

Discussion Questions Week 2
Week of 2/21/06

1. Compare the ways in which different people in Stamford approached Kate Branch and her claims of bewitchment. How do you account for those differences?
2. What relationship was there between the Stamford and Salem witch trials? Why do you the Stamford witch story has been largely forgotten? Does it matter? Is so, why?
3. Discuss the varieties of power exercised by the people portrayed Godbeer's work. What role did gender play in the Stamford trial?
4. "Clergymen, judges, statesmen – the wisest, calmest, holiest persons of their day – stood in the inner circle roundabout the gallows, loudest to applaud the work of blood, latest to confess themselves miserably deceived. If any one part of their proceedings can be said to deserve less blame than another, it was the singular indiscrimination with which they persecuted, not merely the poor and aged, as in former judicial massacres, but people of all ranks; their own equals, brethern, and wives." (Hawthorne, 8)

How does Nathaniel Hawthorne's interpretation of seventeenth-century witch trials compare with that of Roger Godbeer? Why might they be different?

5. What are the similarities and differences between Godbeer as a scholar and Hawthorne as a writer of fiction?
6. Can *Escaping Salem* be thought of, in any sense, as a commemoration?