

TO THE DISCUSSION LEADER

Imagine being twelve years old, with no parents, living alone with your older sister in Salem during the hysteria that surrounded the 1691 Salem Witch Trials.

By 1692, 140 men and women suspected of witchcraft were imprisoned in the Massachusetts Bay Colony of Essex. Worse, nineteen were hanged and one was pressed to death under rocks. Reason finally prevailed, but 300 years later we are still interested, intrigued, and horrified at what happened in Salem. Over the years facts and myths have been so intertwined that it is still a puzzle separating the two.

Lisa Rowe Fraustino tries to separate fact from fiction as she describes the trials through the eyes of her heroine Deliverance Trembley. Lisa Fraustino writes, "People who have read many novels about the Salem witch-hunt will notice that Deliverance Trembley's diary is different from the others. It does not recall old myths. Instead, it attempts to show the factual details about what happened in Salem Village documented by today's best historians. However, that still leaves much to the imagination!"

I Walk in Dread will leave young readers grappling with questions just as historians studying this period continue to do. What caused the afflicted girls to act out the way they did? Did they want attention? Did they become so involved they began to believe they were tormented by witches? Why did the villagers believe the girls, but not the accused adults? What lessons can we learn from what happened in Salem?

I Walk in Dread

The Diary of Deliverance Trembley, Witness to the Salem Witch Trials, Massachusetts Bay Colony, 1691

BY LISA ROWE FRAUSTINO

Ages 8-14 • 256 pages

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SUMMARY

It is 1691 in Salem Village. Twelve-year-old Deliverance (Liv) Trembley and her seventeen-year-old sister Remembrance (Mem) have come to live with their uncle after the death of their parents. Soon after their arrival, their uncle goes off to seek his fortune, leaving the girls to run the farm with the strict instructions that they are to tell no one of his absence. The girls busy themselves tending the animals and trading eggs and apples. Liv writes in her diary, "We are well able to take care of ourselves; that is not the problem. The problem is the villagers, who would not approve, and might condemn our uncle, and remove us from his care." Liv and Mem are able to hide the fact that they are alone, though Liv worries that they might be punished for lying. She also is concerned that they might be cursed by offering shelter and food to a homeless woman, Sarah Goode, who is rumored to be a witch.

When Mem becomes ill, many villagers come to the house bringing food and home remedies. When a small child asks of Mem, "When is she going to scream blasphemies?" both girls are shocked. They soon learn that the visitors believe Mem is afflicted, like two girls in the village who are "contorting their bodies into unnatural positions and uttering terrible sounds that mostly make no sense." Liv, who has already worried over the cause of Mem's illness, feels a "sense of doom." She writes, "Something terrible is going to happen in Salem Village. I can feel it in my bones, as surely as the caterpillar can feel a long winter coming."

Mem recovers, but the girls in the village do not. When the doctor is unable to find a physical cause for their affliction, he says "the Evil Hand" is on them. The villagers, looking for someone to blame, accuse Sarah Goode and two others of being witches and doing the Devil's work. The women are arrested and brought before a public examination. Even though they declare their innocence, the majority of the villagers do not believe them. Soon, more girls become afflicted, and more people are accused, including Martha Corey, an intelligent and outspoken woman. Liv wonders, "Why does the crowd still choose to hear the voices of the girls instead of the voice of reason?"

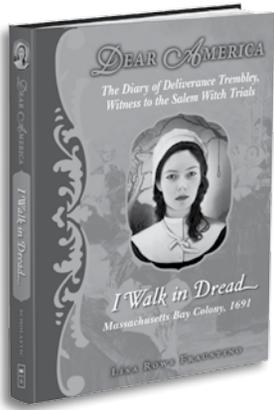
Meanwhile, the landlord threatens to evict Liv and Mem if they cannot pay the rent on the farm. Since it appears that their uncle might never return, Liv writes of the trouble to their older brother Benjamin, who returns to be with them. Mem, who is being courted by Darcy Cooper from Haver'il, accepts his marriage proposal. The whole family plans to move. Liv joyously writes, "Darcy will arrive in the morning with the big wagon, and we will load it up and be gone from this place, not a moment too soon. Thank you, God. Thank you!"

THINKING ABOUT THE BOOK

1. Where does Deliverance (Liv) get her diary?
2. Why is Liv angry with her father?
3. Liv and Mem are sisters. If you could choose to be friends with only one of them, which sister would you choose and why?
4. Describe the fortune-telling incident that Mem and Susannah engaged in using a "venus glass." Why was Liv so upset with them for making a venus glass?
5. In her 30th of January diary entry, Liv writes about an angry exchange between Goody Corey and Mem. When Mem called the Indians "Devils," Goody Corey explained they were just men who had a different belief about what it means to own land. Reread that entry. What was Goody Corey trying to get Mem to understand?
6. What was "the affliction?" Who were the first afflicted girls, and how did they behave?
7. Why do you believe the villagers believed the afflicted girls over the denial of the accused women?
8. Do you think the girls acted afflicted to get attention and get out of doing chores?
9. What was Mem's dowry when she married Darcy Cooper?
10. Why is Deliverance Trembley's story titled *I Walk in Dread*?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

1. Liv is anxious to borrow and read a popular book of her time, *The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*. Part of Mrs. Rowlandson's story is described by Liv in her January 20th entry. Find out more about this courageous woman's experiences at <http://www.bio.umass.edu/biology/conn.river/mary.html>. What interesting facts did you learn about Mrs. Mary Rowlandson?
2. Many villagers visit Mem while she is ill, bringing her medicine and food. Someone brings her a pomander. Find out what it is and how to make one yourself at <http://www.kidwizard.com/ThingsToMake/Pomander.asp>.
3. Choose one of the following and explain its significance in Liv's diary:
 - a. Cotton Mather
 - b. Goody Corey
 - c. Tithing man
 - d. Puritans
 - e. King Philip's War
 - f. Darcy Cooper
4. Liv's diary contains many sayings. Choose one of the following and explain what you think it means:
 - a. Time cuts down all, both great and small.
 - b. What the mind denies, the spirit feels.
 - c. Praise spoileth the child as surely as molasses rots the teeth.
 - d. A fire goes out if it gets no air.
5. In the historical note several books are mentioned: Elizabeth George Speare's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Ann Petry's *Tituba of Salem Village*, and Patricia Clapp's *Witches' Children*. Read one of these books. How is this story of the witchcraft trials similar to *I Walk in Dread*? How is it different?



