to question the causation behind it, but in union, they call it an advent of the devil in mid-February.

In the spreading of the “witch scare” and the eyewitness accounts of sorcerous activities, folk remedies, including the consumption of the ‘Witch Bread’-made with rye flour and urine of the two victimized girls- viraled within the town, in the hope to save themselves from the grasp of the devil.

Simultaneously, in rising tensions of neighbours accusing the two of whom could be the witch, the two girls addressed and accused Tituba, a South American maid; Sarah Good, a random beggar that approach the church; and Sarah Osborne, an old lady who, suspiciously in the eyes of others, did not go to the church for a year as “witches”.

Sarah Good, who appeared extremely destitute, was already an ostracized member within the town, being prosecuted for going against the Puritan ideals that would guide individuals to self-discipline and control. Sarah Osborne, on the other hand, received hatred for her greedy behavior attempting to steal the legacies given to her son from her previous marriage. Lastly, Tituba became a target due to her ethnic difference and physical characteristics reflecting it and the rumor of her being a renegade of purity as she followed the ways of the devil and desire, stated by the stories of Malleus Maleficarum.

Women in accusation went through coerced inspection and investigation, which led to the confession of Tituba that she “cursed the others” and the demonized two had been accomplices in the scene. Tituba was interrogated by the magistrates John Hathorn and Jonathan Corwin in early March after the accusations against Betty Parris and Abigail Williams had already begun. She was coerced into confessing, and eventually confessed that a devil visited her, telling her to hurt children. She also confessed that witches Sarah Good and Sarah Osborn were also involved. In March, more and more accusations were being thrown around, especially toward vulnerable targets in the Puritan community. Tituba was an enslaved outsider, Sarah Good was poor and homeless, and Sarah Osborne had broken christian expectations by being extensively involved in an inheritance dispute.

A variety of events happened in March and April as new accusations began spreading quickly. On March 21, Martha Corey was examined by Judges Hathorne and Corwin. Then, two days later, on March 23, a 4-year-old child named Dorothy Good, daughter of Sarah Good, was accused of witchcraft. Then, on March 24, Rebecca Nurse was examined by the same magistrates. As respected, religious figures in the town, Corey and Nurse’s involvement made it seem that witchcraft was present everywhere. This was the point at which the witch scare evolved from episodes to a colony-wide panic.

In early April, the accusations widened further. On April 3rd, Sarah Cloyce was accused after defending Nurse. The next day, Elizabeth Proctor was accused as well. Both women were examined together before Governor Thomas Danforth and his council. Then, John Proctor was accused, becoming the first male accused member of Salem town. By late April, the fear of witchcraft became self-reinforcing. Every accusation confirmed that the next accusation was real, and every new suspect made the panic more evident. The pressure came to a head in May. In late May, Governor William Phips established a special court of Oyer and Terminer to try the accused witches.

As the court marked an opening to an era of formal recognition of witches and supernatural forces in Salem Village, political and social mistrust became convention, accusations started leading innocuous individuals to death, and conflicts within families and rival groups arose to seize this moment as a chance of neutralization.

Current State of Affairs

Salem Village stands pressured by an atmosphere where fear has become as pervasive as faith. What began as a series of inexplicable afflictions suffered by several young girls has rapidly transformed into a matter of public alarm., convincing many that the 'Devil' has found willing servants within Salem. To a traditional Puritan society, witchcraft is not dismissed as folklore or simple superstition, but regarded as a tangible assault upon both God and civil order. Consequently, the search for those believed to have entered into a covenant with Satan has become an urgent responsibility shared by ministers, magistrates, and ordinary townspeople alike.

In response, local authorities have commenced formal investigations into suspected witchcraft practitioners and laws have been established to make arrests for witchcraft a legality. Examinations of the accused are now taking place before magistrates, while arrests are becoming increasingly frequent as new testimonies emerge. Every accusation carries the potential to expose another alleged servant of the Devil, compelling officials to act hastily lest the perceived corruption spread unchecked throughout the colony. For many inhabitants, justice is no longer merely a legal obligation– it has become a sacred duty.

