

# **Witch Child Study Guide**

## **Witch Child by Celia Rees**

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## Plot Summary

"Witch Child" by Celia Rees is an epistolary novel about a fourteen-year-old girl who flees the witch hunts in England and settles in a Puritan colony in America. After Mary's grandmother is executed as a witch, Mary flees her native England for a newfound colony in America, developing strong friendships and beginning to learn the power within herself as she finds her place in the New World. However, when the witch hunts begin in her new home, Mary fears her true nature will be discovered. "Witch Child" is a disturbing tale of a young girl tormented for things within herself which she did not choose.

After Mary's grandmother is hanged as a witch, Mary is spirited away by a noblewoman, her long-lost mother, who sends her to America to escape persecution. On the ship across the sea, Mary befriends Martha, Jonah, and the Riverses, constantly fearing her true nature will be revealed whenever witches are mentioned which occurs whenever things go badly. Once they reach Salem, they continue on to Beulah, the settlement in the wilderness that has been built by the preceding congregation. Mary lives with Martha, Jonah and Tobias, while the Riverses build a home next to them. She spends a lot of time in the forest helping Jonah, an apothecary, learn the healing properties of local plants. Mary soon meets and befriends Jaybird, an Indian who teaches her about the land.

When Reverend Johnson asks Martha to tend his sick children, he also questions Mary's faith in God. While helping Goody Johnson, Mary learns that Reverend Johnson saved his wife from being drowned as a witch. She believes she would rather die than live Goody Johnson's life. After Goody Johnson dies during childbirth, Reverend Johnson pursues Rebekah Rivers, despite the fact that she is promised to Tobias, Jonah's son, and when his suit is denied, Reverend Johnson insinuates that he suspects Mary of witchcraft. The Vane sisters and their friends accuse Mary of witchcraft, promising to keep her secret if she aids them in securing their future husbands, but they begin dabbling in witchcraft themselves when Mary refuses.

As signs of witchcraft are found in the forest, Martha finds Mary's journal and wants to destroy the dangerous memoir, but instead, Mary sews her journal into her quilt. Mary is questioned when girls' undergarments are found in the woods, but she has an alibi, and the Vanes' story is believed. However, when the Vanes are caught dancing naked in the woods, they feign madness and so a witch hunter is summoned. The witch hunter recognizes Mary from England and the other girls join his accusations. Mary flees to the Riverses' house where she is provided with food and clothes for her flight to the wilderness. Martha adds to Mary's journal that she, Jonah, and the Riverses will soon follow Mary out of Beulah and she hopes that Mary will rejoin them someday.



# Intro and Beginning

## Intro and Beginning Summary

"Witch Child" by Celia Rees is an epistolary novel about a fourteen-year-old girl who flees the witch hunts in England and settles in a Puritan colony in America. After Mary's grandmother is executed as a witch, Mary flees her native England for a newfound colony in America, developing strong friendships and beginning to learn the power within herself as she finds her place in the New World; however, when the witch hunts begin in her new home, Mary fears her true nature will be discovered. "Witch Child" is a disturbing tale of a young girl tormented for things within herself which she did not choose.

In the Intro, Alison Ellman of Boston, MA indicates the following manuscript comes from documents found hidden in a colonial quilt, noting that the grammar is standardized for modern readers. Beginning starts in early March 1659 with the narrator introducing herself as Mary and a witch. She was raised by her grandmother, Eliza Nuttall, without any knowledge of her parents until some men in black hats dragged her grandmother away from their cottage on the edge of the forest after accusing her of being a witch. After several other tests, the witch hunters decided to float her, and neighbors who came to her for help because of her skill with herbs gathered to accuse her, watching as she was bound and thrown into the river. The fact that she floated was a sign of guilt, so she was dragged back to shore because they would not be deprived of a hanging. A crowd gathers in the market square to witness Eliza's execution, and though it is dangerous for Mary to be there, she refuses to flee to the forest because that is what they want her to do. Watching the gallows from the back of the crowd, Mary would destroy these people if she had the power which her grandmother is accused of possessing and which people whisper may have passed on to Mary herself. As Eliza is brought forward, she catches Mary's eyes and smiles before the hangman covers her face with a hood just as a cloak closes over Mary and she is pushed into a waiting carriage. Mary's companion does not speak, and she does not seem to notice Mary's scrutiny as Mary notes she seems to be very wealthy. She does not reveal her identity and Mary does not ask.

## Intro and Beginning Analysis

The Intro serves to claim the story is based on a journal found, indicating that Mary's tale is fact-based. Beginning starts Mary's journal in March 1659 as she introduces herself, a fourteen-year-old witch. Mary explains how she was raised by her grandmother and did not know her parents. When her grandmother is charged with witchcraft, Mary is left alone and frightened. She describes the trials her grandmother undergoes to prove she is a witch, and during her grandmother's execution, Mary notes the stupidity of these people for believing her grandmother is a powerful witch as she would personally destroy these people if she had the power they accuse her



grandmother of possessing. These charges combined with the community's whispers concerning Mary's own potential powers foreshadow the idea that Mary could also be tried as a witch. Luckily, Mary is conveyed away from the square into a carriage during the hanging. Mary does not know who her wealthy companion is, and she does not ask as they ride off, but the companion's presence foreshadows Mary's discovery of her identity.



# Journey 1

## Journey 1 Summary

Mary wakes up as they arrive at an inn and her companion leads her into the inn without telling her where they are and assuring Mary that she will be well fed. Her companion leaves to attend to many things. She promises Mary will be safe with the landlady, Annie, and as Annie bathes Mary, she disregards the pouch Mary wears that her grandmother made her. The next day, Annie dresses Mary in plain colors, and when Mary's companion returns late in the day, she explains she is sending Mary to America as a puritan because England is no longer safe for the girl. She will travel as Mary Newbury, an orphan. As her companion provides Mary with money for the trip, she explains she owes Eliza, her former nurse, a great debt for helping her in a time of trouble, and since she arrived too late to save Eliza, her only way to repay her is through Mary. When she gives Mary a ring engraved with the letter E, Mary sees her own eyes in her companion's and realizes she is finally looking at her mother, but she will never see her again.

Feeling the difference in the air once she reaches the sea, Mary wants to run away because her entire life will change once the Puritans notice her. At E's instruction, she joins the family of John Rivers before meeting Martha Everdale, a widow who invites Mary to travel with her. The Puritans are following their pastor, Reverend Johnson, who has already travelled to the New World. That evening, Mary opens the box that E gave her to find a letter that tells her she is not alone and that E loves her and is always thinking of her. The box also contains linens, plates, various useful items and a book of paper which Mary uses to begin her journal as she feels very lonely. When fog delays the ship's sailing, the Puritans take shelter at an inn and declare the next day as a day of prayer and fasting. In the morning, Reverend Elias Cornwell, the nephew of Reverend Johnson, leads the eloquent prayer. His lengthiness causes Mary's mind to wander as she thinks of how her grandmother always attended church. Martha rouses her after the prayer ends, and Mary fears Reverend Cornwell has guessed her true nature when his eyes narrow, but his mouth twitches with approval because he mistakes her rapture for excessive devotion. Eager to leave Southampton, the Puritans are grateful that their prayers are answered when the mist disappears, and they board the ship, the Annabel. On board, Elias Cornwell leads the congregation in prayer before they are taken to the cabin below which will be their home for the journey where they are packed as tight as cattle. Martha gives Mary some herbs from her garden to strew in her bedding, causing Mary's eyes to water as she is reminded of her grandmother's garden. As the wind catches the sail, the ship begins to move, and they are away.

## Journey 1 Analysis

After her companion leaves her at an inn while she takes care of things, foreshadowing her plans for Mary, Mary is tended to be Annie, the landlady who seems to know Mary's



story, but as Mary's companion promised, Mary is safe with Annie. When Annie hugs her, Mary's eyes sting at the unexpected kindness. In the mirror, Mary's face seems strange, as if she is a woman instead of a child, and in bed, she wonders what will become of her since she has lost her grandmother, the only thing she has ever had. When Mary's unknown companion returns late the next day, she informs Mary of her intentions, foreshadowing Mary's journey to America. Mary cannot stay with her companion as she is also in danger since her husband signed the old king's death warrant and will be arrested as soon as the new king returns. Her explanation that she owes Eliza a great debt which can only be repaid through Mary, combined with her other kindnesses, causes Mary to realize that her companion is actually her biological mother.

The carter lifts Mary into the carriage and as they drive away, Mary feels small and that there is no end to the journey she is beginning. They pass the Temple of the Winds which her grandmother told her about as they are sacred to those who live by the Old Religion. The great stones fade, and beyond them, everything is black. Mary is conveyed to Southampton where she joins the Puritans for their journey to the new world. Here, she meets the Riverses and Martha who offers to be Mary's travelling companion. Mary also learns the Puritans are on their way to reunite with the rest of their congregation which has preceded them to America. When Mary goes through the trunk that her mother gave her, she finds paper which she uses to begin her journal. The Puritans call for a day of prayer when fog delays their departure, and when Mary's attention wanders during the long prayer, she fears Reverend Elias Cornwell has guessed her true nature. Luckily, he believes she is excessively devoted, foreshadowing his fascination with the witch. On board the ship, the passengers make their home below deck, and Mary laments the loss of her grandmother when Martha gives her herbs from her garden which reminds Mary of her grandmother. The ship sets sail, leading to the next journey.



## Journey 2: the Voyage, pages 43-60

### Journey 2: the Voyage, pages 43-60 Summary

As March 1659 continues, the sailors praise the pastor's prayers for working, but Mary dreams of women watching from the coast and knows they were sent by her mother to protect her since E is a powerful witch and Mary is her daughter. The ship seems smaller as they get out to sea, and when Elias Cornwell is afflicted with seasickness, it falls to Mary to care for him. Noticing her examining his books, Elias is surprised to learn that Mary can read and write, so he asks her to scribe his daily journal of the journey for him since he is too ill to write. Mary scribes for Elias Cornwell daily, helping Martha the rest of the time. Though Martha knows everyone, Mary does not make many acquaintances. Jonah, an apothecary, helps Martha tend to the sick, and Mary enjoys the many stories Jonah has to tell since he has spent much of his life travelling. In April 1659, Mary sees her first Great Wonder while she is on deck with Jonah. She spends as much time as possible on deck since jealousies rage below and she has earned scowls from girls she does not even know. As Jonah and Mary watch the porpoises, the sailors are amazed by a huge bird which they prevent Nathaniel Vale from shooting since it is bad luck; however, a feather falls and catches in the rigging above Mary's head, so she snatches it to make a quill. A strong wind drives the ship north, into the cold, causing the sailors concern that they are being blown too far north. Their progress is slow since the icy beauty is deceptive as the bulk of the icebergs lay below the surface where they can rip a ship's hull to pieces. The icebergs become more frequent, but since they are smaller, it is easier to navigate the ship between them. The captain assures his passengers that there is no cause for alarm despite being farther north than they should be. Mary feels like they will never touch land again.

In May 1659, the passengers ration their food nine weeks out of Southampton and they begin to worry they will not reach America before winter. Elias Cornwell believes there is a witch onboard working some kind of maleficence which is the reason they are so far off course. He decides to pray for God's forgiveness by calling for a day of fasting. During the day of fasting, Reverend Cornwell leads a vigil on the ship's deck as he prays to God for forgiveness and deliverance, asking for a sign. The Puritans find their sign in the appearance of the Northern Lights which Reverend Cornwell sees as the Celestial City. The captain orders everyone below deck as they rush to one side, threatening to capsize the ship.

