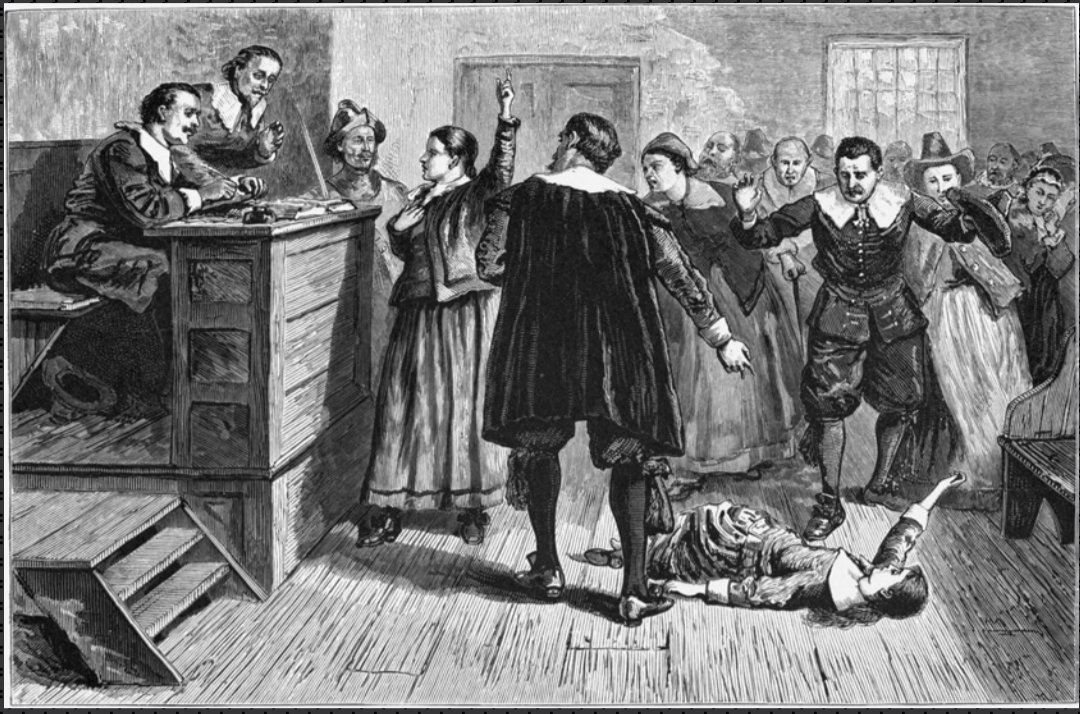


Materialising Magic:

Objects of the Salem Witch Trials (1692-1693)

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Depiction of the Salem Witch Trials. An afflicted girl is struck down by an apparition as the accused proclaims her innocence before God and the judges. (Artist unknown, Published by William A. Crafts 1876)

Introduction and Aims
 The Salem Witch Trials occurred from February 1692 to May 1693 in the British-controlled colony of Massachusetts. Over 200 people were accused of witchcraft, and 19 were executed. The trials relied heavily on 'spectral evidence': testimonies concerning spirit apparitions which inflicted pain. The Salem courts kept detailed records of trial proceedings including warrants, examinations, depositions, testimonies, and indictments. These documents (all available online) provide direct insights into the beliefs of those involved. My project sought to identify the range of objects which the people of Salem associated with the practice of witchcraft.