Religious tensions have likewise deepened existing divisions among Salem's residents. Puritan doctrine demands strict moral discipline, encouraging constant vigilance against sin and spiritual corruption. Under such expectations, longstanding disputes between neighbors, disagreement within families, and personal grievances can quickly acquire theological significance. Actions once interpreted as ordinary conflict are increasingly viewed through the unsettling lens of possible witchcraft.

Despite the colony's determination to uncover those responsible, the mechanisms employed to investigate suspected witches remain deeply imperfect. Much of the judicial process depends upon personal testimony, allowing accusations to initiate legal proceedings even when little material evidence accompanies them. Reputation, rumor, and suspicion often travel faster than verifiable fact, making it exceedingly difficult to distinguish genuine concern from personal animosity.

Among the most controversial practices is the acceptance of *spectral evidence* which claims that an accused person's spirit or apparition has appeared to torment victims despite the individual's physical absence. Such testimony presents an extraordinary challenge to the administration of justice, for neither magistrates nor witnesses possess any reliable means of confirming or disproving experiences rooted solely in personal perception. Yet many regard these accounts as sincere manifestations of demonic influence, granting them considerable weight within examinations.

The courts also operate beneath immense public pressure. As anxiety spreads throughout Salem, magistrates are expected to produce swift answers capable of restoring confidence within the community, and detention facilities struggle to accommodate the growing number of prisoners awaiting examination. This expectation creates an environment in which hesitation may be mistaken for weakness. In this case, caution risks appearing as sympathetic to darkness. Compounding these difficulties, no consistent legal standard guides these investigations. Witnesses of vastly differing credibility receive similar consideration, and confessions are evaluated alongside hearsay. The pursuit of certainty often competes with the deliberation upon which justice ought to depend.

Rather than containing the crisis, each investigation appears only to widen its reach. Accusations no longer remain confined to society's most vulnerable or marginalized individuals. Respected church members, landowners, and prominent families start to find themselves drawn into expanding webs of suspicion. This has eroded the bonds that once held Salem together. Instead of restoring confidence, successive investigations encourage additional witnesses to come forward, creating a cycle in which fear continually sustains itself.

It is within this precarious balance that the Massachusetts Bay Colony now finds itself. Faced with mounting public anxiety, imperfect methods of investigation, and a steadily growing list of the accused, the colony stands upon the threshold of decisions that will determine not only who is brought before the law, but also how justice itself will be defined. The responsibility now falls upon this committee to determine whether Salem can expose those truly guilty of illicit sorcery while preserving the integrity of both its courts and its covenant with God.

Stances of Parties

Abigail Williams
In January 1692, Abigail and her cousin Betty Parris were the first two girls in Salem Village to express bizarre behavior, contortions, and screaming, which seemed to be a sign of unholy and mysterious input of witchcraft from the perspectives of neighbours. Under interrogation of the villagers upon her, she falsely entitled Tituba, Parris family's servant, and Sarah Good, a beggar in poverty, as legitimate practitioners of witchcraft. Her accusations later expanded into prominent figures in the society such as ministers and church members. This accumulated to the point where more than 41 individuals have been called against her testimonies.

Bartholomew Gedney
Bartholomew Gedney was a wealthy physician, merchant, military officer, and magistrate who served as a judge on the Court of Yer and Terminer. He took a more lenient and gentle position in interrogating or accusing one upon the court, as he perceived that random church members and respectful individuals. His experience later influenced his path as a judge, becoming more thorough and empirically demanding to support testimonies and circumstances. He was ultimately appointed as a judge in the Superior Court of Judicature in 1693.

Cotton Mather
Cotton Mather was an influential figure who wrote the *Memorable Providences*, an opinion that sharpened the ideas toward witchcraft and anomalies. Through his preliminary suggestion on witchcraft, he also recommended the court to not account fully by "spectral evidence" that witchcraft and sorcery is in fact, as the Devil may be tricking innocent people. With growing public unease, Mather advocated for the court's rule under the name of spiritual defence against satanic influences.

Elizabeth Proctor
Elizabeth Proctor was accused along with her husband based on spectral testimony by Elizabeth Booth, who claimed the specters of murders told her the Proctors killed them. She was convicted and sentenced to death, but she was pregnant at that time, so she waited execution until her child was born. However, the trial ultimately collapsed and she was released. Her case was simply a coincidence rather than a sign of reform.

