



History KS3 Witchcraft



In the 16th and 17th century people had simple beliefs, they believed in good luck, bad luck and the power of the supernatural.

People were highly religious and superstitious, and therefore would naturally turn to these beliefs when scared.

Crops suffered due to drought and disease and starvation was a big problem....People were scared that the devil was at work.



Crop failures and
famine



Storms at sea



Freak weather
conditions



Illness and sudden
deaths

When lucky charms and prayers failed people looked for someone to blame...

...Witches!



Witches proved to be a popular target and in 1542 witchcraft was punishable by death.

During this period, witches were believed to have been in a pact with Satan and capable of inflicting harm upon their enemies. However, people were happy to use their religious beliefs as an excuse to take revenge on those people that they mistrusted, or disliked, by accusing them of witchcraft.

The Catholic church used witches and witchcraft to keep people believing in God.



Most people accused of witchcraft in Wales, Scotland and England were poor, lonely, isolated and rather defenceless old ladies. These women were often blamed for anything that went wrong within the community – from crop failures, to sudden deaths and violent storms that caused damage and destruction.

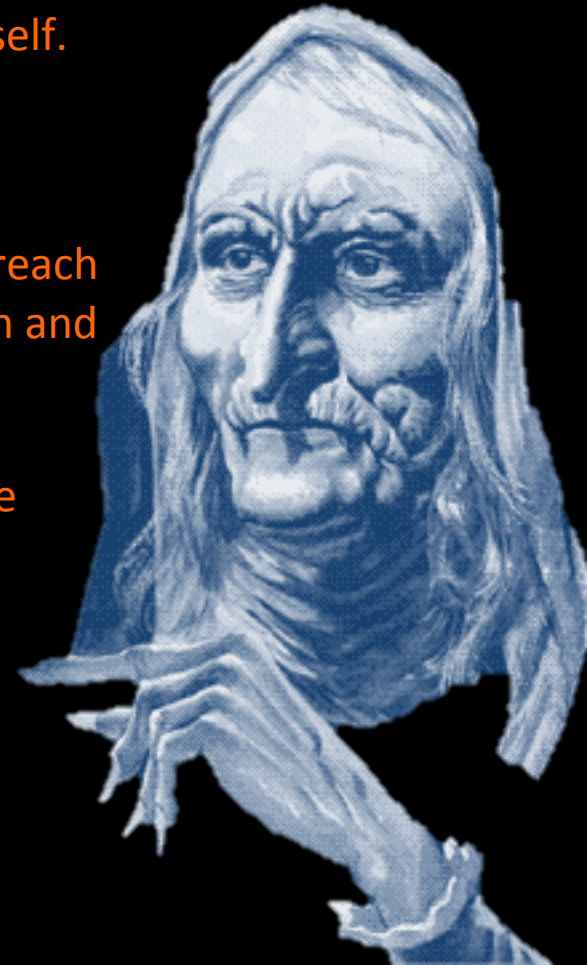
'How to spot a witch':

- Old woman, usually poor
- Lives alone
- Has a 'familiar' (an animal) usually a cat or a toad
- Has a 'Devils mark' this can be a mole, third nipple or discolouration of the skin and when this is stabbed produces no pain or bleeding



Mother Shipton

- Mother Shipton was born in 1488 and died in 1561 at the age of 73. She was a famous prophetess (could foretell the future), however as she was born in such superstitious times she was feared throughout as a Witch.
- Cardinal Wolsey, the Archbishop of York publicly accused her of witchcraft as Mother Shipton prophesied that despite being the Archbishop of York, he would never actually set foot in York itself. Furthermore she prophesied that he would fall.
- After hearing of this Cardinal Wolsey decided to visit York and consequently arrest her as a Witch. However before he could reach York itself he was taken to London on suspicion of high treason and consequently executed.
- Mother Shipton was never accused of Witchcraft again and she went on to foretell the Spanish Armada, the discovery of the potato and even the end of the World!



Quiz

- Why did people believe in witches?

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- Name one reason why people were blamed for being Witches.

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- What happened to people who were accused of Witchcraft?

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- How could you spot a Witch?

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Why was Mother Shipton accused of being a Witch?

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What did Mother Shipton prophesise would happen to Cardinal Wolsey?

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Name something Mother Shipton prophesised.

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Post-trip activities:

1. Produce a poster that warns people about witches.
2. Produce a diary entry of a suspected witch as they await execution.
3. Produce a role play re-enacting a witch's trial:
 - one person takes on the role of the witch
 - One person takes on the role of the judge
 - Half of the class act as the defense and the other half as the prosecution- spend 10 minutes thinking about possible arguments for and against the execution of the suspected witch