### Journey 2: the Voyage, pages 43-60 Analysis

The prayers seem to work, but Mary can feel witches watching her from the shore and is certain they were sent by her mother, a powerful witch, to look after her. After Elias Cornwell falls ill, Mary tends to him, using her healing knowledge which she learned from her grandmother, and when Elias learns that Mary can read and write, he asks her to scribe for him, foreshadowing his interest in the supposed orphan. Mary continues to





develop her friendship with Martha, and she also introduces Jonah into her narrative at this point. Jonah's work as an apothecary and his experience as a traveler explains why Mary enjoys spending time with him, but it also foreshadows his isolation once they reach America. The mention of the girls' jealousies and their habit of scowling at Mary foreshadows her problems with some of the Puritan girls. Once the ship enters icy waters and things are no longer going well, Elias suspects a witch is onboard causing their problems, showing the Puritans' habit of blaming a witch for any ill luck and foreshadowing Mary's difficulties in the new world. During their day of fasting, the Puritans are shocked to see the aurora borealis, and everyone believes the lights are a sign from God.



## Journey 2: the Voyage, pages 60-77

### Journey 2: the Voyage, pages 60-77 Summary

Discussing the lights they saw, everyone is sure it is an obvious omen of disaster, but Mary does not believe the sign is so clear, and Jonah has seen the lights, aurora borealis, many times before; however, he quickly loses friends as no one believes him. Luckily, such conversations cease when the winds pick up, promising deliverance. Excessive wind is also bad, and the passengers are terrified as the ship is tossed on the waves. The silence at the height of the storm is broken by the scream of a woman in labor, and Rebekah Rivers asks Martha to help her mother as the baby is coming early. Martha asks Mary to help with the birthing, and Tobias Morse nails up blankets for privacy and helps Rebekah fetch water as Mary assists Martha. The delivery is difficult for Sarah Rivers as she is weak from a lack of food and the baby is in an awkward position, but after guiding the baby into the world, Martha hands the quiet, lifeless boy to Mary while she tends to his bleeding mother. Rather than sorrow, Rebekah's eyes burn with anger because she is about to lose her mother and brother at once, but thinking of what her grandmother would do, Mary breathes into the baby's nose and plunges him into a bucket of water, causing him to cry out as the shock of immersion is successful. As Mary hands him to his sister, Rebekah notes that Mary is crying, and as if waking from sleep, Mary notices her surroundings; the storm has ceased, and all is still. The baby is named Noah because two land birds come to the ship two days after his birth, so they expect to see land daily. Noah is well, but he is nursed by another mother as Sarah is still sickly. Martha sends Mary to Rebekah with herbs to make a tea to heal Sarah. In June, land is sighted finally, but the ship is further north than planned. As Mary looks at the hostile land, Jack Gill, a young sailor boy, tells her that the coast is treacherous, but Mary is quick to deny any hint of magic when he recognizes her as the girl who blew life into the Rivers baby. Noting that Mary is often alone, Jack realizes she is an orphan like he is which is why he took to the sea since there is money to be made in trading. Mocking the pious passengers, he mentions that the captain hates a parson worse than a witch, but they believe there is a witch onboard too due to strange happenings and the Cornish lads feeling eyes watching them from the coast. Rumors often turn to witchcraft when things go wrong, but as things are well for now, Mary is safe "for the moment" (p. 77).

### Journey 2: the Voyage, pages 60-77 Analysis

Most of the passengers believe that the lights they saw were an ill omen, and Jonah loses many friends when he tries to explain the natural phenomenon. People's apprehensions ease when the winds pick up but return when the ship gets tossed about during a storm. During the storm, Mary and Martha are called to deliver Sarah Rivers' baby. Rebekah's reaction to the event foreshadows her friendship with Mary. When the baby appears to be stillborn, Mary uses her grandmother's wisdom to immerse the baby in water and administer mouth-to-mouth, reviving the infant. The baby boy is named



Noah after the Biblical story because two land birds come to the ship shortly after his birth, demonstrating the deeply religious beliefs of this group. Since Sarah is still ill, Mary and Martha tend to her. Mary befriends Jack Gill, a young sailor, but she denies the hint of magic when he suggests she breathed life into Noah Rivers, showing her fear of being prosecuted. She also worries when he mentions the witches watching from shore, but she is relieved that no one knows who they watched for. She knows the passengers will suspect witchcraft if anything goes awry, but Mary is safe for now since things are going well. This foreshadows that things may not continue to go well in which case witchcraft will be suspected.



## Journey 2: the Voyage, pages 77-89

### Journey 2: the Voyage, pages 77-89 Summary

Mary cannot deny she has the power because what happened today proves she cannot escape her destiny. While talking to Jack on deck, he dragged her to the sloping deck to show her a great fish like the one that swallowed Jonah in the Bible, and explaining it is a whale, Jack tells her that he plans to hunt them someday. The water looks like the scrying bowl that Eliza used to see the future, and though her grandmother believed she had the gift, Mary never tried it; however, she now sees a young boy in a tobacco field who turns into a young man on a boat and then into a captain who disappears into the waves after a whale wrecks his boat. Back in the present, Mary quells Jack's suspicions that she is sick. She has seen his past and future, but her grandmother always said to never reveal someone's death as there is no way to avoid it. She is relieved when the captain calls Jack away. Like her grandmother, Mary sees visions unbidden, but she knows the gift comes from her mother as the power is greater than Eliza's ever was. Though contrary winds hinder the boat's progress, the passengers remain in good spirits as they see land to starboard, allowing the captain to send boats to shore for fresh water and food. Jack visits Mary in the sail locker where she hides to write during the day, talking enough about his plans and dreams for both of them as Mary shares little about herself. They pretend that Jack will make a fortune at sea while Mary waits at home for him to return and marry her, but Mary soon stops the game because she was not in Jack's future that she saw and she would always be waiting for the day he did not return from the sea. Her visions are a curse, and she wishes she had never seen anything.

Martha warns Mary about how she conducts herself with Jack and Elias Cornwell as tongues wag since Mary is a lone girl nearing womanhood. Mary objects that she and Jack are just friends, and she only scribes for Reverend Cornwell. Asking Mary to help her with a quilt, Martha suggests Elias would be a good match for a girl in Mary's position, joking that they should start on her marriage chest. Mary has no desire to think of marriage beyond a game of pretend, but she spends her afternoons sewing like a goodwife because Martha is her only protector and she does not want to upset her. Nearing the end of their long journey, the ship enters a great bay, and Mary notes that the coast looks empty of life and unknowable. In mid-June, the Annabel waits for the right wind to take them toward the harbor, and when the fog slowing their progress toward Salem clears around noon, they are allowed their first glimpse of human habitation. Mary does not share in the general joy since she does not know what America has in store for her. When Jack bids Mary goodbye, he promises to come back someday and find her, but she knows she will never see him again.



## Journey 2: the Voyage, pages 77-89 Analysis

Though Mary has always refused to attempt scrying to see the future, despite her grandmother's belief that she has the gift, she can no longer deny her power and destiny after she sees Jack's future in the sea. His past and future is revealed to her, making her sad because her grandmother taught her that there is no way to avoid the future. Mary knows her gift comes from her mother as she is more powerful than Eliza. The ship acquires additional food and water as they near land, causing the passengers to maintain good spirits. Mary and Jack's friendship continues, but Mary does not enjoy their game of pretending they will one day be married since she knows his future. She wishes she had never seen anything and sees her gift as a curse. Martha chides Mary for her relationships with Elias and Jonah, though Mary objects neither have romantic potential. Yet, she sews with Martha each afternoon like a goodwife for fear of upsetting her only protector. As the ship nears the harbor, Mary does not share in the other passengers' joy since her future in this new land is uncertain at best. She is sad when Jack bids her goodbye. Although he promises to return for her someday, she knows that she will never see him again because she has already seen his future.



# The New World

## The New World Summary

When the ship reaches the shore in June 1659, the passengers' elation turns to anxiety since their brethren who preceded them are not in Salem. Mary is homesick for the ship as they disembark, but she no longer belongs on board. The Elders learn from the Salem men that Reverend Johnson led his flock into the wilderness, so they plan to meet tomorrow to ask for God's guidance on the course they will take. Though Mary did not suffer seasickness, she feels nauseous as "we have arrived, but we are strangers in a strange land" (page 96). Mary explores the town with Rebekah and Tobias, noting the buildings are small, and the folk of Salem's faces show the history of work and hardship, informing them of how life will be in America. Jonah, Tobias, Martha, Mary and the Riverses lodge at the home of Widow Hesketh who tells them her husband died soon after their arrival because they arrived too late for planting. The newcomers worry because they have also arrived late, but Widow Hesketh assures them things have changed since her arrival and no one goes hungry. However, she advises John Rivers to buy provisions while he can, else his wife and children will starve during the harsh winter.

Since Noah's birth, Mary has grown close to Rebekah, though few others speak to Mary as they still do not consider her as part of their congregation. When they go to the market day in Salem, they encounter Deborah and Hannah Vane with Elizabeth Denning and Sarah Garner, girls that Mary does not like. The girls beckon Rebekah to them to ask about Tobias, and though an understanding has been developing between Rebekah and Tobias, it is apparent that Deborah is Rebekah's rival. The girls shriek and point when two savages walk through the market, but none of the Salem settlers pay them any attention, though the newcomers are filled with awe. Though Mary stares, she does not squeal like the others. The older savage man's eyes range over the crowd as if he can see through them, but his eyes become sharp and piercing as he gazes into Mary's eyes. After a week in Salem, John Rivers is concerned since nothing has been settled.

Widow Hesketh invites Martha and Mary to stay with her, suggesting they can set up a clothing business, but Martha wants to join her people. The widow warns them that there are spirits in the forest, and they will get little help from Salem as Reverend Johnson's flock was encouraged to depart because Reverend Johnson behaves like he is a new prophet; she warns them against joining their preceding congregation. The newcomers are called to the meeting house to decide whether they will stay or go. Martha and the Riverses will go, but Jonah worries whether he and Tobias will be accepted since they are strangers. Tobias convinces Jonah to go because he will obviously follow Rebekah, and Mary joins Martha, though she shares some of Jonah's doubts. After supper, Widow Hesketh asks Mary to help her with needlework, suggesting it would be safer for Mary to stay with her. Kind recognizes kind, and she was warned of Mary's coming. Mary must take care wherever she goes because people



bring their superstitions overseas with them, and since Mary insists she can look after herself, Widow Hesketh warns her to watch her back. The newcomers' departure is delayed as the Salem men insist they must use native guides if they are going to find Reverend Johnson's colony, and it takes some time to convince the Elders that this is necessary. As they prepare for their journey into the wilderness, Mary is excited but afraid because of Widow Hesketh's words. She cannot go back, but she cannot stay here because she would miss Martha, Rebekah and her other newfound friends who have become almost like family to her. Deciding "if it is my destiny to stay with these people, then let it be so" (p. 117), Mary packs her belongings for the journey.

## The New World Analysis

After the ship reaches the shore, Mary immediately misses being on the ship. The Puritans soon learn that their brethren who came to America first have left Salem and continued out into the wilderness where they have started a settlement. The newcomers plan to discuss their options. Mary feels sick at being a stranger in a strange land. While exploring the town, Mary notes that life in America will obviously be hard, foreshadowing her upcoming trials. She, along with the Riverses, Jonah, Tobias and Martha, stays with Widow Hesketh whose tale of the tribulations she first endured upon arrival to the new world causes John Rivers to worry about his family's wellbeing. Fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing, Mary notes that she has become very close with Rebekah Rivers since Noah was born, but she also mentions that she is still an outcast among the majority of the congregation, foreshadowing the accusations against her. Additionally, the Vanes' animosity toward Mary foreshadows this, along with Deborah's jealousy of Rebekah and Tobias. Mary's reaction to the Indians in the market square foreshadows her future relationship with Jaybird. Jonah's fear that he and his son will not be accepted in Beulah echoes Mary's own fears and foreshadows the isolation that results from being strangers in such a tightknit community. Mary nearly decides to stay in Salem, especially after Widow Hesketh frightens her by recognizing her own kind; however, Mary decides to stay with her newfound friends for she would miss them too much if she left them now. Widow Hesketh's warning foreshadows the accusations of witchcraft that Mary will eventually face.