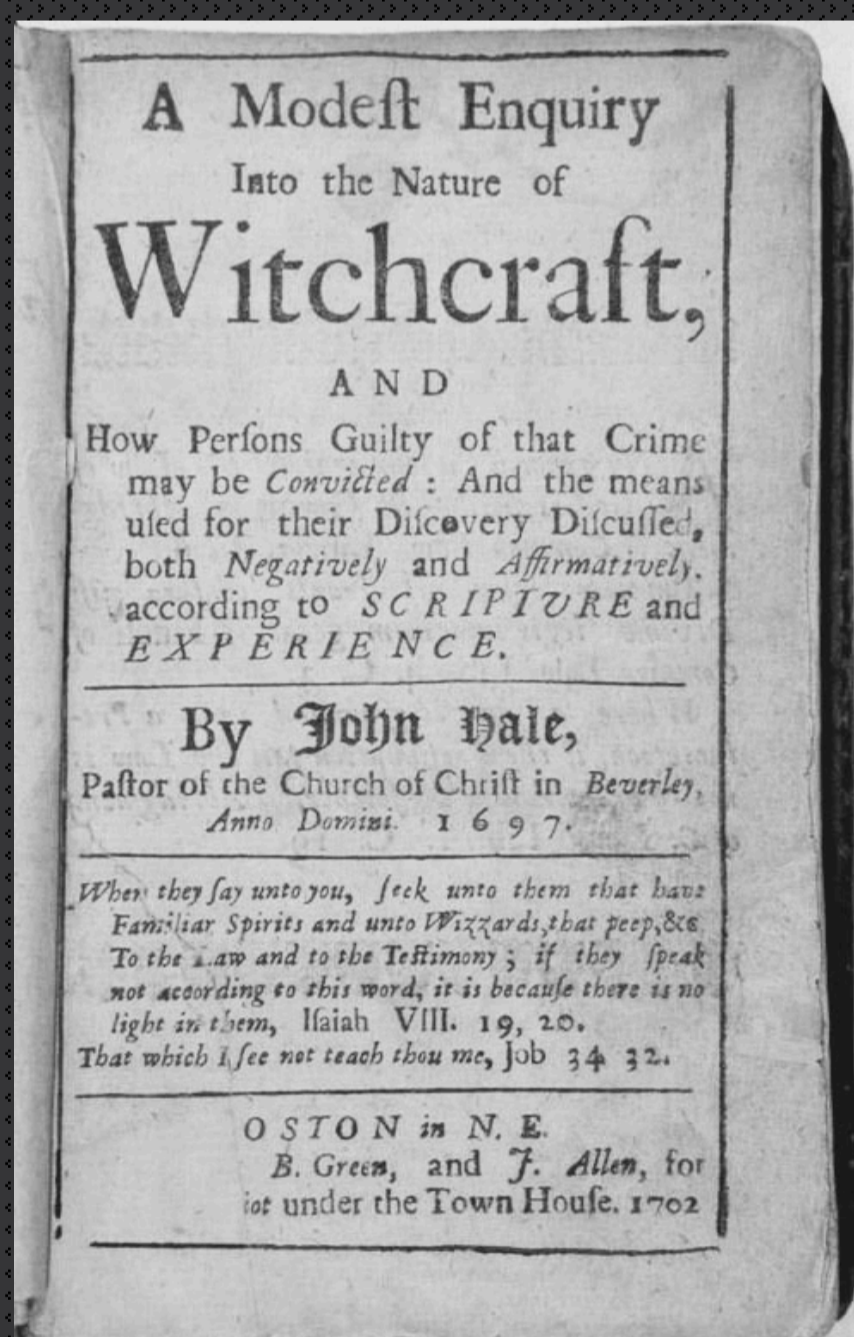
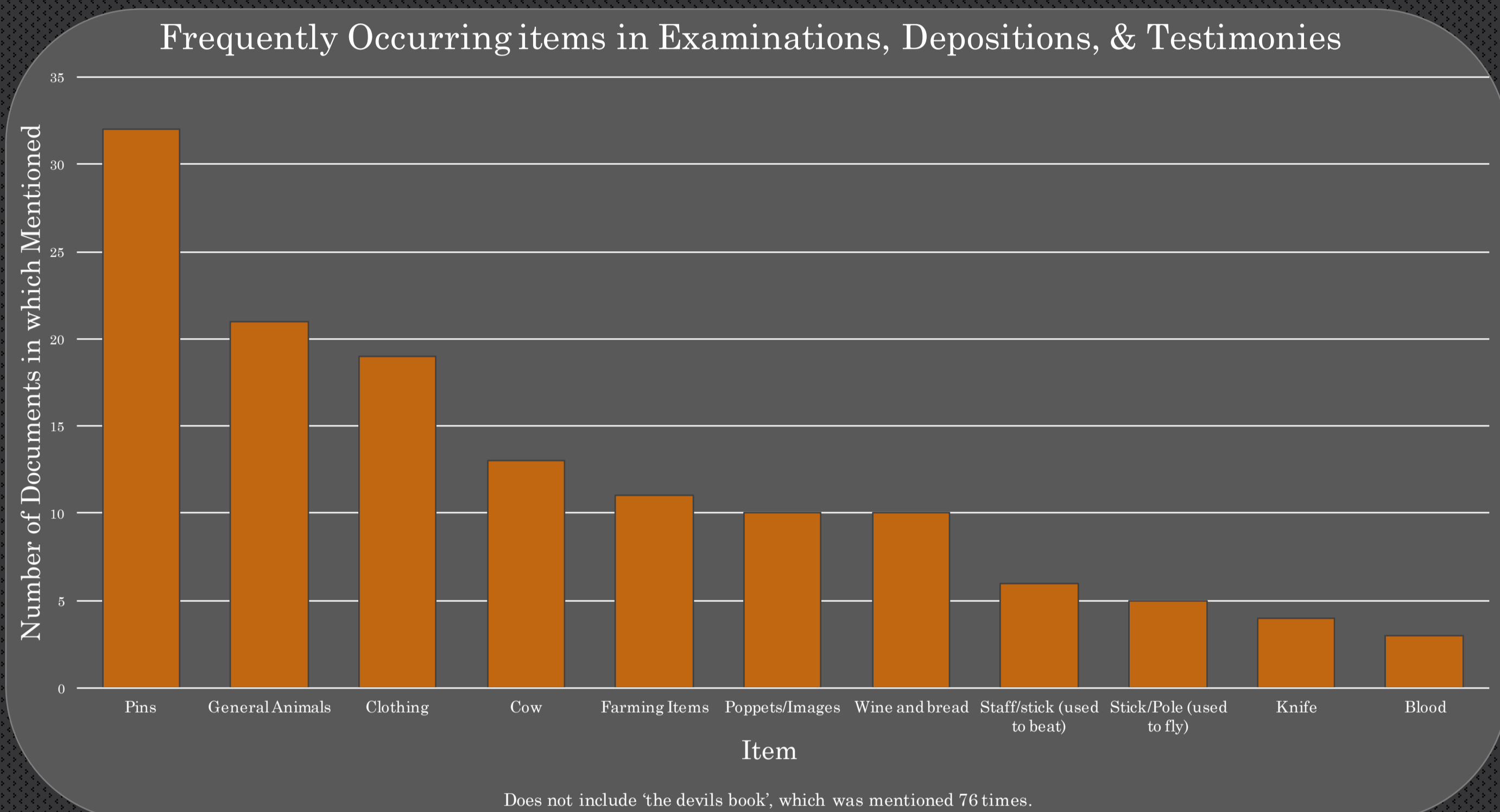


