

THE WITCH CRAZE



Witchcraft, Wicca, Witchfinders and Women

Discover: key events linking to witchcraft **Skill:** chronology, knowledge and understanding

Trials

Witches

Hunting

Whiches

Trouble

Mother

Trials

Hysteria

Craze

Storms

Murders

Gremlins

Burning

Hysteria

Madness

Imps

The idea of (1) _____ dates back to earliest recorded history. It was usually women who were seen as being more connected with healing, the earth and nature. Paganism was an early form of religion in Europe dating c **2500 BC**. In Pagan times, Wicca, was the Triple Goddess, meaning the maiden, the (2) _____ and the crone. An early Hebrew (Jewish) passage mentions the existence of witches ... *"Let there not be found among you anyone who immolates his son or daughter in the fire, nor a fortune-teller, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults spirits or seeks oracles from the dead."* In **1018**, Pope Gregory VII wrote to Harald III of Denmark in forbidding witches to be put to death upon presumption of them having caused (3) _____ or failure of crops. In **1484**, Pope Innocent the VIII issued the *summis desiderantes* that recognised the existence of witches and allowed for the *"correcting, imprisoning, punishing and chastising such persons"*. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, or the Hammer of Witches, by Catholic Clergyman Heinrich Kramer was published in Germany in **1487**. It asked for the extermination of witches and was a best-seller for 200 years. Anne Boleyn, second wife of King Henry VIII was accused of practicing witchcraft before her beheading in **1536**. The large scale persecution of witches or the ' (4) _____ Times ' started in Scotland in **1590** under the rule of James VI – the future James I of England. Between 1603 and 1625, there were about 450 witch (5) _____ in total with half of the accused found guilty and executed. *The Discovery of Witches*, was a pamphlet published in England in **1647**, by Witchfinder General, Mathew Hopkins. He wrote that he had witnessed six (6) _____ attempting to sneak into the room where a witch was being watched. *'One was a whitish thing, not quite as large as a _____ ; another was something like a dog with sandy spots; and a third resembled a greyhound with long legs'*. The European witch (7) _____ also spread to Colonial American with the most famous witching event culminated in the Salem witch trials, in Massachusetts in **1692**. (8) _____ spread through the community and beyond and 20 people were executed. After events in Salem, the witch craze began to die down. In **1951**, the Witchcraft Act introduced in England in **1542** was repealed. However, even today many people still believe in witchcraft, the occult and dark magic. In **2009**, a young girl was buried alive in Papua New Guinea after being accused of being a witch.


1: Why do you think women were more likely of being accused of witchcraft?

2: Roughly how many witches were executed between 1603 and 1625?

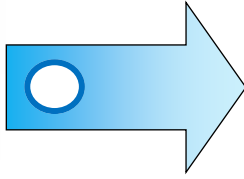
3: Why do you think society was more likely to believe in witches in the past than today ?



Why Were Women Accused of Being Witches?

 **Mission** : to complete the tasks outlined bellow!

Task : 1: colour code or label (1-4) each of the four circles below. **2 :** Match with the sources provided **3 :** Write a few sentences about each category below.
4 : Answer question provided.



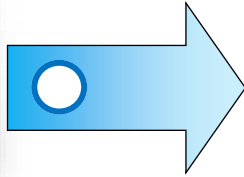
Religious Beliefs



- *
- *
- *
- *

Complete the passage ...

“ Thou shall not suffer

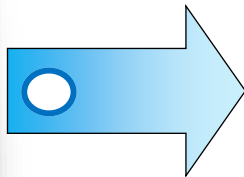


Gender Roles and Misogyny



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- *
- *
- *

Why were midwives accused?

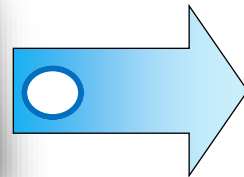


Intolerance



- *
- *
- *
- *

Example of intolerance today



Ignorance / Other Reasons



- *
- *
- *
- *

Symptoms or ergot poisoning

Women had control over the health and life of others and these jobs had the potential of going very wrong. Women were often blamed when someone died or became sick. A midwife who delivered a deformed or still born child could very well be accused of being a witch. A mother may want to blame someone for the death and since the midwife was present, they are subject to being accused of doing something supernatural to cause this.