# Journey 3: Wilderness

## Journey 3: Wilderness Summary

In July 1659, Mary thinks of her grandmother's deserted cottage as they finally gather to leave town. As the large group advances slowly, Mary walks with Rebekah and Tobias, continuing until sunset when they set up camp. Some sleep under shelter while others sleep in the mild, open night. Mary writes by starlight. Though there are few roads, the way is open and easy to pass at first, but nothing could prepare the newcomers for the forest which hinders their progress even further. Two savages, the same boy and his grandfather that Mary saw in the market place, join them to act as their guides as it will be impossible to find the settlement without the natives' direction. Mary is surprised to realize that the boy speaks English, and she feels the same strangeness when the old man catches her eyes again. The next day, they enter the forest which is sometimes impenetrable to the point that the group must stop while the men clear the way with axes. The natives help the Puritans find fresh water, fruit and nuts, and they also teach the men to hunt venison and wild turkey. They journey daily until the light fades when the fear of the unknown spreads in the darkness of night. The group prays against Satan as the forest is his realm. The Indians camp a little away from the whites, comfortable in the forest, and they leave nothing behind when they break camp each morning. Mary does not fear the forest as the others do since she was raised in the woods. Jonah is not afraid either, and he spends his time talking to the Indians and learning that the natives are divided into nations; their guides are Pennacook. The journey is hard, but the Puritans press onward, and the Indians tell Jonah that they admire the whites' determination. The newcomers are excited when they reach a clearing and see smoke on a hill in the distance, the first sign they have seen of human habitation, and the younger Indian tells them it is the place they seek, Beulah. They travel many more miles before reaching their destination, but they know they are nearing the settlement when they come upon a leveled surface where many trees have been felled. They finally reach the hill where they see the settlement and the surrounding forest which has been cultivated into fields. Still, something holds them back, watching until the settlers notice them, and then, people begin calling out to one another. With no one to greet them, Mary stays with Jonah and Tobias to observe as Martha runs ahead to find her kin. Speaking in his language, the old Indian mutters something that could be a prayer or a curse before he and his grandson disappear back into the forest as quietly as they had arrived.

## Journey 3: Wilderness Analysis

As Mary joins the group heading away from Salem into the wilderness toward Beulah, she describes the journey in her journal as she writes by starlight. The path is dense and difficult, especially when they reach the forest where they are joined by two Indians, the same from the market which further foreshadows Mary's interactions with the young boy and his grandfather. This foreshadowing is particularly obvious when she feels





strange under the old man's gaze. Though the Puritans fear the Indians, they would not survive without the natives who help them find food and keep them on the correct path to their brethren. Each night, the Puritans grow fearful in the dark as the forest belongs to Satan. This belief demonstrates the superstitious fears of the Puritans and foreshadows how Mary will be treated due to her lack of fear which results from the fact that she was raised in the woods. In a manner similar to Mary yet again, Jonah does not fear the forest or the Indians, and he spends much of his time talking to the natives, emphasizing his differences from the Puritans and indicating he will be persecuted. When the group finally reaches the settlement, everyone rushes ahead to find their family except Mary, Jonah and Tobias who are strangers and have no one waiting to greet them. The Indians disappear quietly into the forest, serving as a contrast with the Puritans who do not understand how to move silently through the woods.



# Settlement, pages 137-153

## Settlement, pages 137-153 Summary

In August 1659, not all is joy as one of Martha's sisters is dead while the other is married to one of the chief men in town and expects Martha and Mary to be her servants. Instead, Martha and Mary will go in with Jonah and Tobias for equal shares. John Rivers' brothers moved on, and Mary is glad when Sarah dissuades him from following because Rebekah is the only true friend she has ever had. The Rivers build a house next door. The next month, Mary notes that the Sabbath is strictly kept, though there is much work to do, and Sundays are spent in the meeting hall; those who do not attend will be expelled from the community. Mary is fascinated by the wolf heads nailed outside the hall to serve as a warning of the dangers in the forest. Reverend Johnson is hailed as a prophet, but Mary dislikes his cold eyes and does not want him to notice her. Both households worry about the upcoming winter, building structures for their animals. Meanwhile, Jonah begins to use his knowledge as an apothecary to treat some of the settlers. Once the Riverses' house is finished, all live together while working on the second house, and since Martha and Jonah begin their Physick Garden, Mary helps Jonah explore the forest for unknown plants since he plans to write a book about the virtues and uses of various plants in England and America. Sometimes, though, Mary ventures into the woods alone for nuts and fruits, and she makes a terrible confession for which she would be punished if discovered: she dresses as a boy when she goes to the forest alone, using clothes acquired secretly from her friends which she hides in the middle of a hollow tree. When Mary ventures farther than before and comes upon a pond, she bathes and falls asleep, waking to find leaves with a soap-like quality on her clothes. On her way back to the settlement, she feels like she is being watched, and the next time she enters the forest, she again feels she is being watched. Though she is alert, she has no warning as the young Indian guide appears and confesses to leaving the plant. Despite his assurances that women in his camp often go naked, Mary runs away, mortified that he saw her nude. Jonah breaks his ankle while helping John and Tobias, and while Martha gives him poppy to ease the pain, the herbs she needs for a poultice do not grow in America so they do not know what to do.

## Settlement, pages 137-153 Analysis

Since Martha's sister has married an important man in Beulah, she expects Martha and Mary to be her servants, so the two decide to build a house with Jonah and Tobias who offer them equal shares. The Rivers also stay, luckily for Mary whose only friend is Rebekah. The two groups decide to build houses next door to one another, foreshadowing their continued fellowship and the close relationship that continues to develop between the two groups. Mary notes how strictly the Sabbath is upheld in Beulah; those who do not attend church on Sundays or who work are expelled from the community. Mary's dislike of Reverend Johnson foreshadows her negative interactions with him. Mary aids Jonah in learning about local plants as he continues his practice as



an apothecary, even beginning to treat some of the settlers. Mary occasionally ventures into the woods alone, but when she does, she dresses as a boy, a fact that would cause her to be punished. She becomes worried when she bathes in a pond far from Beulah and dozes in the sun, waking to find leaves on her clothes which foreshadow that someone saw her. This fact is quickly fulfilled when Jaybird, the younger Indian, greets her during her next venture into the woods, and this also further foreshadows Mary's friendship with Jaybird. Mary's concern for Jonah's injured ankle and the fact that they do not have access to the herbs that Martha needs for a poultice foreshadows Mary turning to the Indians for help since she does not understand the local plants as they do.



# Settlement, pages 154-171

## Settlement, pages 154-171 Summary

When Jonah's foot blackens and he grows feverish, Tobias prepares to ride to Salem, but Mary rushes into the forest where she finds the Indian boy and tells him about Jonah's situation. He offers to ask his grandfather for help, promising to come soon. When Martha complains about a jaybird chattering, Mary opens the door and finds a basket of herbs, so she follows the bird's call to the Indian boy who recounts his grandfather's instructions, promising to return tomorrow to check on Jonah. Martha is displeased with Mary's woodland wandering and using the natives' remedies, but when Jonah's foot improves and his fever goes down, she praises the natives' Christianity despite being heathens; still, she warns Mary against talking to the natives as it could bring unwanted attention if she is seen. Jonah thinks Martha's fears are silly and encourages Mary to learn more, so Mary spends time with Jaybird, learning about the healing properties of plants and how to be quiet in the woods. When Mary wonders why she has seen no other natives, Jaybird explains the first white settlers brought diseases that killed most of his family, and after he was educated by a white man, he decided to return to his people only to find Beulah in place of his village since the white men usurped his tribe's summer village while they were at their winter home. Jaybird's grandfather stays to watch over the holy places, the stones at the top of the hill which he insists should be respected. After Jethro Vane complains that Mary cursed his hogs, Martha forbids her to enter the forest, fearing that people will turn against them. Martha's sister, Goodwife Anne, visits to warn them of the natives' savageness, and when she looks at Jonah's book of remedies, she disapproves because it looks like magic. Since she cannot best Jonah, she turns to Mary, insisting the girl should stick close to home and help Martha. Goodwife Anne also informs them that Reverend Johnson is meeting with the selectmen to discuss the impropriety of a young girl living with unrelated men, and she soon returns to inform Mary that she will move in with the Riverses. Martha is unhappy with the arrangement but believes it best so that more suspicion does not fall on Mary. Though Mary does not mind living with the Riverses, "I do not like being shifted like a piece on a chessboard" (p. 171).

## Settlement, pages 154-171 Analysis

Since Jonah's condition worsens, Mary fulfills the earlier foreshadowing by rushing into the forest and asking Jaybird for help. Jaybird soon brings a basket of herbs which Martha uses despite her mistrust. Martha is concerned with Mary's interactions with the Indians since the other Puritans will not look kindly on her association with heathens, but she praises the natives for being better Christians than some of her fellow Puritans. Disregarding Martha's fears, Mary continues to spend time with Jaybird, learning about local plants and how to be quiet in the woods. Jaybird also tells her about his family's history and how many of his tribe were killed by diseases brought from the white men who first came to America. After Jethro Vane suggests that Mary cursed his hogs,



Martha forbids Mary from going to the forest, fulfilling the foreshadowing concerning how Mary's lack of fear of the forest would cause others to treat her while simultaneously foreshadowing the accusations against Mary. Martha's sister is wary of Jonah's remedies, feeling they look like magic, but more importantly, she warns them that Mary may be forced to move in with the Riverses because many feel it is improper for a young unmarried woman to live with unrelated men. This foreshadowing is quickly fulfilled when the pronouncement is made, and though Mary does not mind living with her other friends, she dislikes being forced to do so without being permitted any say.



# Settlement, pages 172-189

## Settlement, pages 172-189 Summary

In late October 1659, Mary longs to escape, but she promised Martha she would not go beyond the settlement boundaries, plus there is still much to do to make their homes comfortable. The days grow shorter, and Mary has not seen Jaybird for weeks. In November, Mary visits the forest for fear it will be her last excursion before the snow comes, convincing herself that Martha's prohibition no longer holds since she now lives with the Riverses. Jaybird joins her and, telling her that his grandfather wants to see her, leads her into the forest, up a cliff and through the caves behind the waterfall. His grandfather, White Eagle, greets Mary as mahigan shkiizhig which Jaybird explains means Eyes of a Wolf which is his grandfather's name for Mary since she reminds him of a young she-wolf he once knew who was "fierce, proud, and brave but not fully grown into her strength" (p. 178). White Eagle is curious about the hare he has seen near the village as it is different from local hares, and Mary recalls the stories of how her grandmother could take the shape of a hare. When she tells the Indians about her grandmother, White Eagle explains Eliza's spirit is restless because of the great wrong done to her, and she has followed Mary to watch over her, likely because she fears that what was done to her could be done to Mary. As Jaybird leads Mary out of the cave, she asks what happened to the she-wolf, but they do not know; either her pack drove her out or turned on her and tore her to pieces. In late November, Tobias hunts in the woods with Josiah Compton and Ned Cardwell, and while they are successful, Mary is relieved that the hare they were chasing managed to escape. After hearing wolves one night, the men herd the sheep into the byre, but two sheep are found slaughtered the next morning in the field. It is cold in the meeting house as Reverend Johnson compares his congregation to sheep, warning them to be sober and vigilant since the Devil is like a lion seeking who he can devour.