Image from *The Discovery of Witches* (1647) by Matthew Hopkins, it depicts Hopkins as the central figure and two witches describing their familiars. Hopkins was a notorious witch hunter in England from 1644-1647.

Data Set: The Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive
<http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/home.html>
 Documents relating to 47 of the accused were assessed: this amounted to 35 examinations, and 248 depositions and testimonies.

Total Items

Item	Number of documents in which mentioned
Total Documents	283
No Item	118
Spirit / Apparition	87
Book	76
Pins	32
General Animal	21
Clothing	19
Cow	13
Farming Items	11
Poppets / Images	10
Wine and Bread / Sacrament	10
Staff / Stick (used to beat)	6
Stick / Pole (used to ride on)	5
Knife	4
Blood	3



The Devil's book was the object most associated with witches, who were accused of signing the book or tempting others to do so. The signature represented the contract made with the Devil.



Poppets (dolls) pierced with pins have been used in occult practices since ancient times. Poppets were the sole category of object presented as evidence in court during the Salem witch trials. In modern times the cloth dolls stuck with pins is a common image of Vodun, a creole religion born out of African traditional religion in the New World.



The clothing noted in the trials was more elaborate than everyday dress, often featuring expensive dyes or foreign fabrics. Puritans felt over-dressing was a sign of vanity. In Salem, some confessions of witchcraft reference the Devil offering fine clothing in exchange for service.



Witches' meetings were viewed as bastardizations of Puritan rituals. Witches would be baptized in the name of a false god and would worship him by taking sacrament of bread and blood-coloured wine.



Conclusion
 Objects mentioned in the witch trials reflect two aspects of Puritan views about witches. The first is the threat they pose, manifested in items used to curse and the misuse of everyday objects. The second is connection between witches and the Devil, with a book as a contract, and fine things received in return. Physical evidence was mentioned far less frequently than spectral evidence during the trials, but still played a key role in determining the guilt of a suspected witch. The trials have a place in America's developmental history, and the image of a witch articulated there continues to influence depictions today.

