

#### Myth No.4

World history is a host to many stories that through time have been altered into myths. One of these misconceptions is the idea of witches playing a role in society, and the hunt throughout history to stop them. Notions of witchcraft have been around for centuries, and became abundant during the 1500s when villages and cities across Europe followed the works of Heinrich Kramer, who wrote 'The Hammer of Witches'. The book emphasized the impurity and evil nature of the female body & his writings normalized the idea of witches (mostly female) and supernatural forces in society. These hunts were abundant mostly in 16 & 17th century Europe, the burning of witches became a common practice and tens of thousands of women were accused and executed for witchcraft. When studying the witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts, there is evident European influence in American culture. The famous Salem witch trials were much shorter, spanning from 1692 to 1693 and spoke of nineteen convicted witches who were hanged due to accusations of causing the 'fits' of young girls. These fits were characterized "by seizures, violent contortions and bloodcurdling screams." A doctor diagnosed the girls with being affected by evil magic. This caused widespread panic throughout the Salem settlement, many believing witchcraft lived among them. Allegations escalated towards many people, some died in a cell while awaiting trial, and a man was even crushed to death by heavy stones. Even though the deaths in Salem were gruesome and memorable, no witches were burned at the stake. Contrary to popular belief the myth of burning witches in Salem originated from the massive witch hunt that took place in 16th century Europe. I choose this myth because I have always been interested in the reality of this story since it is a recurring theme in modern art.

Works Cited:

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