

Unit 5, Lesson 13: Salem Witches Cold Case #1692

Lesson Overview

In this lesson students will be asked to solve a history “cold case” that addresses the question - what happened to the nineteen people who were killed under unusual circumstances in 1692? Students will analyze primary and secondary sources to crack the case and create an investigative report (or account) in which they explain what happened.

Delaware Content Standards

- History Standard 1, 4-5 [Chronology]: Students will study historical events and persons within a given time frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-effect factors.
- History Standard 2a, 4-5 [Analysis]: Students will draw historical conclusions and construct historical accounts from primary and secondary source materials
- History Standard 2b, 4-5 [Analysis]: Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; chronologically arrange them; and analyze change over time.
- History Standard 3, 4-5 [Interpretation]: Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and relate this explanation to the evidence presented or the point-of-view of the author.
- Big Ideas: accounts, evidence, causes-effects, change over time.

Essential Questions: What Happened?

Enduring Understandings: Students will understand that primary and secondary sources are used to construct accounts of past events, and that accounts should be corroborated.

Resources:

- [Resource 1: Warm Up](#)
- [Resource 2: Evidence Packet 1](#)
- [Resource 3: Evidence Packet 2](#)
- [Resource 4: My Account](#)
- [Resource 5: Correcting Mistakes of the Past](#)
- [Resource 6: Connecting Past to Present](#)
- [Resource 7: Check for Understanding](#)

Procedures:

For the Teacher: planning to implement the lesson. You will want to create 2 document or evidence packets for the students who will be working in groups (see Resources 1 and 2 below). Create 2 packets for each group i.e., Evidence Packet 1 and Evidence Packet 2. There is a header for each packet in the lesson resources.

1. **WarmUp - Determining Meaning in Context.** Distribute copies of [Resource 1: Warm-Up](#). Tell students to complete the ReDiWrite process described below and on Resource 1 itself:
 - a. Present students with the following paragraph.

On March 18, 1990 thirteen incredibly valuable and expensive paintings by great artists such as Vermeer and Rembrandt were stolen from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, Massachusetts. This remains a cold case for the police. They continue to look for new evidence to find out who stole the paintings and have them returned.

- b. Ask students to
 - i. Read the paragraph to find clues for the definition of “cold case.”
 - ii. Discuss possible meanings and clues with a partner
 - iii. Write a definition of “cold case” based on the context in which the term appears.
2. **Define “Cold Case.”** Offer the following definition after the students have completed the Warm-Up and have shared some tentative definitions.
 - a. Cold Case - an unsolved criminal investigation which remains open until new evidence solves it.
3. **Introduce the Lesson: Tell the students that, in this lesson, they are going to try to solve a cold case that dates all the way back to 1692. This is the case -** In 1692, nineteen people were killed under unusual circumstances. Your job in this lesson will be to use clues from the past to try to solve the mystery of what happened to these people.
4. **Analyze Evidence to Construct an Account:** Place students into small groups of 3-4 (larger groups optional but may lead to some students being disengaged). Distribute [Resource 2 - Evidence Packet 1](#) containing Sources 1a-1f to students. Tell them that they are to use the sources to try to construct a tentative account of what happened to the 19 people in 1692. Give students time to analyze and discuss the evidence, emphasizing that they must base their conclusions on the evidence in the packets. Tell them that you are checking to see if you can find more evidence that they can examine after Packet 1.
 - a. Give them sufficient time to analyze the sources and discuss possible accounts or conclusions. Offers volunteers opportunities to share some tentative conclusions.
5. **Analyze New Evidence to Construct the Accounts:** Tell students that you came across new evidence. Distribute [Resource 3 Evidence Packet 2](#) with Sources 2a-2e. Repeat the steps described in Procedure 4 above. Students should examine the evidence to see if the new sources call for revisions to their tentative accounts.
6. **Corroborating Accounts:** A nice video overview of the Salem Witch “hysteria” is presented [here](#). Show this to the class. This video incorporates some of the images used in this lesson's Evidence Packets. Invite students to corroborate, compare/contrast their accounts with the one in the video that is at least partially grounded in research done by professional historians.
 - a. The narrator of this video spends some time toward the end suggesting some of the causes of the Salem witch hunts. Encourage students to create a list of some or all of them. You may want to pause the video after the narrator discusses each cause. They include:
 - i. hysteria
 - ii. disagreements within the town which led some to use accusations as a weapon
 - iii. the presence of a rye bacteria that caused hallucinations
 - b. Explain to students that the causes remain a bit of a “cold case” due to the lack of conclusive evidence. Perhaps someday new evidence will be found.

7. **Final Conclusion:** Students will fill out [Resource 4](#) to identify their conclusion about what happened to the 19 people who died in 1692?
 - a. Optional Extension: Have students work in separate jigsaw groups to research causes advanced by historians then present their findings to the rest of the class.
8. **Reading - Correcting the Mistakes of the Past:** distribute copies of [Resource 5](#) Ask students to focus on how people felt after the witch hunts ended.
9. **Reading - Connecting Past and Present:** distribute copies of [Resource 6](#) Ask students to think about how the past can help explain the present.
10. **Checks for Understanding.** distribute copies of [Resource 7](#) and have students complete the checks for understanding.
11. **Option:** Another visually entertaining TED video that examines the Salem witch phenomenon using cartoon characters can be accessed [here](#). The script for this video may prove a bit more challenging for younger students at times.