Francis Nurse
France Nurse was a Salem Village farmer, and the husband of Rebecca Nurse, who participated in a wide variety of legal activities against accusations made to her family. He vigorously gathered evidence against accusations made to his wife, who was a revered church member, to prove that she was innocuous. Securing a formal petition consisting 39 prominent neighbours' signatures, he attempted a robust attestation challenging the Court's overdependence on spectral evidence. However, the afflicted girl's claims were more heavily considered, dismissing Nurse's challenges at the end.

Giles Corey
Giles Corey was Martha Corey's husband, who was an 80 year old farmer accused after defending his wife's stance, also indirectly opposing the trials. When he was brought before the court, he refued to enter a plea. As punishment for standing mute, he was sentenced to peine forte et dure. In this torture,

he had to sit under increasing loads of stone over two days. When he was asked to plead, his only response was to add more weight, and he eventually gave no confession.

Increase Mather
Mather was the president of Harvard College, who served as a Puritan minister as well as a political diplomat. Returning from London to have negotiated a new royal charter for Massachusetts, he contributed to the appointment of Sir William Phips as the royal governor of the colony. He wrote books indicating research on supernatural events, such as *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Provinces*(1684). He later wrote *Cases of Conscience Concerning Evil Spirits Personating Men* to advocate the innocently accused individuals in custody and argue against the application of spectral evidence to support a case. He condoned Anglo-American jurisprudence by delivering a renowned legal aphorism ""It was better that ten suspected witches should escape, than that one innocent person should be condemned."

John Hawthorne
John Hawthorne took a mutli-hypenate position as a merchant, magistrate, and judge on the Court of Oyer and Terminator in Massachusetts. He was known for his aggressive behavior in accusing witches. He fundamentally had a stance of treating a suspect as being guilty until proven innocent. In alignment with William Stoughton, he sent several individuals to jail. His stances weren't corrected even by the end of the Salem witch trials, when other jurors admitted significant errors to their discretion.

John Proctor
John Proctor was a prosperous Salem farmer and tavern owner who eventually became one of the trial's largest critics, publicly dismissing the afflicted girls' accusations as fraud and pressuring his own servant, Mary Warren, to recant her testimony. His skepticism on the trials backfired, when Warren later returned to accuse him, while Mary Walcott separately claimed he tried to choke her to death. Despite all this turbulence, 32 neighbors signed a petition for him, describing he was a devout christian. However, this show of community was disregarded by the court entirely. In history, Proctor and his wife were tried on August 5th, 1692, and he was hanged on August 19th.

Jonathan Corwin
Jonathan Corwin was a wealthy Salem merchant who, along with John Hathorne, conducted the earliest examinations of the accused before the formal courts were established. He was later appointed to the Court of Oyer and Terminer after a previous magistrate resigned in protest of a hanging. As a judge, he bears responsibility for admitting spectral evidence, and has authority to change the proceedings of trials.

Martha Corey
Martha Corey was a church member who openly argued against the magistrates' discretion to credit the afflicted girls' accusations. However, this public stance simply placed her as a target. She was a very common case at this time, since most people who were against the trials were accused, tried, and executed at this time.

Mary Walcott
Mary Walcott was one of the afflicted girls and a cousin of Ann Putnam Jr. She was in a very tight social circle, which led to her accusations being very credible. She was an active accuser, naming

John Proctor among others and claiming his specter choked her. The spectral evidence was accepted and made her one of the most consequential people.

Mercy Lewis
Mercy Lewis was a 17-year-old servant in the Putnam household. He was vocal and prolific during accusations of the Salem Witch Trials. Her testimonies were brought forth to the court with greater consideration amongst the individuals who reportedly were afflicted by witchcraft. Many judges used her "evidence" as a way to order arrests and convictions in a judicial manner. One notable accusation made against her was against her former employer, Reverend George Burroughs. He was executed on Gallows Hill under the sin of asking Lewis to sign on the Devil's book.

