

We Aren't Superstitious

[Salem Witch Trials, 1692]

-Stephen Vincent Benet

Answer the following questions as you read this essay which introduces many of the characters and events we will be reading about in *The Crucible*. Write in complete sentences & use details from the text to support your responses.

1. Benet believes that the story of the Salem witchcraft trials is worth retelling because it deals with a situation that has been repeated throughout history. What are some examples, historical or current, of mass hysteria?
2. How does Benet depict Salem Village and those who lived there? (Include specific details from the text.)
3. Benet attempts to rationalize an event in America's history that may seem, to us today, completely irrational. What factors does he claim may have led to the hysteria? Which of these factors can be applied to the other examples of mass hysteria that you cited in question #1?
4. Explain the role that Tituba played in the Salem events. How did she serve as the catalyst? How did her background both hurt and help her fate during the trials?
5. Although Benet does attempt to rationalize the witch hunt, he cites several examples of moments or aspects that were completely ridiculous and irrational. What is one such example? Which do you find most absurd?

