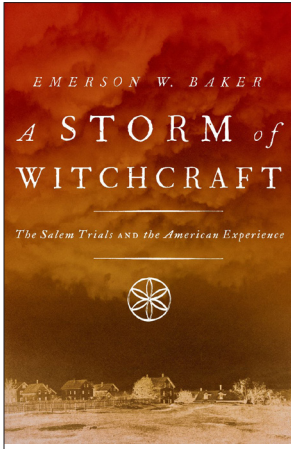


# Bayou Bend/Rienzi Book Club Guide

## September 2019

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**Reading Guide:*****A Storm of Witchcraft: The Salem Trials and the American Experience*****By Emerson W. Baker (2017)**

1. The Salem witch trials have been surrounded by myths and misinformation for centuries. How did this book change your knowledge of the trials? What most surprised you in the book?
2. Emerson Baker has a background in both archaeology and history. How do you think this affected the way he wrote the book?
3. Which of the people who appeared in the book did you find most compelling? Was it in a positive or negative way?
4. The Puritans have often appeared in American literature in works such as *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Crucible*, viewed by authors from the perspective of their own eras. Did this book encourage you to look at other works differently? How?
5. Instead of retelling the events of the witch trials through the course of the book, Baker reviews them in the first chapter and then provides context to people and events with the rest of the book. Did this approach work for you? Why or why not?
6. What still confuses or mystifies you about the Salem witch trials after reading the book?
7. Would you recommend this book to others? Who do you think the ideal reader for this book would be?
8. What other books, movies or other resources would you recommend to someone who enjoyed this book?

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## Author Biography

Emerson W. Baker is a professor of history at Salem State University. Along with *Storm of Witchcraft*, he is the author of *The Devil of Great Island: Witchcraft and Conflict in Early New England*, and coauthor of an award-winning biography of Sir William Phips. Dr. Baker's fieldwork in history and archaeology primarily focuses on seventeenth-century New England with a special interest in early Maine. He has consulted and appeared on camera for numerous television productions on early American history, including *Colonial House* on PBS (2004). Dr. Baker has chaired the Maine Humanities Council and serves on the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

## Digital Resources

Emerson Baker's website with historic witchcraft sources and information:

<http://w3.salemstate.edu/~ebaker/talks>

Podcast on *Storm of Witchcraft*:

<https://www.benfranklinworld.com/episode-053-emerson-w-baker-a-storm-of-witchcraft/>

## If you liked *Storm of Witchcraft*, you may enjoy these other books (descriptions courtesy of Amazon.com):

- *In the Shadow of Salem: The Andover Witch Hunt of 1692* by Richard Hite (2018)

Based on extensive primary source research, *In the Shadow of Salem: The Andover Witch Hunt of 1692* by historian and archivist Richard Hite tells for the first time the fascinating story of this long overlooked phase of the largest witch hunt in American history. Untangling a net of rivalries and ties between families and neighbors, the author explains the actions of the accusers, the reactions of the accused, and their ultimate fates.

- *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* by Jane Kamensky (1999)

*Governing the Tongue* explains why the spoken word assumed such importance in the culture of early New England. In a work that is at once historical, sociocultural, and linguistic, Jane Kamensky explores the little-known words of unsung individuals, and reconsiders such famous Puritan events as the banishment of Anne Hutchinson and the Salem witch trials, to expose the ever-present fear of what the Puritans called "sins of the tongue." By placing speech at the heart of New England's early history, Kamensky develops new ideas about the complex relationship between speech and power in both Puritan New England and, by extension, our world today.

- *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich (1982)

This enthralling work of scholarship strips away abstractions to reveal the hidden—and not always stoic—face of the "goodwives" of colonial America. In these pages we encounter the awesome burdens—and the considerable power—of a New England housewife's domestic life and witness her occasional forays into the world of men. We see her borrowing from her neighbors, loving her husband, raising—and, all too often, mourning—her children, and even attaining fame as a heroine of frontier conflicts or notoriety as a murderess.

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