Rebecca Nurse
Rebecca Nurse was an elderly, partially deaf church member whose piety was so established that her arrest and accusation shocked the community. When questioned about her specter tormenting the afflicted, she reportedly replied that the devil may only appear in shape. Although a valid point, this was a defense that could not overcome spectral testimony. A remarkable number of 39 neighbors signed a petition attesting to her innocence. Initially, the jury ruled in favor of her, but when the afflicted girls broke into fits in the courtroom, William Stoughton pressed the jury to reconsider, and they reversed the verdict.

Samuel Parris
Samuel Parris was the minister of Salem and the father and uncle to the two girls, Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, the very girls who ignited the crisis. When he was already involved in disputes with the village over the salary and firewood allowance, Parris validated the accusations. His congregation eventually brought formal charges against him in 1693, and he was eventually pressed out of position in the future.

William Phips
William Phips was the newly appointed royal governor of Massachusetts bay Colony whose order ultimately ended Salem Witch Trials. He was the one to notice custody facilities being overwhelmed with accused witches and sorcerers and issue a special commission to establish the Court of Oyer and Terminer on May 27th, 1692. Phips later prohibited the use of spectral evidence, dissolved the Court of Oyer and Terminer, and established the Superior Court of Judicature.

William Stoughton
William Stoughton was the lieutenant governor of Massachusetts and the chief magistrate in the Court of Oyer and Terminer. He can be titled as being infamous for making judicial approaches driving convictions and executions throughout 1692. His theological background in Harvard and Oxford gave him deep negative sentiments against the crime of witchcraft. Unequivocally, he championed the value of spectral evidence in court, based on his religious background, to decide on the legal position he took to punish the satan-motivated individuals.

Possible Solutions

1. **Legal Reform of Evidentiary Process**
   At the starting point of this crisis, the trial's legitimacy rests heavily on spectral evidence such as visions, dreams, and allegations about a witch's spirit. This results in a system that is easily swayed by confessions obtained through coercion, threats, and torture. Delegates can push to change the standards of valid proof in a witch trial accusation. A new standard would need to be issued through an authority the court officially recognizes. The new standard would set whether spectral evidence is admissible or not, or to what extent it is admissible. This would be a solution for resolving the hysteria's detrimental effects as a whole.

2. **Covert Investigative Body**
   Rather than relying on open accusations and mob testimony, a smaller, trusted group could be tasked with quietly investigating accusations before they end up in a trial, separating threats, panic-driven claims, and actual witchcraft witnesses. Delegates would have to decide on the make-up of the group and the procedures. Eventually, cases that are judged to be based on personal grudges, disputes, or panic are quietly dropped before open court. This would decrease the frequency and magnitude of public panics.

3. **Managing Public Perception**
   Although a somewhat immoral method, delegates could work to shape what the town believes by discrediting specific harmful accusers, controlling the testimonies that reach the public, or redirecting fear toward other explanations. Methods would be decided with debate. Redirecting fear means offering the town an alternative explanation for the misfortune is not witchcraft, and this would be delivered by physicians or a minister. Controlling the testimonies that are publicized means limiting the accusations that can be heard in open court. This way, public panic could be avoided through distractions.

Questions to Consider

- What standards should authorities establish to determine whether an accusation of witchcraft is credible enough to justify investigation, arrest, or prosecution?
- How should the committee distinguish legitimate evidence of witchcraft from accusations motivated by personal disputes or social tensions within the community?
- To what extent should spectral evidence, confessions, witness testimony, and physical evidence be trusted and how should conflicting forms of evidence be weighted against one another?
- What legal protections should be offered to the accused while still allowing authorities to investigate suspected witchcraft effectively?
- How can the committee prevent fear of witchcraft from encouraging false accusations or creating further disorder within Salem?
- What safeguards could determine whether claims of witchcraft are reliable?
- If existing legal procedures prove inadequate for addressing the growing crisis, what new institutions, investigative procedures, or judicial mechanisms should be established?
- With whom would your character most likely to cooperate in developing a response to the accusations, and what disagreements might prevent cooperation with other members of the committee?
- What would your character consider a successful resolution to the crisis? Ex.) Identifying and punishing suspected witches, restoring public order, protecting the innocent, strengthening religious authority, reforming legal proceedings, or some combination of these goals?

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