## Settlement, pages 172-189 Analysis

Mary tries to follow Martha's bidding and stay within the settlement, but in November, she escapes into the forest before the first snow. When she encounters Jaybird, he takes her to see his grandfather, White Eagle. White Eagle tells Mary that she reminds him of a she-wolf he once knew who was "fierce, proud, and brave but not fully grown into her strength" (p. 178), but he refuses to tell her what happened to the wolf, foreshadowing that it was likely something bad. This foreshadowing is fulfilled later when Jaybird tells Mary that the wolf was likely driven from her pack or her pack turned on her and tore her apart. When White Eagle questions Mary about the foreign hare he has seen around the village, Mary recognizes her grandmother's shape, so he tells her that her grandmother is watching over her, likely for fear that Mary will also be persecuted as a witch. Back at Beulah, Mary is relieved to learn the hare escaped when several of the men were hunting it. After wolves slaughter sheep near the village, Reverend Johnson sermonizes on the congregation being sheep, warning them to wary

of the Devil who will devour them like the lion. This vigilance foreshadows Mary's persecution.



## Settlement, pages 189-205

### Settlement, pages 189-205 Summary

The winter sets in bitterly by December, and Rebekah often visits Tobias next door while Mary visits with Martha as they make a quilt for the young couple's marriage bed. By January 1660, many settlers grow sick from the cruel afflictions brought by the cold. When Reverend Johnson summons Martha to tend to his sick children, Martha asks for Mary's help, but Reverend Johnson has heard of Mary and questions her faith, warning she must live by God's word as Reverend Johnson knows everything that happens in the community. Reverend Johnson's children's health improves, but Martha worries about Goody Johnson, fearing her current pregnancy is sapping her strength. Goody Johnson calls Mary to her to ask if she will scribe for Elias since Goody Johnson is too weak to do so, and Mary cannot refuse since the woman gives her a week's worth of food for her household. Mary is glad she rarely sees Reverend Johnson when she scribes for Elias Cornwell, but she believes Elias is mad as she scribes his collection of old wives' tales and listens to his belief concerning the upcoming year of the Beast, 1666, which he believes will mark Christ's coming and that Beulah will be at its center. As hunger stalks the town, the wolves grow bolder, and Tobias shows Mary wolf tracks on the main street in town. Mary helps Goody Johnson daily when her eldest girls fall sick again, but when Goody Johnson asks about her past, Mary begs her not to question her because Goody Johnson is too good to lie to; however, Goody Johnson can guess somewhat, telling Mary how she was an orphan and was being tried as a witch when Reverend Johnson found and saved her. She leads a pious life as his wife out of gratitude, and she encourages Mary that she can also change. Mary agrees to try, though she would rather be drowned than live the life Goody Johnson has chosen. While clearing the snow on the edge of the woods, Mary looks up to see a she-wolf, and they stare at each other. Unafraid, Mary wills the wolf to go away because the men have baited traps at the edge of the forest, and the wolf suddenly runs off as if she heard Mary's message. In February, Goody Johnson dies in childbirth, and the baby is stillborn despite Martha and Mary's best efforts. As they leave Reverend Johnson and his children to spend the last few moments with Goody Johnson, Martha hopes she and Mary will not be blamed as people often accuse healers of being killers when things go wrong. Goody Johnson and the baby are stored in an outbuilding where the cold prevents decay into March since the ground is still too hard to dig a grave.

### Settlement, pages 189-205 Analysis

Mary and Martha begin making a quilt for Rebekah and Tobias' wedding bed, foreshadowing their eminent nuptials. When the settlers begin to suffer afflictions brought on by the cold, Reverend Johnson summons Martha to tend to his children; however, he lectures Mary on her faith, having heard that she is forward and has plenty to say for herself. His lecture foreshadows Mary's persecution. Martha's fear for Goody Johnson's health because of her pregnancy foreshadows the woman's death during





childbirth. Mary begins to develop a relationship with Goody Johnson when the pastor's wife asks her to scribe for Elias Cornwell, and this also foreshadows Elias's interest in Mary. As Mary spends more time with Goody Johnson, the pastor's wife insinuates that she knows something of Mary's past because she was like her before she met Reverend Johnson who saved her from being drowned as a witch, and though Mary promises that she will strive to live a pious life, she thinks that she would rather drown than make the decision that Goody Johnson made. Fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing, Goody Johnson dies in childbirth, as does her newborn baby. Martha's fear that she and Mary will be blamed foreshadows Reverend Johnson's accusations against Mary, as well as Martha's own fears of being accused of witchcraft because she is a healer and people often accuse healers of also being able to kill when their remedies fail.



# Settlement, pages 205-222

## Settlement, pages 205-222 Summary

When Goody Johnson is buried in March, Reverend Cornwell conducts the service, and though Reverend Johnson dabs at his eyes and nose, Mary is unsure if his tears are caused by sorrow or the wind. Later that month when Reverend Johnson preaches that it is better to marry than to burn, it is obvious that he wants a new wife. There are plenty of candidates, particularly Deborah Vane who disregards the interest of Ned Cardwell and Josiah Compton, having eyes only for Reverend Johnson. Mary is not pleased when Reverend Johnson turns his attention to Rebekah, asking John for her hand though she and Tobias are to be married in the spring. When she finds Rebekah crying, Rebekah confides in Mary that she is pregnant, and Mary encourages her to tell her mother before her father decides in favor of Reverend Johnson. Sarah pleads with John for her daughter's case, and it does not take long for John to decide that Rebekah and Tobias will be married by the end of next month. When the wedding banns are hung on Sunday, Reverend Johnson accuses Mary of meddling in things that do not concern her, suggesting she bespelled his wife and child and thwarted his search for a new wife using witchcraft. He warns her that her days are numbered if he hears anything more about her. Deciding not to worry Martha, Mary vows to stay out of Reverend Johnson's way. With the winter finally past, it is time to plow and plant, and when Mary sees the hare staring at her in the lower meadow, she knows it is Eliza but wonders why she has come. Tobias and Rebekah are married, and since they share Rebekah's room, Mary moves back in with Martha. They consider making quilts for money since Tobias and Rebekah's wedding quilt is so widely admired. Deborah Vane and her friends often whisper when they see Mary with Rebekah, and on May Day Eve, the girls ask Mary about her visits to the forest, insisting they know she speaks to animals and Indians when she conjures spirits and dances naked. They promise not to tell that she cast spells if they help her bind their future husbands to them as she did for Rebekah. They also suggest she has spelled Elias Cornwell for herself as he obviously singles Mary out, though she tries to avoid him. After Mary refuses to help them and attempts to deny their accusations, the girls leave with their baskets full of herbs for witch's brewing. Mary knows magic can be used for evil as well as good, and though she is sure the girls have no skill, they obviously contrive to take power from her. In May, Reverend Johnson announces that signs of witchcraft have been found in the forest, causing Deborah and her friends to go white and stare at their shoes, but as Reverend Johnson rants against the iniquities of the Indians who are obviously minions of the Devil and orders patrols to guard the settlement, the girls breathe again, closing their eyes in silent prayers of thanks.

## Settlement, pages 205-222 Analysis

Mary's uncertainty about whether Reverend Johnson is crying from sorrow or the wind during his wife's funeral indicates his callous nature. She also disapproves when he



makes it apparent that he is in search for a new wife within weeks of his wife's funeral. Though Deborah Vane disappoints several young men who are interested in her by her obvious pursuit of the pastor, Reverend Johnson turns his attention to Rebekah, ignoring the fact that she is promised to Tobias which signifies his selfish and narcissistic nature as he obviously believes he has the right to whatever he chooses. Beyond her love for Tobias, Rebekah is distraught because she is already with child, but at Mary's urging, she confides in her mother who convinces John to refuse Reverend Johnson's request to marry Rebekah. When Rebekah's marriage to Tobias is announced, Reverend Johnson accuses Mary of witchcraft, blaming her for his wife and child's death and for thwarting his desire to marry Rebekah; this fulfills the earlier foreshadowing and again demonstrates Reverend Johnson's vicious and selfish nature as he accuses Mary of witchcraft because he does not get what he wants. Once the winter passes, Mary again sees the hare which she knows is Eliza, but she does not understand why her grandmother has followed her so far. After Rebekah's wedding, the Vane sisters and their friends accuse Mary of witchcraft, fulfilling the earlier foreshadowing, but they promise not to mention her powers if she helps them bind their future husbands, suggesting that is how Rebekah caught Tobias. They also suggest Mary has bound Elias Cornwell to herself since his interest in Mary is apparent, despite Mary's efforts to avoid him. The girls are agitated when Mary refuses to help them, foreshadowing their malicious intentions against her. Mary worries that the girls will attempt to use her power, though they obviously have none of their own, foreshadowing their dabbling in witchcraft. May fulfills this foreshadowing when Reverend Johnson lectures about signs of witchcraft that have been found in the forest, and Mary can tell who the guilty parties are by their reaction; however, luck is on their side as Reverend Johnson immediately accuses the Indians of the travesty and orders guards to prevent Indians from breaching Beulah with their Devilish intentions.



# Settlement, pages 223-240

## Settlement, pages 223-240 Summary

Mary listens for Jaybird, wanting to warn him though Martha has forbidden her to enter the forest. When she hears him, Mary meets Jaybird at the edge of the forest where he gives her a gift of moccasins, yet she barely has time to warn him before Martha calls her. Martha worries that Mary was conjuring, but Mary assures her she is not so stupid; however, Martha argues that Mary was stupid enough to write that she is a witch, and they will all be hanged if it is found. Mary stops Martha from destroying her journal, promising to do so herself, and though Mary intends to do what Martha expects, she is lonely and feeling like her mother is with her, she sees the cloth they are using to make her quilt and decides what to do. Mary sews the pages of her journal into the quilt, knowing it will not be found no matter how they search. In June 1660, Martha and Mary work on Mary's quilt each day, Martha disapproving of the untraditional flowers, leaves and sails which Mary insists upon, and each night, Mary stows her journal pages inside the quilt. When seven-year-old Joshua Rivers goes missing, Sarah is frantic, and while the entire town searches for him, Martha asks Mary to scry for him. Mary sees Joshua in the swamp, and Martha sends the men to search the swamp where Joshua is found and safely returned home. On the hottest midsummer's day that Mary can remember, Mary and Martha stay at the Riverses' house because Martha is afraid of storms, and when they wake to the raging storm and a human voice shrieking in terror, none are brave enough to investigate. The next day, they learn the shrieks came from old Tom Carter who went into the woods to relieve himself and saw the white shapes of spirits in the trees. Some laugh, yet others take him seriously and lead Tom Carter to Reverend Johnson and Elias Cornwell to tell his story. The men search the forest, and rumors abound that they find something, but no one knows what exactly. Around noon, Jethro Vane, Ezekiel Francis and another constable arrive and demand that Martha and Mary come with them, but Martha refuses because they need to feed the men. The constables leave, and Martha sends Mary to get Sarah, insisting they must all be together because the men will not return until evening. Soon, a bunch returns, including Reverend Johnson and Nathaniel Clench, and when Reverend Johnson questions Mary's whereabouts during the storm, Sarah intervenes that they were all together, learning that evidence of conjuring spirits was found in the woods. Sarah insists it is impossible to suggest that Mary and Rebekah snuck out without her, unless they are insinuating that she was also practicing witchcraft, as she glares at her brother-in-law, Nathaniel Clench. Though Martha and Mary are easy game, the Riverses are well-connected. As Reverend Johnson reveals the female undergarments that were found, Mary objects that they would not fit her or Rebekah, so he should search for a smaller girl who wears such vanities under her clothes, looking at Jethro Vane since the description obviously fits his nieces and he knows it. Sarah is indignant that Mary and Martha were suspected, but John counsels her to caution, sure that this will all blow over. In July, Deborah and Hannah Vane are questioned, but they explain that they removed their garments while walking in the heat and simply neglected to retrieve them; their story is believed because Jethro Vane is a powerful man, and Mary waits with



dread for suspicion to return to her, even though she is not guilty and has witnesses. She does not trust these malicious girls who will be quick to redirect blame if they are caught, likely in Mary's direction.