Around the late thirteenth century, the Catholic Church began to teach that only Catholic priests had magical powers. As this magical power was not human, it either came from God or from the devil. Therefore, anybody, outside of the church, involved in such "magical" activities must have received their power from Satan and thus were witches. The Catholic church had also taken part in burning of heretics and this no doubt influenced the mindset of persecuting those who were seen as a threat to society or just different.

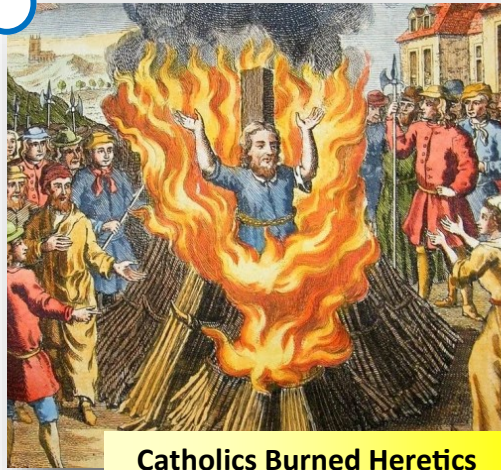
The Puritans strongly believed in the existence of witches and witchcraft. According to the belief, witches were in alliance with the devil that gave them power to do harm. They were blamed for all kinds of misfortunes from illnesses and failed crops to bad weather and other things that are easy to explain today. But due to lack of knowledge and the strong belief in the occult, people would believe the most improbable explanations. For them, witches and witchcraft were a very real threat.



Trials



Women in the 16th century were expected to be submissive and live under the man of the house. Therefore, when a woman was independent she was seen as odd, which put her at risk of being accused. Also, because women were beginning to live longer, there was not yet a role that allowed older women to fit easily into society. Many of these women were also widowed, which meant they were no longer under the care of a man and this made them vulnerable. These women, in particular, caused tensions within the Puritan society. Puritan leaders felt that women owning land was a breaking up of their society by not having a male head of the house. The resulting tensions caused witchcraft accusations.



Catholics Burned Heretics

With the Protestant's strong emphasis upon the literal meaning of the Bible, the writing in Exodus 22:18: "thou shall not suffer a witch to live," was often used. Both John Calvin and Martin Luther described their personal encounters with the devil and witches.

During the Black Death (plague) that wiped out up to fifty percent of the population, many people looked for scapegoats. Intolerance of non-Christians led to minorities such as Muslims and Jews being accused of devil-worship. Women were also an easy target and thus were singled out as being a cause of trouble.



The Salem tragedy might have been related to the cold weather, more specifically a pursuit for something or someone to blame for the related hardships such as crop failure. This theory is supported by historical records which indicate that the years preceding the Witch Trials were particularly cold.

One theory claims that girls in the village were bored as there wasn't much to do. The Puritans held very strict beliefs which forbade many forms of entertainment. For girls, it was even worse because the restrictions for them were more severe than they were for boys. For them, reading books, and attending small circles involving fortune telling and listening to stories - among other also about witches and witchcraft - were the main form of entertainment.

A doctor who researched the climate patterns in Europe believes some women accused of witchcraft may have eaten moldy rye bread. This created Ergot poisoning with the mold causing hallucinations, laughing, crying, and barking like a dog. Ergot is produced when rye bread or grain becomes moldy after a wet spring and summer. At the Salem witch trials in America, the young girls demonstrated similar peculiar behavior.



Scapegoats

There had always been village tensions and anxieties about the poor. Poorer older single or widowed women generally did not have male supporters to guard against fake accusations of being a witch. Often they were accused simply because they were not liked or wrongly blamed for some 'unexplainable' misfortune. Many times these women had cats and other animals to keep them company. The animals could be seen as "familiar," and were additional sources of suspicions. In the America tensions between old and new settlers also were present.



10 Reasons Women Were Accused of Being Witches?

Go Further : use the clues to identify reasons. (categorise - Religious Gender Intolerance Other)



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Catholic Church



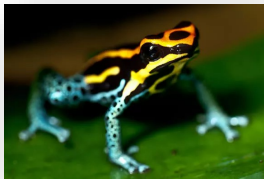


Black Death





Ergot Poisoning





Boredom





Roles as Midwives





Natural Disasters





Puritan Teaching





Misogyny





Old Women Vulner'ble





Fear of Poor





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