



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Wednesday 24 May 2023 – Morning

A Level History A

Y312/01 Popular Culture and the Witchcraze of the 16th and 17th Centuries

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer the question in Section A and **any two** questions in Section B.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **80**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets [].
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document has **4** pages.

ADVICE

- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

SECTION A

Read the **two** passages and answer Question 1.

- 1 Evaluate the interpretations in **both** of the two passages and explain which you think is more convincing as an explanation of the witchcraft prosecutions in East Anglia in the period from 1645 to 1647. [30]

Passage A

The usual explanation for the prosecutions is that they were stirred up by Hopkins and Stearne. The usual motive ascribed to them is greed. They were certainly paid for their witch-hunting, but the suggestion that they started looking for witches because they were impoverished appears to have no factual basis.

The real spur to their activity, at least in Essex, seems to have been a combination of curiosity, bewilderment, and anxiety, with a desire to exercise power and perform a useful public duty. Though Hopkins claims to have been, with Stearne, in personal danger, the impression is that this was in the background: more striking was their feeling of surprise, mingled with horror, at the conspiracy which they had discovered.

Such a conclusion can only remain an impression culled from the pamphlet and other accounts. A similar impression is that Hopkins and Stearne, like the justices, clergymen, and other notable inhabitants, really believed that they were performing a public service, dealing with a public menace. They repeatedly asserted that they did not go round stirring up trouble, but only answered a public demand: as Hopkins said in a letter, he only went to towns where he was welcomed.

Of course, there is a danger in accepting the witchfinders' later defence of their motives. But it would also be naive to isolate these two as black-hearted villains leading on an innocent populace. Examination of the 1645 trial in its historical and local setting does not support such a conclusion.

Adapted from: A. Macfarlane, Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England, published in 1970.

Passage B

Explanations for the witch hunt have tended to concentrate too much on the input of Hopkins and Stearne. It is obvious that their witch-hunting activities, and the reputation they acquired for expertise, acted as a powerful catalyst. However, this catalyst acted within a distinctive context.

East Anglia was a parliamentary stronghold, and although it had not experienced serious fighting, the region was feeling the strains of warfare, both material and ideological. The war was increasingly being portrayed as a struggle between good and evil, between godliness and iniquity, with parliament's royalist opponents becoming demonised by parliamentary propaganda.

Within this context, local administration was concerned with keeping the war effort going. Hence, local justices of the peace who might otherwise have helped defuse witchcraft accusations at an early stage were preoccupied.

The ideological tensions generated by the war meant that in parliamentary zones like East Anglia there was a shift towards hard-line, more militant, and more popular Puritanism. Well-documented purges of clergymen thought to be ideologically unreliable had taken place in Essex and Suffolk and a leading role in exposing such clergy frequently taken by just that class of yeoman farmer who acted as accusers in witchcraft cases.

There was just enough dilution of normal authority structures to permit witch-hunting to begin and to allow Hopkins to come to prominence. And a strong enough presence of popular Puritanism, operating within the broader ideological tensions generated by the Civil War, to allow a mass witch-hunt to develop.

Adapted from: J. Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Early Modern England*, published in 2019.

SECTION B

Answer any **two** questions.

- 2*** 'The withdrawal of the elite posed the greatest challenge to popular culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' How far do you agree? [25]
- 3*** 'Changes and divisions within society were the most important reasons for the persecution of witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' How far do you agree? [25]
- 4*** 'Regional variations in the persecution of witches suggests that there was not a European Witchcraze in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' How far do you agree? [25]

END OF QUESTION PAPER

OCR

Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Copyright Information

OCR is committed to seeking permission to reproduce all third-party content that it uses in its assessment materials. OCR has attempted to identify and contact all copyright holders whose work is used in this paper. To avoid the issue of disclosure of answer-related information to candidates, all copyright acknowledgements are reproduced in the OCR Copyright Acknowledgements Booklet. This is produced for each series of examinations and is freely available to download from our public website (www.ocr.org.uk) after the live examination series.

If OCR has unwittingly failed to correctly acknowledge or clear any third-party content in this assessment material, OCR will be happy to correct its mistake at the earliest possible opportunity.

For queries or further information please contact The OCR Copyright Team, The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA.

OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, which is itself a department of the University of Cambridge.