## Settlement, pages 223-240 Analysis

Mary shows her loyalty to Jaybird by warning him about Reverend Johnson's mandates concerning Indians, despite Martha forbidding her to enter the forest. When Martha calls for Mary, she asks if Mary was conjuring, chiding Mary for writing that she is a witch in her journal since it could easily be found in which case they would all be punished. Mary promises to destroy the journal, but she is unable to do so, so instead, she sews the pages from her journal into the quilt that she and Martha are making for her. Each night, she adds more pages to the quilt after she and Martha make the quilt larger during the day. Ironically, despite Martha's protests against Mary's powers, she asks Mary to scry for Joshua Rivers after he goes missing, and Mary's powers are revealed when she locates the boy in the swamp. Martha's desire for Mary to help demonstrates that she does not believe Mary is evil, even if she is a witch. During the storm, the shrieks that Mary, Martha, Sarah and Rebekah hear foreshadow the continuing accusations of witchcraft in Beulah. The next day, this foreshadowing is fulfilled when Tom Carter indicates that he saw spirits in the trees. He is taken to Reverend Johnson who soon sends constables to question Mary and Martha. Revealing her knowledge of the politics in their village, Martha sends the men away so that she and Mary are with the Rivers women when the constables return with Reverend Johnson and Nathaniel Clench. Sarah's presence is beneficial since Clench is her brother-in-law, and Sarah objects to the men's indication that Mary was conjuring in the woods, daring the men to accuse her as well after she insists that Mary was with her the entire night. When Reverend Johnson shows Mary the female undergarments that were found, Mary tells him that the clothes would belong to a smaller girl who wears such vanities, obviously hinting at the Vane sisters as Jethro Vane well knows. Unfortunately, because the Vanes are well-connected, they come up with a story that is believed. Mary worries that the girls will blame her if they are caught, foreshadowing the girls doing just that.



# Settlement, pages 243-254

## Settlement, pages 243-254 Summary

In July and August, Mary writes quickly before stitching her pages into her quilt. She thought that nearly being caught would have made the girls stop, but they grow bolder, believing they have the power to conjure storms, and they now practice in one another's barns and houses. When September 1660 brings a series of afflictions, Reverend Johnson orders a Day of Humiliation to beg God's forgiveness as they have obviously attracted His displeasure. During the sermon, the Vanes and their friends faint and are taken out of church. They continue to rant and rave for days until Reverend Johnson sends Elias Cornwell to Salem for a doctor. Meanwhile, rumors spread that Jeremiah Vane caught the girls dancing naked but only made them promise not to do it anymore. Unfortunately, Ned Cardwell also saw the girls and threatened to tell Reverend Johnson unless the Vanes gave him freedom, money to set up on his own and Deborah as a wife. The girls seek refuge in madness because they cannot be held responsible for their actions if they are possessed by a spirit since the spirit will be seen as responsible. Mary tries to quell her fear because she is sure the girls will turn the blame toward her. She considers begging Elias Cornwell for protection as he obviously admires her, but she cannot bear enduring Goody Johnson's fate. After the doctor from Salem confirms the girls' madness is caused by witchcraft, Mary is glad she did not turn to Elias since he is the first to quote Exodus and Leviticus about killing witches, and they send for a newcomer who can prove the presence of witchcraft.

In October 1660, Mary fears for her life and worries these may be the last words she ever writes. The witch hunter finally arrives, and the meeting house fills for another Day of Humiliation. The afflicted girls sit in the front, and when Hannah twists her poppet's waist, Rebekah's pains begins, so Elias Cornwell allows Sarah and Martha to take her away but insists Mary must stay. Reverend Johnson enters with Obadiah Wilson who immediately recognizes Mary and points her out as one who bears the mark of the beast. Next, Hannah rises and claims Mary's spirit comes to her. The other girls join in, chanting and accusing Mary of sending herself against them. When Obadiah Wilson orders Mary be brought to him, she rushes to the back of the building where Tobias helps her slip outside. Mary takes refuge in Rebekah's birthing room where Martha assures her the men will not dare enter. Sarah supplies food, boy's clothing and a blanket while Mary gathers her moccasins and the little leather pouch from her box. This is all she has to take with her to the wilderness where she must take her chances because she will surely hang if she stays in Beulah. Rebekah's pains come closer, and though Mary wants to see the baby delivered safely, she can stay no longer.

## Settlement, pages 243-254 Analysis

Mary's haste as she begins her final entries indicate that her persecution is imminent. Her disapproval and disbelief that the girls have grown bolder since nearly being caught



foreshadows their continued witchcraft causing problems for Mary. The description of the girls' rants and the rumors of them being caught contribute to the foreshadowing. Meanwhile, Mary knows they are trying to cast the blame away from themselves by indicating they have been possessed, and she fears they will shift the blame on her shoulders. Though Mary considers begging Elias Cornwell for protection, she still refuses to endure Goody Johnson's fate, again deciding that death is a better alternative than a horrid marriage. The Elders soon send for a witch hunter recently arrived from England, foreshadowing Mary being denounced as a witch. During the meeting, Hannah twists her poppet's waist and Rebekah goes into labor, indicating that Hannah caused the early labor. The fact that Elias Cornwell prevents Mary from leaving with Rebekah and Martha foreshadows the accusations against her, and the foreshadowing is reinforced when Obadiah Wilson, the witch hunter that tried Eliza, appears and recognizes Mary. This foreshadowing is quickly fulfilled when Obadiah Wilson points to Mary as bearing the mark of the beast, and earlier foreshadowing concerning the girls' accusations against Mary are fulfilled as the girls rise and accuse Mary of sending her spirit against them. In a display of loyalty, Tobias helps Mary escape, and she rushes to the Riverses' home, trusting them to protect her despite the accusations against her. The Riverses show their loyalty as well by sheltering Mary and providing her with supplies to escape into the wilderness. Against her desires, Mary does not wait for Rebekah's baby to be delivered before fleeing to the forest to avoid being hanged which will certainly be the case if she stays in Beulah. This final culmination of events fulfills the foreshadowing concerning Mary's persecution throughout the novel.





# Testimony & Afterword

## Testimony & Afterword Summary

Testimony is written by Martha who feels beholden to finish Mary's story. Mary has no choice but to flee as they come straight from the meeting house. The Riverses do their best to provide Mary with food and clothing since she heads to the wilderness. When Reverend Johnson, Elias Cornwell, Nathaniel Clench and the constables arrive, John and Tobias stand ready with musket and sword, but Sarah forbids them from fighting, telling the men that Mary has been and gone. As the Riverses are well-respected, Nathaniel Clench would leave, but Reverend Johnson insists upon searching both houses; however, Martha refuses them entrance to the birthing room especially as the stranger accompanying them is sick and could infect the baby. The men flinch at Rebekah's screams, but they leave, promising to be back. Tobias stands guard until 1 A.M. when the baby comes and Mary is already gone. John sees Mary safely out of the village and into the forest. Rebekah names her daughter Mary Sarah, but the child will not be baptized in Beulah. They are all leaving as soon as possible since the crying out will not stop now that it has started, and they will likely charge Martha and Jonah next as she is a healer and he is a stranger. Jonah packs the wagon, and they will leave once he finishes. Sarah and John will follow with Rebekah and Tobias as soon as Rebekah is well enough to travel. Mary showed Martha where her writings were hidden before she left, so Martha will add this and take Mary's box and quilt with them so Mary will know she kept faith if she ever finds them and can take back her story. Martha and Jonah will head for Salem, but they plan to go further south from there "where folk are freer to follow their own conscience, which is one of the reasons we crossed over the ocean in the first place" (p. 260). Martha will leave word for Mary each place they go.

The Afterword claims that Alison Ellman will continue her efforts to trace Mary and the other people in this account, providing contact information should anyone possess any additional accounts.

## Testimony & Afterword Analysis

Testimony is written by Martha, the first portion of the book not written by Mary. Martha feels obligated to continue Mary's story as Mary has fled. She describes the Riverses' loyalty in providing food and clothing for Mary and shielding her from those pursuing her. The constables insist upon searching the house, but they are dissuaded from continuing their search in Rebekah's birthing room by Rebekah's screams and Martha's refusal to admit them. Martha describes how John made sure that Mary safely escaped the village, and Rebekah's unwavering friendship is demonstrated by her decision to name her daughter after her friend as well as her mother. Moreover, Martha, Jonah and the Riverses all plan to leave Beulah; now that the crying out has begun, it will not stop, and Martha fears she and Jonah will be targeted next because of their professions. Tobias and the Riverses will follow them soon, once Rebekah and the baby are well





enough to travel. Martha's devotion to Mary is evident in her decision to keep Mary's quilt and box as proof that she has kept faith, in addition to the fact that she will leave word for Mary everywhere they go and hopes Mary will find them someday. The novel ends with an Afterword by Alison Ellman, the supposed author who found Mary's manuscript, who indicates she will attempt to learn more about Mary and the other characters, foreshadowing a sequel to this tale.



# Characters

## Mary Newbury

Mary Newbury is the main character and the narrator who tells her story through her journal. She is a fourteen-year-old witch and she is very brave and headstrong. After Mary's grandmother is hanged as a witch, Mary is spirited away by a noblewoman, her long-lost mother, who sends her to America to escape persecution. On the ship across the sea, Mary befriends Martha, Jonah and the Riverses, constantly fearing her true nature will be revealed whenever witches are mentioned which occurs whenever things go badly. Once they reach Salem, they continue on to Beulah, the settlement in the wilderness that has been built by the preceding congregation. Mary lives with Martha, Jonah and Tobias, while the Riverses build a home next to them. She spends a lot of time in the forest helping Jonah, an apothecary, learn the healing properties of local plants. Mary soon meets and befriends Jaybird, an Indian who teaches her about the land.

When Reverend Johnson asks Martha to tend his sick children, he also questions Mary's faith in God. While helping Goody Johnson, Mary learns that Reverend Johnson saved his wife from being drowned as a witch; she believes she would rather die than live Goody Johnson's life. After Goody Johnson dies during childbirth, Reverend Johnson pursues Rebekah Rivers, despite the fact that she is promised to Tobias, Jonah's son, and when his suit is denied, Reverend Johnson insinuates that he suspects Mary of witchcraft. The Vane sisters and their friends accuse Mary of witchcraft, promising to keep her secret if she aids them in securing their future husbands, but they begin dabbling in witchcraft themselves when Mary refuses. As signs of witchcraft are found in the forest, Martha finds Mary's journal and wants to destroy the dangerous memoir, but instead, Mary sews her journal into her quilt. Mary is questioned when girls' undergarments are found in the woods, but she has an alibi and the Vanes' story is believed. However, when the Vanes are caught dancing naked in the woods, they feign madness, so a witch hunter is summoned. The witch hunter recognizes Mary from England, and the other girls join his accusations. Mary flees to the Riverses' house where she is provided with food and clothes for her flight to the wilderness. Martha adds to Mary's journal that she, Jonah and the Riverses will soon follow Mary out of Beulah, and she hopes that Mary will rejoin them someday.

## Martha Everdale

Martha Everdale is a widow whose husband and children are dead. She is a healer who is part of the congregation following Reverend Johnson's congregation to America to rejoin her family. Martha is trained as a healer. She meets Mary in Southampton and offers to travel with the young orphan. On the ship to America, Martha befriends Jonah also, and she acts as midwife to Sarah Rivers when Sarah goes into labor, developing a close relationship with the Riverses as well. Once their group reaches Salem, Martha



joins the group continuing on to Beulah where she sets up house with Mary, Jonah and Tobias, while the Riverses build a house next door to them. She and Jonah work on their healing garden, but Martha worries about Mary spending much time in the forest because of the rumors that result.

