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# Wicked Girls: A Novel Of The Salem Witch Trials



## Synopsis

From the acclaimed Printz Honor winner author Stephanie Hemphill comes this powerful fictionalized account of the Salem witch trials from the point of view of three of the real young women living in Salem in 1692. Ann Putnam Jr. is the queen bee. When her father suggests a spate of illnesses in the village is the result of witchcraft, she puts in motion a chain of events that will change Salem forever. Mercy Lewis is the beautiful servant in Ann's house who inspires adulation in some and envy in others. With her troubled past, she seizes her only chance at safety. Margaret Walcott, Ann's cousin, is desperately in love. She is torn between staying loyal to her friends and pursuing a life with her betrothed. With new accusations mounting against the men and women of the community, the girls will have to decide: Is it too late to tell the truth?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up *Wicked Girls* weaves a fresh interpretation of the events put forth in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and revisited more recently by Katherine Howe in *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane* (Voice, 2009). Mercy Lewis, Ann Putnam, and Mary Walcott (in this story, called "Margaret") point their fingers, lift their eyes, and cry "witch" once again. Elderly Goody Nurse appears, Mary Warren (here called "Ruth") recants her accusations, John Proctor is accused and hanged, and Giles Corey is pressed to death. The verse format is fresh and engaging, distilling the actions of the seven accusing girls into riveting narrative. In Hemphill's village of Salem, Mercy Lewis (age 17) and Ann Putnam, Jr. (age 12) vie for control of

the group of girls who quickly become swept up by their celebrity. Their accusations become self-serving: the merest look or shudder from one of the "afflicted" means the offender (an inattentive lover; someone who has done a parent wrong) risks being branded a witch or wizard. Eventually, the group fractures and the girls turn on each other, leading to cruelty and death. In the author's note, Hemphill outlines the historical background, with source notes for further reading. As in *Your Own*, Sylvia (Knopf, 2007), she bases her book in fact, but acknowledges that "certain names and accounts have been changed, amended and altered" in the construction of her novel. Teens may need some encouragement to pick up this book, but it deserves a place in most high school collections. Maggie Knapp, Trinity Valley School, Fort Worth, TX

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**\*Starred Review\*** Hemphill follows her Printz Honor Book *Your Own*, Sylvia (2007) with another bold verse novel based on historical figures. Here, her voices belong to the "afflicted" girls of Salem, whose accusations of witchcraft led to the hangings of 19 townspeople in 1692. Once again, Hemphill's raw, intimate poetry probes behind the abstract facts and creates characters that pulse with complex emotion. According to an appended author's note, unresolved theories about the causes of the girls' behavior range from bread-mold-induced hallucinations to bird flu. In Hemphill's story, the girls fake their afflictions, and the book's great strength lies in its masterful unveiling of the girls' wholly believable motivations: romantic jealousy; boredom; a yearning for friendship, affection, and attention; and most of all, empowerment in a highly constricting and stratified society that left few opportunities for women. Layering the girls' voices in interspersed, lyrical poems that slowly build the psychological drama, Hemphill requires patience from her readers. What emerge are richly developed portraits of Puritanical mean girls, and teens will easily recognize the contemporary parallels in the authentic clique dynamics. An excellent supplementary choice for curricular studies of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, this will also find readers outside the classroom, who will savor the accessible, unsettling, piercing lines that connect past and present with timeless conflicts and truths. Grades 7-12. --Gillian Engberg --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I purchased this book by mistake. I was actually looking for a different book with the same title-also a very good book, by the by. When I flipped through upon receiving it, I was happy to see that it's a book on a topic that I am interested in but never took the time to really research or pay much

attention to, so I gave the book a shot. I'm glad that I did, because it ended up being really good and one of my favorite books this year. Also interestingly, I tend to buy several books at once and then read the first chapter of each to see which is most interesting, and that's the one I'll read first. Since this book was a mistake, I wasn't holding out that it would be one of the first to be read. But, once I started reading, I didn't go back to the others to read their first chapters at all, I just kept going with this one. It reads easily and almost poetically. I found myself being pretty entranced by the story and the characters. I felt like I loved and hated each of them at different points. Once I finished the book fairly quickly, it compelled me to do a little research refreshing on the topic of the Salem Witch Trials. I think that's one sign of a good book. Overall, a great mistake and a top five of the year.

I have read this book in the hardback format as part of a librarian's review group I belong to. I liked it so much, that I wanted a copy of my own for my Kindle. This fictionalized account of the infamous Salem Witch Trials is well researched, the appendices give good background material as well as information about the historical characters portrayed. The blank verse presentation is refreshing and makes for a pleasurable read. The fact that the story is moved forward from the point of view and in the voices of the girls that were at the root of this infamous episode of Colonial American history is both insightful and innovative. I highly recommend it for young adult readers as well as anyone interested in this period of history.

This book is a YA verse novel about the Salem witch trials. The book is told from the multiple viewpoints of the teenage accusers. As always when I read a book about this time period, I am shocked by the power given to these girls. So many innocent people suffered at their accusations. It frustrates me. However, this book was well written and detailed that time period well. The verse format worked well and the book read smoothly. This book was on the historical fiction book list for a YA literature class that I am taking. I read this book on my Kindle.[...]

Great read, my tween couldn't put it down. We bought it for a book report.

This book was a gift for my middle school Granddaughter. She loved it, said it had a lot of historical facts in it ! She had read another book about the trials, and learned far more from this one! She wrote a great report, and really enjoyed the book.

I read this book in one sitting and liked it so much, I just ordered copies for two of my girlfriends. The

Salem Witch trials have been the subject of many stories, but I liked how the author was able to draw interesting conclusions to the motivations of these girls. Also, brought up the downsides of going along with the crowd/peer pressure. A must read for teenage girls.

Good angle on historical fiction. The book is a decent glimpse into what their lives could have been inspired by.

I found it hard to read as the whole book was more in poetry form than book form. However it was well-written.

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