



lingoda

# Witch hunts

SPEAKING

LEVEL  
Advanced

NUMBER  
C1\_1066S\_EN

LANGUAGE  
English






## Goals

- Can read, listen to and understand a lengthy text about the history of witch hunts.
- Can express more complex ideas related to persecution, people and events in history.





**Witch hunts** were a feature of life in the early modern period in Europe and the USA. Many innocent people were killed in an attempt to stamp out **black magic**.



## Witches

**There are many children's stories about witches. Can you think of any?**





## Witch hunts

**Have you heard about witch hunts and witch trials in the early modern period? What do you know about them?**



## New words

**ailment**

**Ailment** is an old-fashioned word for illness.

**to eliminate**

**To eliminate** means to get rid of, delete, or stamp out.

**advent**

The **advent** of something is the beginning.

**convent**

A **convent** is connected to the church and is where nuns live.



## New words

**to incorporate**

To **incorporate** means to include something, or to make it part of something.

**to align**

If you **align** yourself with someone or something, you give them your support.

**inherently**

**Inherently** denotes a permanent or essential characteristic.

**provision**

**Provision** is the act of supplying something.



## Witch hunts

Witch hunts were a feature of European and North American life in the Early Modern period. Between 1450 and 1750, an estimated 35,000–100,000 people were killed under suspicion of witchcraft.

For hundreds of years before the fifteenth century, the church had tried to **stamp out** a belief in witches, which was associated with paganism and the rural, uneducated poor. The church failed **to eliminate** belief in witches entirely and eventually chose to incorporate them into their teachings, **aligning** them with both pagan beliefs and the devil. With the church now acknowledging the existence of, and **condemning**, witches, people began to hunt and **persecute** those people believed to be practising black magic.





## Witch hunts

Over seventy percent of those accused of witchcraft were women, and many were elderly and widows who had no one to defend them. Often they were women who gave out herbal remedies for **ailments**, though truly no one was safe from accusation. There were several ways of proving that someone was a witch. One of the most well-known was by drowning: if a person **immersed** in water sank they were innocent, if they floated they were a witch. Another method was by searching for the mark of the devil on the person, by stripping and shaving them and looking for marks on their bodies. Punishments for witchcraft included hanging, burning at the stake, and beheading.



## Vocabulary

Using vocabulary from the text, fill in the gaps.

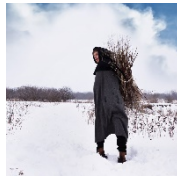
1. During the Early Modern period, the Church wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ pre-Christian traditions, such as \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Those who lived in \_\_\_\_\_ areas, away from the cities, were more likely to believe in \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ were often targets of accusations of witchcraft, along with those who gave out \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ were ways to test if someone was a witch.





## Over to you

**Answer these questions with your teacher.**



1

Why do you think the rural, uneducated poor were more likely to believe in witches? What other superstitions may they have held?



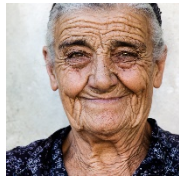
## Over to you

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1

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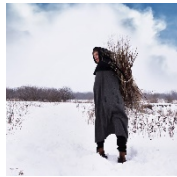
2

Why do you think most of those accused of witchcraft were women?



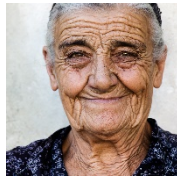
## Over to you

Answer these questions with your teacher.



1

Why do you think the rural, uneducated poor were more likely to believe in witches? What other superstitions may they have held?



2

Why do you think most of those accused of witchcraft were women?



3

What do you think of the tests for determining whether someone was a witch?