Reverend Johnson asks Martha to tend his sick children, and when she acts as midwife to Goody Johnson who dies during childbirth, Martha fears that she and Mary will be blamed since healers are often accused of being killers when things go badly. As signs of witchcraft are found in the forest, Martha finds Mary's journal and wants to destroy the dangerous memoir, but instead, Mary sews her journal into her quilt. Martha tries to protect Mary and herself when more accusations arise concerning witchcraft, but when Mary is finally accused formally by Obadiah Wilson and the girls feigning possession, Martha can do nothing except provide clothes and food for Mary's trek into the wilderness. Martha adds to Mary's journal that she, Jonah, and the Riverses will soon follow Mary out of Beulah, and she hopes that Mary will rejoin them someday.

## John Rivers

John Rivers is the head of the Rivers family who befriends Mary, Martha, Jonah and Tobias. He is Sarah's husband and Rebekah's father. John is ready to fight Reverend Johnson and the constables to prevent them from entering Rebekah's birthing room where Mary is hidden after being accused of witchcraft. He plans to follow Martha and Jonah out of Beulah as soon as Rebekah is well enough to travel after giving birth.

## Sarah Rivers

Sarah Rivers is the wife of John and Rebekah's mother. Martha and Mary aid Sarah when she gives birth on the Annabel. Later, she convinces John to refuse Reverend Johnson's suit to marry Rebekah who is pregnant by Tobias, her promised. Sarah defends Mary when she is accused of witchcraft during the storm, and she hides Mary after her formal accusations by Obadiah Wilson. Sarah plans to leave Beulah as soon as her daughter is well enough to travel.

## Rebekah Rivers

Rebekah Rivers is the eldest daughter of Sarah and John, and she becomes Mary's best friend. She is promised to Tobias Morse, and when Reverend Johnson asks for her hand after his wife dies in childbirth, Rebekah is distraught because she is pregnant with Tobias' child. She confides in Mary who convinces her to tell her mother, and Sarah persuades John to refuse Reverend Johnson's suit. Rebekah marries Tobias, but she goes into labor early during the meeting where Mary is accused of witchcraft because Hannah Vane twists the belly of her poppet since she covets Tobias. Rebekah gives birth to a healthy daughter who she names Mary Sarah, and she plans to leave Beulah with her husband and her parents as soon as she is well enough to travel.



## Jonah Morse

Jonah Morse is an apothecary who befriends Mary and Martha on their journey to America. He sets up a house with the women and his son, Tobias, upon reaching Beulah. Mary assists Jonah with his research of the healing properties of plants, and he leaves Beulah with Martha shortly after Mary flees her persecution of witchcraft.

## Tobias Morse

Tobias Morse is Jonah's son and Rebekah's promised. He eventually marries Rebekah and fathers her child. He helps Mary escape the meeting house when she is accused of witchcraft, and he plans to leave Beulah with his wife and the Riverses as soon as Rebekah is well enough to travel after childbirth. Hannah Vane covets Tobias.

## Deborah Vane

Deborah Vane is the leader of the Puritan girls who play with witchcraft. She wants to marry Reverend Johnson. The girls are all from well-connected and respectable families, but they are catty and petty. They torment Mary on the ship to America, and in Beulah, they accuse Mary of witchcraft, offering to keep her secret if she bespells their chosen husbands. Since Mary refuses, the girls dabble themselves, practicing spells in the forest and one another's homes and barns. When they are caught, they feign madness and possession, ultimately accusing Mary of sending her spirit against them.

## Hannah Vane

Hannah Vane is one of the Puritan girls who practice witchcraft, and she covets Tobias Morse. The girls are all from well-connected and respectable families, but they are catty and petty. They torment Mary on the ship to America, and in Beulah, they accuse Mary of witchcraft, offering to keep her secret if she bespells their chosen husbands. Since Mary refuses, the girls dabble themselves, practicing spells in the forest and one another's homes and barns. When they are caught, they feign madness and possession, ultimately accusing Mary of sending her spirit against them.

## Elizabeth Denning

Elizabeth Denning is one of the Puritan girls who practice witchcraft. The girls are all from well-connected and respectable families, but they are catty and petty. They torment Mary on the ship to America, and in Beulah, they accuse Mary of witchcraft, offering to keep her secret if she bespells their chosen husbands. Since Mary refuses, the girls dabble themselves, practicing spells in the forest and one another's homes and barns. When they are caught, they feign madness and possession, ultimately accusing Mary of sending her spirit against them.



## **Sarah Garner**

Sarah Garner is one of the Puritan girls who practice witchcraft. The girls are all from well-connected and respectable families, but they are catty and petty. They torment Mary on the ship to America, and in Beulah, they accuse Mary of witchcraft, offering to keep her secret if she bespells their chosen husbands. Since Mary refuses, the girls dabble themselves, practicing spells in the forest and one another's homes and barns. When they are caught, they feign madness and possession, ultimately accusing Mary of sending her spirit against them.

## **Reverend Elias Cornwell**

Reverend Elias Cornwell is Reverend Johnson's nephew, and he asks Mary to scribe for him on the Annabel and later in Beulah. He obviously favors Mary, though she avoids him. Mary considers asking Reverend Cornwell for protection when she fears being charged as a witch, but she refuses to endure Goody Johnson's fate. Elias leads the witch hunt.

## **Reverend Johnson**

Reverend Johnson is the haughty, cold leader of the settlement at Beulah who is hailed as a prophet. Mary dislikes his cold, empty eyes. When Reverend Johnson summons Martha to tend his sick children, he questions Mary's faith, and after his wife dies in childbirth, he asks for Rebekah's hand though she is promised to Tobias. He accuses Mary of witchcraft when his hopes of Rebekah are thwarted. Leading the witch hunt, Reverend Johnson calls for Obadiah Wilson's aid, persecuting Mary as a witch.

## **Goody Johnson**

Goody Johnson is Reverend Johnson's wife who befriends Mary. She tells Mary that she serves as Reverend Johnson's obedient wife because he saved her from execution for witchcraft. She dies during childbirth.

## **Jaybird**

Jaybird is the young Native American man who befriends Mary. He and his grandfather, White Eagle, guide the newcomers to Beulah. Jaybird tells Mary how he was educated by a white man after his family died of diseases brought overseas by the white men. Since the white men stole his people's village to erect Beulah, he lives in the forest with his grandfather. Jaybird teaches Mary about the healing properties of local plants and how to travel unseen and unheard through the forest. When he takes Mary to see his grandfather, White Eagle asks about the hare, Eliza's spirit, who has followed Mary to America to warn, protect, or ask for vengeance.



## Obadiah Wilson

Obadiah Wilson is the self-appointed witch finder who directs the execution of Eliza Nuttall. When he is summoned to Beulah to confirm the girls are afflicted by witchcraft, he accuses Mary of bearing the mark of the beast.

## Eliza Nuttall

Eliza Nuttall is Mary's grandmother who raised Mary without knowledge of her parents. She is tried as a witch and executed.

## E

E is the mysterious noblewoman who spirits Mary away from Eliza's execution and sends her to America for safety. Mary recognizes E as her long-lost mother and knows her power comes from E because it is stronger than Eliza's power ever was.



# Objects/Places

## Eliza's House

Mary grows up in her grandmother Eliza's home, which is a small cottage on the edge of the woods in England. She flees after Eliza is hanged as a witch.

## Inn

Mary is spirited away from her grandmother's execution to an inn by a noblewoman who she realizes is her long-lost mother. At the inn, Mary's mother prepares her for the journey to America.

## Southampton

Mary meets the Riverses in Southampton and boards the ship bound for America.

## The Annabel

The Annabel is the name of the ship that Mary and the Puritans take to America. During the four-month journey, Mary befriends Martha, Jonah, and the Riverses.

## Salem

The Puritans disembark in Salem where Mary, Martha, Jonah, Tobias and the Riverses board with Widow Hesketh for a month while the Elders decide whether to follow Reverend Johnson to his new colony in the wilderness. Widow Hesketh tries to convince Mary to stay in Salem with her because she recognizes Mary as her kind and feels she would be safer in Salem.

## Beulah

Beulah is the colony in the wilderness near Salem which is formed by Reverend Johnson and his followers. Most of the Puritans from the Annabel, including the Riverses, Martha, Jonah, Tobias and Mary, follow and settle in Beulah.

## Forest

The Puritans fear the forest as the Devil's place because it is mysterious and dark. Unafraid, Mary often ventures into the forest where she meets and befriends Jaybird.



Signs of witchcraft are found in the forest, leading to Mary's persecution as a witch and eventually her flight into the wilderness to avoid being hanged.

## Meeting House

Sunday services and all community meetings are held at the Meeting House atop the hill. This is where Mary is formally accused of witchcraft.

## Swamps

When Joshua Rivers gets lost in the swamps, Mary locates him by scrying at Martha's request.

## Riverses' House

The Riverses build their house next to the home of Martha, Mary, Jonah and Tobias. Mary is forced to live with the Rivers for a while because it is improper for a young woman to live with unrelated men. After being denounced as a witch, Mary flees to the Riverses' home where she hides in Rebekah's birthing room until the constables' search ends and she can escape to the wilderness.





# Themes

## Witchcraft

Witchcraft is a very important theme in "Witch Child" as it drives the action of the novel. The novel begins with Mary announcing she is a witch. She describes how her grandmother, Eliza Nuttall, was tried as a witch and hanged. Their neighbors whisper that Mary may have the same powers as Eliza, so a stranger who turns out to be Mary's long-lost mother rescues Mary and takes her to an inn where she is dressed as a Puritan and learns that she will be sent to America for safety. On the way to Southampton, Mary passes the Temple of the Winds which her grandmother told her about as they are sacred to those who live by the Old Religion. On the ship, Mary dreams of women watching from the coast and knows they were sent by her mother to protect her since E is a powerful witch and Mary is her daughter. When the ship travels farther to the north than planned, Elias Cornwell believes there is a witch onboard working some kind of maleficence which is the reason they are so far off course. Mary is quick to deny any hint of magic when Jack Gill recognizes her as the girl who blew life into the Rivers baby. Mocking the pious passengers, he mentions that the captain hates a parson worse than a witch, but they believe there is a witch onboard too due to strange happenings and the Cornish lads feeling eyes watching them from the coast. Rumors often turn to witchcraft when things go wrong, but as things are well for now, Mary is safe "for the moment" (p. 77).

Mary cannot deny she has the power because what happened today proves she cannot escape her destiny. While watching whales with Jack, the water looks like the scrying bowl that Eliza used to see the future, and though her grandmother believed she had the gift, Mary never tried it; however, she now sees a young boy in a tobacco field who turns into a young man on a boat and then into a captain who disappears into the waves after a whale wrecks his boat. She has seen his past and future, but her grandmother always said to never reveal someone's death as there is no way to avoid it. Like her grandmother, Mary sees visions unbidden, but she knows the gift comes from her mother as the power is greater than Eliza's ever was. Widow Hesketh suggests it would be safer for Mary to stay with her in Salem instead of traveling on to Beulah. Kind recognizes kind, and she was warned of Mary's coming. Mary must take care wherever she goes because people bring their superstitions overseas with them, and since Mary insists she can look after herself, Widow Hesketh warns her to watch her back.

