

Six Women of Salem: The Untold Story of the Accused and Their Accusers in the Salem Witch Trials

Marilynne K. Roach

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In her well-researched *Six Women of Salem: The Untold Story of the Accused and Their Accusers in the Salem Witch Trials*, historian Marilynne K. Roach focuses on the lives of six Salem women at the center of the trials—some accused and some accusers. Her fact-based insight into these women's lives, along with the moments she breaks into short, fictionalized scenes, puts these lives into perspective, allowing readers to connect with the events in a way not afforded in other accounts of this period.

The first section of the book shows each woman's status within the village and the connections they have to one another. She also gives an account of their personal triumphs, as well as their hardships, such as suffering through beatings, miscarriage, and other loss. In the second section, Roach uses court reportage, handwritten notes from trial witnesses, and preserved documents to show the day-by-day progression of events and how the trials came to an end.

Throughout the text, Roach follows Bridget Bishop, survivor of an abusive marriage; Mary English, wealthy and well-educated; Rebecca Nurse, an ill, elderly woman; Ann Putnam, with a dwindling income and a daughter active in the accusations; Mary Warren, a young maid, desperate to marry; and Tituba, the minister's slave and the first to confess. Each woman has an important role from the first accusations to the first hangings, and Roach approaches the women's stories, whether accused or accuser, with the same in-depth research and insight.

Roach also offers possible explanations when there are no documented facts. She writes of the girls who had made the accusations of witchcraft: "And once the parents took the remarks as accusations and seconded them with their own belief, the girls might well think that adult approval proved the supposition and came to believe what, after all, had been a question rather than a certain statement." Though Roach does not claim these statements as truth, the explanations help readers see the possibilities behind the girls' actions.

Roach's work will shed new light on the Salem witch trials, not only by showing how the accusers may have truly believed they were bewitched and tortured, but also by making the innocent women come to life.

KANDY ALAMEDA (Winter 2014)

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