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LISA ROWE FRAUSTINO is the author of the novels *Grass and Sky*; *Ash*; and *The Hole in the Wall*. She is also the author of the picture book, *The Hickory Chair*. Lisa lives with her husband in Connecticut and teaches at Eastern Connecticut State University.

AN INTERVIEW WITH LISA ROWE FRAUSTINO

As you went about doing your research on the Salem witchcraft trials, what piece of information surprised you most?

My research led me to many surprises, but perhaps the biggest one was the discovery that no evidence exists to support the most common storyline about the cause of the witch-hunt. The traditional story goes that a circle of girls gathered in the Reverend Parris's kitchen to hear the slave Tituba spin tales of the supernatural and tell fortunes. This forbidden mischief was thought to have sparked the mass hysteria of the trials. Today's most careful scholars believe that the popular myth about the occult circle of girls meeting with Tituba at the Parris home has little or no basis in fact.

You've written other works of historical fiction, but this is your first novel written in diary form. What challenges go along with writing in this format?

One of my first books, *Ash: A Novel*, is written in a form very close to the diary: a secret journal written by Wes to his brother Ash. Writing it gave me good practice for *I Walk in Dread*. The diary or journal form allows the reader a special kind of pleasure forbidden in daily life, that of peeking into someone else's private thoughts. It allows the writer to climb inside the mind of the narrator in a way deeper than possible with more objective viewpoints. It's fun to write in the voice of a diarist, and yet no information can be given

that the narrator doesn't know. This presents a storytelling challenge, as it can be difficult to show the complete picture through only private thoughts; a third-person viewpoint allows the writer to give more information than the diarist would. When the diary is a work of historical fiction, another layer of challenge arises, and that is to remain true to the voice of a person who comes from a completely different time while also telling the historical truth. These things are almost impossible to know for sure, yet we do our best through research, research, research.

On the acknowledgments page you thank the Star Pants critique group. How does this group of other authors help you in your own writing?

Writing is a solitary pursuit, and it's important to gather with like-minded people every once in a while to remember we're not alone. We share information about the professional end of the business as well as giving each other manuscript critiques and brainstorming solutions to writing problems. We teach and learn from each other as good friends always do.

Your main characters, Liv and her sister Mem, have unusual given names—Deliverance and Remembrance. These stand out in contrast to the other female characters, Ann, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Abigail. What was your inspiration for so naming them?

Obviously, the names Ann, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Abigail were chosen for me by their parents—these were all real historical figures. There were dozens of girls and women involved with the witch hunts, so when naming Liv and Mem, I wanted to avoid confusion by giving them distinctive names that would stand out from all of the others I would be using in the story. Deliverance and Remembrance may be unusual names now, but they were both common during the Puritan period, along with other names that embodied religious principles, such as Hope and Mercy. I decided on Deliverance and Remembrance because the names suited their personalities, and they had nice nicknames. I always wished I had a nickname!

AN INTERVIEW WITH LISA ROWE FRAUSTINO—CONTINUED

Please tell us about the venus glass. What was its origin? Was it a real method of telling fortunes?

The venus glass was a real method of telling fortunes during the Puritan era. Named after the goddess of love, it was simply a clear glass of water into which the girl would drop an egg white and watch what shape it would take. The shape was superstitiously believed to indicate the trade of the girl's future sweetheart. In a culture that believed in the power of witchcraft and the occult, such acts of "white magic" were extremely common even though regularly discouraged by ministers in their sermons.

In your historical note, you mention several historical fiction books that focus on the Salem witch trials. Is there any book you'd recommend for your readers who would like to learn more about this period, especially one that is more historical fact than myth?

The first book written especially for young people to clear up the myths and focus on historical facts is Marc Aronson's nonfiction work *Witch-Hunt: Mysteries of the Salem Witch Trials* (Atheneum 2003). I recommend it. Adolescent readers may also enjoy Marilynne K. Roache's *The Salem Witch Trials: A Day-By-Day Chronicle of a Community Under Siege*, which was published for adults but isn't too difficult to read and is very interesting.

Do you see any parallels between the hysteria that surrounded Salem in the 1690s and the ever-present concern by some these days about witchcraft and the occult?

The motivations of Puritan witch hunters and today's censors are not so very different. Honest belief in and fear of witchcraft leads to honest concerns that may seem hysterical to those of us with a scientific viewpoint toward the occult.

If you could ask youngsters who have read *I Walk in Dread: The Diary of Deliverance Trembley, Witness to the Salem Witch Trials* one question, what would that question be?

What would you have done if you were living in Salem Village during the witch scare? Do you think you would have become one of the accusers or one of the accused?

Discussion Guide written by Richard F. Abrahamson, Ph.D., Professor of Literature for Children and Young Adults, University of Houston, and Eleanore S. Tyson, Ed.D., Clinical Associate Professor, University of Houston, Department of Curriculum and Instruction. Houston, Texas.

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