In Beulah, after Jethro Vane complains that Mary cursed his hogs, Martha forbids her to enter the forest, fearing that people will turn against them. Martha's sister, Goodwife Anne, visits to warn them of the natives' savageness, and when she looks at Jonah's book of remedies, she disapproves because it looks like magic. White Eagle is curious about the hare he has seen near the village as it is different from local hares, and Mary recalls the stories of how her grandmother could take the shape of a hare. When she tells the Indians about her grandmother, White Eagle explains Eliza's spirit is restless because of the great wrong done to her, and she has followed Mary to watch over her,



likely because she fears that what was done to her could be done to Mary. Goody Johnson tells Mary about how she was an orphan and was being tried as a witch when Reverend Johnson found and saved her. She leads a pious life as his wife out of gratitude, and she encourages Mary that she can also change. Mary agrees to try, though she would rather be drowned than live the life Goody Johnson has chosen. When Goody Johnson dies during childbirth, Martha hopes she and Mary will not be blamed as people often accuse healers of being killers when things go wrong. When Rebekah and Tobias' wedding banners are hung on Sunday, Reverend Johnson accuses Mary of meddling in things that do not concern her, suggesting she bespelled his wife and child and thwarted his search for a new wife using witchcraft. On May Day Eve, the Vane sisters and their friends ask Mary about her visits to the forest, insisting they know she speaks to animals and Indians when she conjures spirits and dances naked. They promise not to tell that she cast spells if they help her bind their future husbands to them as she did for Rebekah. They also suggest she has spelled Elias Cornwell for herself as he obviously singles Mary out, though she tries to avoid him. After Mary refuses to help them and attempts to deny their accusations, the girls leave with their baskets full of herbs for witch's brewing. Mary knows magic can be used for evil as well as good, and though she is sure the girls have no skill, they obviously contrive to take power from her. In May, Reverend Johnson announces that signs of witchcraft have been found in the forest, causing Deborah and her friends to go white and stare at their shoes, but as Reverend Johnson rants against the iniquities of the Indians who are obviously minions of the Devil and orders patrols to guard the settlement, the girls breathe again, closing their eyes in silent prayers of thanks.

When seven-year-old Joshua Rivers goes missing, Sarah is frantic, and while the entire town searches for him, Martha asks Mary to scry for him. Mary sees Joshua in the swamp, and Martha sends the men to search the swamp where Joshua is found and safely returned home. After Tom Carter sees the white shapes of spirits in the trees during a storm, Reverend Johnson questions Mary's whereabouts during the storm, but Sarah intervenes that they were all together, learning that evidence of conjuring spirits was found in the woods. Sarah insists it is impossible to suggest that Mary and Rebekah snuck out without her, unless they are insinuating that she was also practicing witchcraft, as she glares at her brother-in-law, Nathaniel Clench. As Reverend Johnson reveals the female undergarments that were found, Mary objects that they would not fit her or Rebekah, so he should search for a smaller girl who wears such vanities under her clothes, looking at Jethro Vane since the description obviously fits his nieces and he knows it. Deborah and Hannah Vane are questioned, but they explain that they removed their garments while walking in the heat and simply neglected to retrieve them; their story is believed because Jethro Vane is a powerful man, and Mary waits with dread for suspicion to return to her, even though she is not guilty and has witnesses. Mary thought that nearly being caught would have made the girls stop, but they grow bolder, believing they have the power to conjure storms, and they now practice in one another's barns and houses.

When September 1660 brings a series of afflictions, Reverend Johnson orders a Day of Humiliation to beg God's forgiveness as they have obviously attracted His displeasure. During the sermon, the Vanes and their friends faint and are taken out of church. They



continue to rant and rave for days until Reverend Johnson sends Elias Cornwell to Salem for a doctor. Meanwhile, rumors spread that Jeremiah Vane caught the girls dancing naked but only made them promise not to do it anymore. Unfortunately, Ned Cardwell also saw the girls and threatened to tell Reverend Johnson unless the Vanes gave him freedom, money to set up on his own and Deborah as a wife. The girls seek refuge in madness because they cannot be held responsible for their actions if they are possessed by a spirit since the spirit will be seen as responsible. After the doctor from Salem confirms the girls' madness is caused by witchcraft, Mary is glad she did not turn to Elias since he is the first to quote Exodus and Leviticus about killing witches, and they send for a newcomer who can prove the presence of witchcraft. In October 1660, Mary fears for her life and worries these may be the last words she ever writes. The witch hunter finally arrives, and the meeting house fills for another Day of Humiliation. The afflicted girls sit in the front, and when Hannah twists her poppet's waist, Rebekah's pains begin, so Elias Cornwell allows Sarah and Martha to take her away but insists Mary must stay. Reverend Johnson enters with Obadiah Wilson who immediately recognizes Mary and points her out as one who bears the mark of the beast. Next, Hannah rises and claims Mary's spirit comes to her. The other girls join in, chanting and accusing Mary of sending herself against them. When Obadiah Wilson orders Mary be brought to him, she rushes to the back of the building where Tobias helps her slip outside. She rushes to the Riverses who hide her until they can sneak her away during in the evening.

## Vindictiveness

An important theme in this novel which ties in with the theme of witchcraft is vindictiveness. Many who were accused of witchcraft during these times were accused because of jealousy or other reasons, rather than because their accusers actually suspected them of practicing witchcraft. The first example of vindictiveness is seen during Eliza's trials when neighbors who she previously aided come forward to make accusations against her. Watching the gallows from the back of the crowd, Mary would destroy these people if she had the power which her grandmother is accused of possessing and which people whisper may have passed on to Mary herself. During the journey to America, the Puritans suspect the presence of a witch whenever things go badly, and Mary constantly fears for her safety, lest they discover her true nature. Though Mary does nothing wrong during the journey, several of the Puritan girls cast scowls in her directions, though she does not even know them. Rumors also begin to spread about Mary's relationships with Elias Cornwell and Jack Gill. The Puritans turn against Jonah when he assures them that the lights they see are just the aurora borealis because they believe the lights are an ill omen from God. When Mary and Rebekah go to the market day in Salem, they encounter Deborah and Hannah Vane with Elizabeth Denning and Sarah Garner, girls that Mary does not like. The girls beckon Rebekah to them to ask about Tobias, and though an understanding has been developing between Rebekah and Tobias, it is apparent that Deborah is Rebekah's rival. Widow Hesketh tries to persuade Mary to stay in Salem with her, recognizing her own kind and fearing for Mary's safety in Beulah because the Puritans bring their



superstitions with them overseas. She warns Mary to watch her back since Mary insists she can take care of herself.

Martha worries about Mary's association with Jaybird for fear it will cause the Beulah settlers to turn against them since they do not trust the savage natives. When Goody Johnson dies in childbirth, Martha fears that she and Mary will be blamed since healers are often accused of being killers when things go wrong. After Reverend Johnson is denied his suit of Rebekah Rivers, he accuses Mary of meddling in things that do not concern her, suggesting she bespelled his wife and child and thwarted his search for a new wife using witchcraft. The Vanes and their friends accuse Mary of witchcraft, promising to keep the secret if she helps them cast spells on their future husbands. She refuses but worries that the girls contrive to take power from her. When Tom Carter sees spirits in the forest during a storm and girls' garments are found in the forest, Reverend Johnson immediately questions Mary, though the garments are obviously too small to fit her. The Vanes concoct a story which is readily believed, and Mary fears the malicious girls will redirect blame in her direction if their activities are discovered. When the girls are caught, Ned Cardwell uses his knowledge to try to blackmail the Vanes, but instead, the girls feign madness and possession. When Obadiah Wilson accuses Mary of bearing the mark of the beast, the girls claim Mary sent her spirit against them, causing Mary to flee to the wilderness. Martha, Jonah, Tobias and the Riverses decide to leave Beulah as well because the crying out will not stop now that it has begun, and Martha and Jonah are likely targets since she is a healer and he is an apothecary and a stranger.

## Journeys

An important theme in "Witch Child" is the journeys that Mary takes, including the reasons behind them as well as the things she learns during her journeys. Her first journey from her childhood home to an inn results from her grandmother, Eliza Nuttall, being tried and executed as a witch. Mary is spirited away by a stranger who takes her to an inn, clothes her as a Puritan and announces she will be sent to America for her safety. Mary realizes this stranger is her long-lost mother. Mary is then taken to Southampton where she meets Martha and the Riverses who she travels with to America. During the voyage, her friendships with these individuals, as well as Jonah and Tobias Morse, grows. She also meets Elias Cornwell who takes an interest in the young orphan. During the journey, Mary lives in constant fear that her true nature as a witch will be discovered. She also learns beyond doubt that she does possess powers when she sees a young sailor's future in the waves, unbidden. When the Annabel reaches Salem, Massachusetts, the Puritans are distraught to learn that the preceding members of their congregation have already traveled on to a new settlement, Beulah, in the wilderness, and they discuss whether they will settle in Salem or if they will follow their family into the wilderness. Mary and her companions lodge with the Widow Hesketh in Salem who tries to convince Mary to stay in Salem where it will be safer for a witch.



When the newcomers finally decide to proceed on to Beulah, the Salem inhabitants convince them that they must acquire native guides with much difficulty. Mary is hesitant to leave Salem; she cannot go back, but she cannot stay here because she would miss Martha, Rebekah and her other newfound friends who have become almost like family to her. Deciding "if it is my destiny to stay with these people, then let it be so" (page 117), Mary packs her belongings for the journey. Mary and the Puritans travel through the wilderness, battling the dense forest with two Natives as their guides. They journey daily until the light fades when the fear of the unknown spreads in the darkness of night. The group prays against Satan as the forest is his realm. The Indians camp a little away from the whites, comfortable in the forest, and they leave nothing behind when they break camp each morning. Mary does not fear the forest as the others do since she was raised in the woods. Jonah is not afraid either, and he spends his time talking to the Indians and learning that the natives are divided into nations; their guides are Pennacook. The journey is hard, but the Puritans press onward, and the Indians tell Jonah that they admire the whites' determination. The newcomers are ecstatic when they finally reach Beulah. At this point, it seems that Mary's journeys have come to an end as she settles in Beulah with her friends. Unfortunately, when some of the Puritan girls are caught practicing witchcraft, they accuse Mary of possessing them, and Mary hides at the Riverses' house while the search rages. The Riverses supply her with food, clothes and a blanket. This is all she has to take with her to the wilderness where she must take her chances because she will surely hang if she stays in Beulah. The story ends with Mary beginning her journey into the wilderness, a journey whose end is unknown. Coming full circle, her first journey results from fleeing persecution as a witch, as does her final journey in this novel, insinuating that her story has not yet ended.



# Style

## Point of View

This novel is written using a first-person and limited point of view. The point of view is also reliable and this is all proven by the fact that the narrator, Mary, does not have access to others' thoughts and emotions, though she shares her own freely. This is appropriate as the novel is written as a journal. Mary also knows what she witnesses, and she is very astute, presumably because of her powers as a witch. This is important since Mary often predicts impending events, and this serves as evidence of her powers. Additionally, the point of view is useful as it allows the novel to focus on Mary's experiences.

The novel is written using about 75% exposition with the remaining 25% being dialogue. This distribution is useful as it allows the focus to remain on Mary's experiences and thoughts, while the dialogue serves primarily to prove her suspicions or reinforce her fears. The viewpoint in the novel is primarily that of Mary, but the Intro and Afterword are written by the supposed author, Allison Ellman, and the Testimony is written by Martha after Mary flees to the wilderness to escape being hanged as a witch.

## Setting

"Witch Child" is set in the real world during the mid-17th century, specifically March 1659 to October 1660. The story begins in England and continues in America. The majority of the characters are Puritans settling in America, but Mary is a witch hidden in their midst. Also, Jaybird and his grandfather, White Eagle, are Native Americans who befriend Mary. Because Jonah is an apothecary while Mary and Martha are healers, they worry they will be prime targets should a witch hunt take place. Jonah and Mary's danger is greater since they are also strangers in Beulah. In contrast, the Riverses avoid suspicion because they are well-respected and well-connected. Unfortunately, the Vane sisters and their friends also escape suspicion because of their connections, even though they are guilty of practicing witchcraft.

