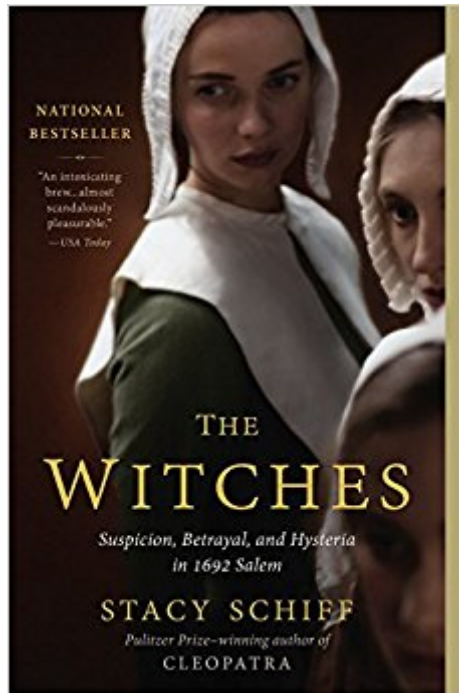




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The Witches: Suspicion, Betrayal, And Hysteria In 1692 Salem



Synopsis

Pulitzer Prize winner Stacy Schiff, author of the #1 bestseller *Cleopatra*, provides an electrifying, fresh view of the Salem witch trials. The panic began early in 1692, over an exceptionally raw Massachusetts winter, when a minister's niece began to writhe and roar. It spread quickly, confounding the most educated men and prominent politicians in the colony. Neighbors accused neighbors, husbands accused wives, parents and children one another. It ended less than a year later, but not before nineteen men and women had been hanged and an elderly man crushed to death. Speaking loudly and emphatically, adolescent girls stood at the center of the crisis. Along with suffrage and Prohibition, the Salem witch trials represent one of the few moments when women played the central role in American history. Drawing masterfully on the archives, Stacy Schiff introduces us to the strains on a Puritan adolescent's life and to the authorities whose delicate agendas were at risk. She illuminates the demands of a rigorous faith, the vulnerability of settlements adrift from the mother country, perched-at a politically tumultuous time-on the edge of what a visitor termed a "remote, rocky, barren, bushy, wild-woody wilderness." With devastating clarity, the textures and tensions of colonial life emerge; hidden patterns subtly, startlingly detach themselves from the darkness. Schiff brings early American anxieties to the fore to align them brilliantly with our own. In an era of religious provocations, crowdsourcing, and invisible enemies, this enthralling story makes more sense than ever. *The Witches* is Schiff's riveting account of a seminal episode, a primal American mystery unveiled-in crackling detail and lyrical prose-by one of our most acclaimed historians.

Customer Reviews

An Best Book of November 2015: In 1692, at the edge of the New England wilderness, an entire village went insane. Everyone knows the story: The pre-teen daughters of the local minister are mysteriously overcome by convulsions, their uncontrollable screaming sending the superstitious community into fear and confusion. Lacking other explanations--adolescent rebellion, maybe?--Satanic influence is suspected, and accusations of witchcraft soon fly like enchanted broomsticks. The town is pitted against itself, and by the time the hysteria fades, 19 men and women are hanged, another pressed to death. But what actually happened? Pulitzer Prize-winner Stacy Schiff's *The Witches: Salem, 1692* steps back from more than three centuries of hyperbole and supposition, giving us our most complete account yet. It can't have been easy: As Schiff points out early in the book, the Puritans of Salem village were often assiduous diarists and record-keepers, but first-hand accounts of the months of the hysteria are mysteriously rare-and

those that exist are mainly unreliable. To construct her history, Schiff went through the looking glass, compiling seemingly every fact available to create a historically accurate narrative of events while placing it within the cultural context of 17th century New England. The results are obvious: this book is dense with facts and a large cast of characters, and readers must commit. But Schiff keeps the proceedings rolling with wry humor and an eye for the peculiar-yet-illuminating detail. This isn't *The Crucible* or *Blair Witch*; it's light on sensationalism, but rife with real-life toil-and-trouble. The truth, as always, is strange enough.--Jon Foro --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"History in the hands of Stacy Schiff is invariably full of life, light, shadow, surprise, clarity of insight, and so it is again and then some in her latest work, *The Witches*. Few writers combine as she does superb scholarship and an exceptional gift for language with amazing reach and agility of mind. This is a superb book." --David McCullough, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Wright Brothers* "The Witches is the fullest and finest story ever told about Salem in 1692, and no one else could tell it with the otherworldly flair of Stacy Schiff." --Joseph J. Ellis, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Quartet*

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