## Witch hunts

**Did anything in  
the text  
surprise you?**





## Get ready to listen



The next few slides will focus on training your listening comprehension



## Listening activity

**As you listen to your teacher read, make notes and get ready to answer the following questions.**

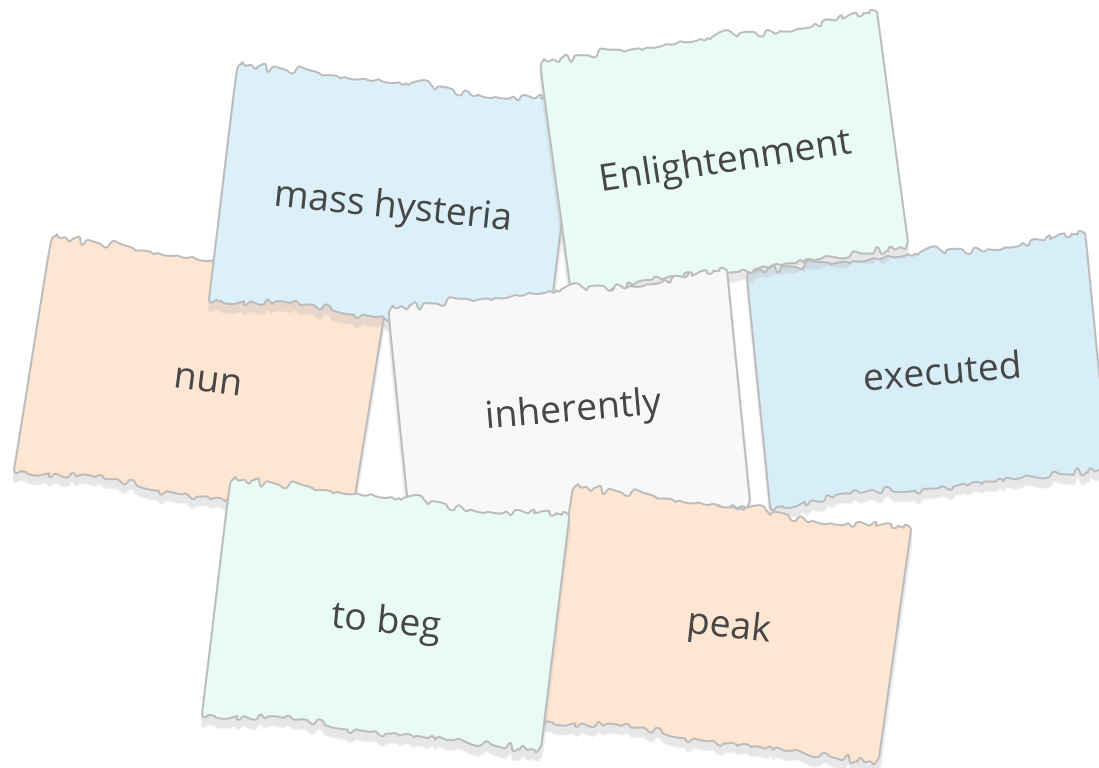
1. Between which years did the European witch trials reach their peak?
2. Besides the Church, what other factors contributed to the witch trials?
3. The text describes the witch trials as a form of release. Release of what?
4. How does the text describe attitudes towards women at the time?
5. The text names 3 potential reasons for the disappearance of the witch trials. What are they?





## Vocabulary

You heard all of these words in the listening. Do you know what they mean? Why did you hear them in relation to witch hunts?





## Witch hunts

Answer these questions related to the listening text.

1. Why do you think witch hunts reached their peak in the seventeenth century?
2. What other episodes in history have been the cause or result of mass hysteria?
3. Salem has become a tourist spot. Why do you think this is? Would you be interested in visiting?
4. What do you think may have been the consequences of so many executions in a short space of time in a small town?





## Witch hunts

**Of the reasons for witch hunts put forward in the text, which do you think is the most likely to be true?  
Do you know any other reasons?**





## Reasons for decline

**Which of the three theories, as to why witch hunts declined in the nineteenth century, do you think is the most credible?**

**Do you know of any other theories?**

**Can you think of any other reasons?**



greater understanding of illness

the  
Enlightenment

provision for  
the poor



## Witch trial activist

Imagine that witch trials are still taking place today in your country, in your very town. You have started a movement against this discriminatory and dangerous behaviour. While it's risky for you, your campaign is gaining a following and you want this reign of fear to be over. You are going to make a speech at a protest you have organised; draft out what you will say.

- Be as persuasive as possible
- Mention the injustices your town has been putting up with for centuries
- Suggest some ways to move forward and abolish these laws once and for all.





## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





## Transcription

The European witch trials reached their peak between 1580 and 1630. Both Catholics and Protestants hunted witches, with some of the most notorious hunts happening in Germany. In North America, the most famous witch trials happened at Salem in the 1690s. In a case of mass hysteria, twenty people were executed in the space of just over a year, as people in the village of Salem were afflicted with unusual symptoms such as screaming and violent and uncontrollable fits and body contortions, which were attributed to witchcraft.

The causes of the witch hunts of course goes beyond simply the Church. Many of those accused were unpopular in their communities for being antisocial or begging from their neighbours, and it has been suggested that witch hunts were a way to release the social tension built up against these people. Larger numbers of unmarried women, due to a rise in the average age of marriage and the release of nuns from closed convents, may also have contributed, as women were seen by some as inherently evil.