Mary grows up in her grandmother Eliza's home which is a small cottage on the edge of the woods in England. She flees after Eliza is hanged as a witch. Mary is spirited away from her grandmother's execution to an inn by a noblewoman who she realizes is her long-lost mother. At the inn, Mary's mother prepares her for the journey to America. Mary meets the Riverses in Southampton and boards the ship bound for America. The Annabel is the name of the ship that Mary and the Puritans take to America. During the four-month journey, Mary befriends Martha, Jonah and the Riverses. The Puritans disembark in Salem where Mary, Martha, Jonah, Tobias and the Riverses board with Widow Hesketh for a month while the Elders decide whether to follow Reverend Johnson to his new colony in the wilderness. Widow Hesketh tries to convince Mary to stay in Salem with her because she recognizes Mary as her kind and feels she would





be safer in Salem. Beulah is the colony in the wilderness near Salem which is formed by Reverend Johnson and his followers. Most of the Puritans from the Annabel, including the Riverses, Martha, Jonah, Tobias and Mary, follow and settle in Beulah. The Puritans fear the forest as the Devil's place because it is mysterious and dark. Unafraid, Mary often ventures into the forest where she meets and befriends Jaybird. Signs of witchcraft are found in the forest, leading to the Mary's persecution as a witch and eventually her flight into the wilderness to avoid being hanged. Sunday services and all community meetings are held at the Meeting House atop the hill. This is where Mary is formally accused of witchcraft. When Joshua Rivers gets lost in the swamps, Mary locates him by scrying at Martha's request. The Riverses build their house next to the home of Martha, Mary, Jonah and Tobias. Mary is forced to live with the Rivers for a while because it is improper for a young woman to live with unrelated men. After being denounced as a witch, Mary flees to the Riverses' home where she hides in Rebekah's birthing room until the constables' search ends and she can escape to the wilderness.

## Language and Meaning

The language in this novel tends to be casual and informal. The language used is proper, it is modern which is inappropriate for the time period in which Mary's journal is purported to have been written; however, the Intro indicates that the grammar was standardized for modern readers, explaining and excusing this anomaly. The language style used to write this novel was chosen because it is easier for modern teens to read than it would be if it were written in language more appropriate to the mid-17th century. It aids comprehension in this way, but the novel is less realistic than it would be if Mary's journal were written using the language that a girl during the time period would have actually used.

The language used in "Witch Child" tends to characterize Mary's struggles, trials and tribulations, as well as the culture in which she lives. The novel is written using about 75% exposition with the remaining 25% being dialogue. This distribution is useful as it allows the focus to remain on Mary's experiences and thoughts, while the dialogue serves primarily to prove her suspicions or reinforce her fears. The novel's language enables readers to understand the narrative more easily; however, it hinders the writing style as it is ineffective in appearing to be written during the 17th century. Overall, it is very easy to read, although the language used is unrealistic even after the reasons for this have been explained.

## Structure

"Witch Child" is comprised of two hundred and sixty-one pages which are divided into eight chapters in addition to an Introduction and Afterword. The Intro and Afterword are supposedly written by Allison Ellman, the alleged author of the publication. The seven chapters composing the bulk of the narrative are written from Mary's perspective and are separated into one hundred sections, while the final chapter is written as Martha. The length of the sections vary from a few sentences up to ten pages, and the chapters'



lengths ranges between five and over a hundred pages. The chapters are titled, and the sections are numbered with some being dated approximately. As the length of the sections vary, so does the detail provided within each, with some being extremely vague while others are monotonously detailed. The time covered in each chapter varies, but the entire narrative occurs between March 1659 and October 1660.

"Witch Child" by Celia Rees is an epistolary novel about a fourteen-year-old girl who flees the witch hunts in England and settles in a Puritan colony in America. After Mary's grandmother is executed as a witch, Mary flees her native England for a newfound colony in America, developing strong friendships and beginning to learn the power within herself as she finds her place in the New World; however, when the witch hunts begin in her new home, Mary fears her true nature will be discovered. "Witch Child" is a disturbing tale of a young girl tormented for things within herself which she did not choose. The novel is fairly slow paced, yet the action near the end occurs quickly. The novel is easy to read due to the modern language used, and the story is mostly linear, though it begins with background information about Mary's grandmother and mother who Mary sporadically thinks of during the remainder of the novel. Overall, the novel is very entertaining, although Mary's treatment throughout the novel and especially at the end is somewhat distressing as it is easy to empathize with the scared, young girl.





## Quotes

"I am Mary. I am a witch. Or so some would call me. 'Spawn of the Devil,' 'Witch child,' they hiss in the street, although I know neither father nor mother. I know only my grandmother, Eliza Nuttall; Mother Nuttall to her neighbors. She brought me up from a baby. If she knew who my parents are, she never told me" (Beginning, p. 3).

"I should flee, get away. They will turn on me next unless I go. But where to? What am I to do? Lose myself. Die in the forest. I look around. Eyes, hard with hatred, slide from mine. Mouths twitch between leering and sneering. I will not run away into the forest, because that is what they want me to do" (Beginning, p. 6).

"I owe a great debt to Eliza Nuttall, the woman you call Grandmother. She was my nurse. As a child I held her in great affection. I was as close to her as you are. Were. Later she helped me in a time of trouble, when no other could. She rendered me a service and now it is my turn. Over the years, I tried to help her, make sure she was comfortable... But my husband is a soldier and latterly a politician; following him took me far away. I came when I heard of her trouble, but I was too late - too late to prevent...The only way I can repay her now is through you. Now haste, there is no time to waste" (Journey 1, p. 22-23).

"All along the coast I saw women in high places, on craggy headlands and jutting promontories, keeping a watch for our passing...I knew that they had been sent there by my mother. Word had gone out to protect me. I am her daughter and she is a most powerful witch" (Journey 2, p. 43).

"We have wandered far from our course and have become lost in an icebound wilderness. We must have done wrong, sinned and sinned grievously to earn His displeasure. Either that or there is a witch onboard, a servant of Satan, working some maleficence" (Journey 2, p. 54).

"You're the girl who saved the babe. They say it was dead and you blew the life back into it" (Journey 2, p. 72).

"Some say it's a witch in disguise. Some of the lads are Cornish, and they believe there's something here. They know a witch faster than a Witch Pricker. They felt us being overlooked from Plymouth to Land's End, and out beyond the Scillies" (Journey 2, p. 76).

"I have the power; none may doubt it. Whatever I may have hoped, I cannot escape my destiny. What happened today has served to prove that to me" (Journey 2, p. 77).

"I have seen his past. I have seen his future. I know how death will come to him, and I feel the knowledge like a burden. Grandmother said never to reveal the manner of someone's dying. There is no help and no avoidance. What will be, will be, but to know



too soon will color someone's life, darkening the hue for them, stealing the light" (Journey 2, p. 82).

"They've founded a settlement deep in the wilderness, and we've scarce heard from them since. They rarely come here. Now you arrive, bent on joining them. Truly, mistress, I caution you against it" (The New World, p. 111).

"You might be safer here. I think you guess my meaning...Kind knows kind. Whether 'tis a gift or a curse, I can't tell, but I know 'tis not of our choosing. I was warned of your coming" (The New World, p. 114).

"These were our guides. They had been with us all along, we just had not seen them. They had come out now because they were needed. Without them we would never find the settlement for which we were heading. Without them we might never be seen again" (Journey 3, p. 125).

"White man's fire. It is called Beulah. It is the place you seek" (The New World, p. 131).

"The town is run in strict accordance with God's laws. Anyone disobeying them can find themselves in the stocks or whipped or having to find another place to live. Sunday service is attended by all; there are no exceptions. The penalty for nonattendance is expulsion. Not just from the church but from the whole community" (Settlement, p. 141).

"I have to confess a terrible thing. I have a very great secret. If anyone discovers it, I will be punished severely. I have taken to wearing boy's clothing when I venture out alone in the forest" (Settlement, p. 148).

"'Tis a miracle. That's what it is. We are all God's children. They are better Christians than some I could name, despite their heathen ways" (Settlement, p. 158).

"The choice was not a hard one to make. I grew old enough to know that there is more to being a white man than learning his language and wearing his clothes. I wanted to go home to my people. Except I found that I had no home, I had no people. My village was a white man's town. Beulah" (Settlement, p. 162).

"This is no matter for laughing! Such talk is dangerous. We all know where such whispers lead. We don't want folk turning against us" (Settlement, p. 165).

"It is his name for you: mahigan shkiizhig. It is what he calls you: Eyes of a Wolf... Why? It is just as my laugh is like the jaybird call, and I love to wear bright things. My grandfather is White Eagle, because of his hair and the feather he wears. So you have the eyes of a wolf" (Settlement, p. 177).

"Her spirit is restless because of the great wrong done to her. It has followed you across the ocean... To warn, to watch over, to ask for vengeance. He is not sure. Just as the physical form is different from the creatures native here, so the spirit is foreign to him; so he cannot be certain. He says that to take such a journey shows great love or great



fear or both. He thinks she is here because she fears for you. That which was done to her could be done to you" (Settlement, p. 181).

"I have also heard that you have much to say for yourself. Tell me, Mary. Do you shun the Devil and all his works? Do you believe in God? Do you live by His Word? Let us hope that you do. For I am His representative here in this community. Do not forget that. There is nothing, nothing that I do not know about. Are you obedient? Make sure that you are. Remember: 'Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft,' so it is written in the Book of Samuel" (Settlement, p. 192-193).

"I said what she wanted to hear, because she had been kind and I wanted to please her. I could not say what I really felt: If I had to choose between the life she'd had and death by drowning, I would choose the latter" (Settlement, p. 201).

"Another good woman gone. Ours is a hard calling. Birth and death go together too often for my liking. Let us hope we don't get the blame for it" (Settlement, p. 204).

"Do you not understand? Do I have to spell it out? I am with child" (Settlement, p. 208).

"You come into my house, and my wife dies, my child besides. Perhaps you put a spell on them too? I look to find another and am straightway thwarted. How much ill luck can one man suffer before he looks to find a cause for it? Witchcraft...Go your ways, Mary. But I warn you. One breath more about you, and your days here are numbered" (Settlement, p. 212-213).

"Rebekah and Tobias. You wove a spell to bind him to her. A love spell. That was your work" (Settlement, p. 219).

"A witch! You are mad to write it! If I can find it, so can they. You could get us all hanged" (Settlement, p. 224).

"Go and get Sarah. When they come back, we must all be together. Our hopes can't rest on the men. They won't be back till evening, never mind what I told him" (Settlement, p. 236).

"What happened on Midsummer Night should have put an end to their madness. Instead they feed upon it. Now they believe they have the power to conjure storms. They lose flesh, their eyes burn. I know the witch's calendar. Each month, as the moon waxes to full, the girls' antic behavior increases. Hannah has been removed twice from Sunday service for interrupting sermons, talking loudly, then falling to giggling and laughing uncontrollably. What they do is like a sickness, a fever in the blood. They practice not just in the forest but in bars, in one another's houses. I have been keeping watch. I have seen the candle-flicker, the shadow of dancing figures, turning on the walls" (Witness, p. 243).

"If they are possessed by the Devil or some other spirit, then they are not responsible for what they do, the spirit is" (Witness, p. 247).



"All I have to take with me to the wilderness. I must take my chances there. If I stay here, I hang for sure" (Witness, p. 254).

"One day, mayhap, she will find us, and she can take back her story. Until that day comes, I will keep all safe. Then she will know how I kept faith... We will leave word for her, each place we go" (Testimony, p. 260).



## Topics for Discussion

Who is the narrator in this novel? Why is she unique?

Why does Mary flee England and head to America?

Who is Jaybird and how does Mary become friends with him?

What begins the rumors of witchcraft in Beulah?

Describe the Vanes' and other girls' symptoms that indicate witchcraft.

What evidence points to Mary as a witch?

How does Mary escape Beulah and where does she go?

Why does Martha, Jonah and the Riverses plan to leave Beulah?

What is the significance of the hare that Mary sees on the ship and near Beulah?