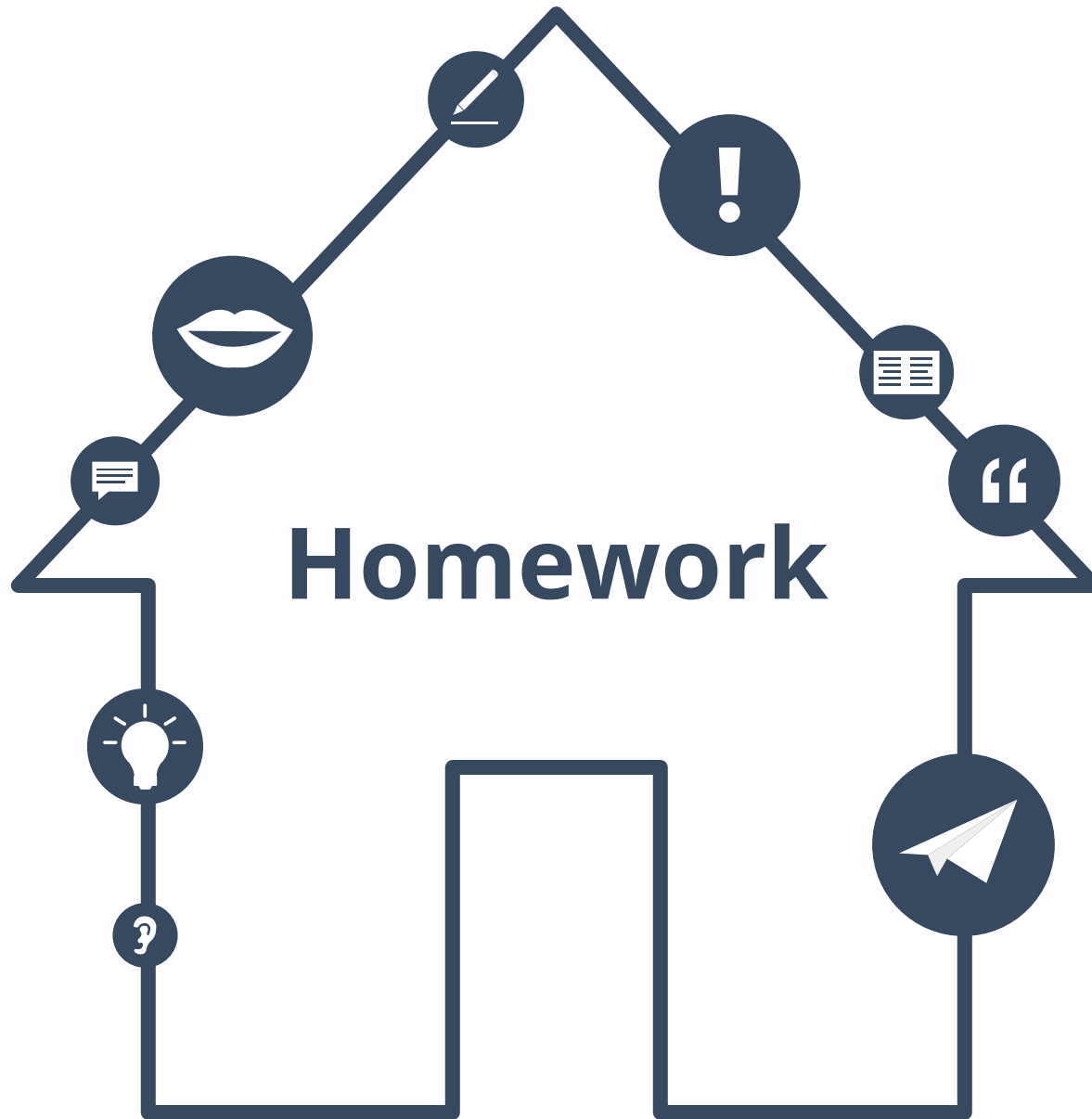
The reasons for the decline of witch hunts are not agreed upon, but the advent of the Enlightenment, a better understanding of illness, and even provision for poorer members of society meant that witch hunts disappeared from Europe and North America in the eighteenth century.



## Answer key

**Exercise p. 10**  
1. stamp out/eliminate, paganism – 2. rural, black magic – 3. widows, herbal remedies – 4. drowning, searching for marks







## Match the beginnings and the endings

1. 70% of those killed on...

a. one cause of witch hunts.

2. The church aligned black magic...

b. were often targeted.

3. It was the rural, uneducated poor...

c. with the devil.

4. Those who gave out herbal remedies...

d. the Salem witch trials.

5. Mass hysteria prompted...

e. helped eliminate witch hunts.

6. Begging by neighbours is thought to be...

f. suspicion of being witches were women.

7. The advent of the Enlightenment...

g. who often believed in witches.



# Make full sentences with the words below

A

Drowning  
method  
witch  
test

B

Church  
belief  
witches  
stamp out

C

Symptoms  
Salem  
skin  
pricking

D

Provision  
stop  
hunts  
poor



## Homework answer key

Suggested answers: A. Drowning was a method to test if someone was a witch. B. The Church tried to stamp out belief in witches. C. Symptoms such as pricking of the skin prompted witch trials in Salem. D. Provision for the poor helped stop witch hunts.

### **Exercise p. 24**

1. F, 2. C, 3. G, 4. B, 5. D, 6. A, 7. E

### **Exercise p. 23**



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