

EDUCATION
RESOURCE

Aha!

You're a Witch

EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN WITCH-HUNTS



Year 8



Australian Government
Australian Research Council



AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR THE
HISTORY OF EMOTIONS

■ About Us

THE AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR THE HISTORY OF EMOTIONS (Europe, 1100–1800)

The Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (CHE) was established in 2011. It recognises the importance of emotion in shaping our mental, physical and social wellbeing, and that the expression, understanding and representation of emotions has changed over time. Through its innovative research, the Centre seeks to build on our understanding of emotions, past and present, and provide insight into contemporary Australian culture.

With a focus on the medieval and early modern periods, the Centre's research examines four key themes: Meanings, Change, Performance, and Shaping the Modern. Through its education and public outreach programs, and affiliations with industry and cultural organisations, the Centre aims to invigorate our culture, and engage the community in the consideration of emotions and their impact on history.

For more information about the Centre's research and public outreach programs go to www.historyofemotions.org.au

■ About This Lesson Resource

Aha! You're a Witch!

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Title page image: Mary Hoare, *The Three Witches from Macbeth: Double, Double, Toil and Trouble*. c.1781. Courtesy of Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

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Curriculum Links

HISTORY

Year 8 – Early Modern Era

Key Inquiry Question:

What key beliefs and values emerged and how did they influence societies?

Key Concepts:

Continuity and change
Evidence

GENERAL CAPABILITIES

Personal and Social Capability

Students build their capacity to critique societal constructs and forms of discrimination

Intercultural Understanding

Students use reflection to better understand the actions of individuals and groups in specific situations and how these are shaped by culture

Students challenge stereotypes and prejudices

Critical and Creative Thinking

Transfer knowledge into new contexts

Literacy

Use language to interact with others

Use pair, group and class discussions ... as learning tools to explore ideas, test possibilities, compare solutions and rehearse ideas and arguments in preparation for creating texts

Aha! You're a Witch!

Unit Description

If you lived in Europe in the sixteenth century or seventeenth century and someone accused you of being a witch, you would be in considerable danger! This unit focuses on the witch-hunts in Europe during the early modern period, from approximately 1450 to 1750.

Students are introduced to the history of the European witch-hunts, providing a broad introductory foundation for further individual research. Students also examine the ways in which early modern media influenced popular emotions and opinions about witches.

Unit Plan

Duration: 2 x 40 minute lessons, with additional assignments and activities

Lesson 1:

What was Meant by 'Witch', 'Witchcraft' and 'Witch-Hunt' in Early Modern Europe?

Part A: Teacher-Guided Lecture and Discussion

Part B: Research Activity

Materials:

- PowerPoint file and information/questions guide
- Student Resource 3: 'Emotions Metre' – one per student

Lesson 2:

How were Witches and Their Crimes Represented in the News of the Era?

What made Them so Scary? How was the Media Influencing Emotions?

Part A: Teacher-Guided Lecture and Discussion

Part B: Student Activities

Part C: Research Activity

Materials:

- PowerPoint file and information/questions guide
- Student Resource 1: Excerpt from a 1580 German News Report
- Student Resource 2: Excerpt from a Letter, 1628
- Student Resource 3: 'Emotions Metre' – one per student

Lesson 1

WHAT WAS MEANT BY 'WITCH', 'WITCHCRAFT'
AND 'WITCH-HUNT' IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE?



Image: *Witchcraft: A Witch and a Devil Making a Nail with Which to Make a Boy Lame*. Woodcut, 1720. Credit: Wellcome Collection.

Part A: Teacher-Guided Learning

SLIDE	GUIDING QUESTIONS/INFORMATION
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What witches do you know about? Describe some witches portrayed in popular culture – in movies, books, songs, Halloween traditions. What emotions are attached to these types of witches? • If someone calls you a ‘witch’ today, what do they mean? • Is your life then in danger? • How would you feel about that accusation? <p>OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: ‘OPINION CONTINUUM’</p> <p>Ask students ‘How strongly do you agree or disagree with this statement?’ for each of the following:</p> <p>‘Witches only exist in fairytales’ ‘Witches are scary’ ‘Witches were bad people’</p> <p>After each statement students move to a position in the classroom relative to signs on two opposite walls: ‘Strongly Agree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’. Imagine a line from one sign, across the room to the other sign. This is the continuum along which students will choose a position to stand.</p> <p>Repeat the ‘Opinion Continuum’ activity at the end of the lesson so students can form opinions based on new learning.</p>
4	<p>If you lived in Europe in the sixteenth or seventeenth century and someone accused you of being a witch, you would be in considerable danger!</p> <p>In Europe during the early modern period, from roughly 1450 to about 1750, a witch was someone who others believed was practising harmful ‘witchcraft’. Witches were often executed. What do you think was meant by the term ‘witchcraft’ in early modern Europe?</p> <p>Witchcraft meant:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The practice of harmful magic, i.e., the use of some kind of supernatural or mysterious power to bring misfortune upon neighbours. Disease, injury or death for people or their animals, destruction of crops by hailstorms and the burning of towns were often believed to have been caused by witches.
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The worship of ‘the Devil’ <p>Some Christian leaders claimed that the power to perform these malicious, magical acts came from the Devil.</p> <p>Witches were accused of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having made a pact with the Devil, by which they allegedly promised to serve him as their god in return for the power to inflict magical harm. • gathering in (or flying to) remote locations to worship the Devil. At these nocturnal assemblies, often referred to as sabbaths, witches would allegedly have themselves rebaptised in the religion of their new demonic master (Levack, 2014).

Lesson 1

PART A: TEACHER-GUIDED LEARNING

6	<p>What was a witch-hunt?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A witch-hunt was the process of identifying people believed to be involved in the secret practice of witchcraft. • Most witch-hunts began when villagers accused their neighbours of harming them by magical means. • If the authorities believed the accusation, the accused person would be arrested, interrogated to confess their 'crime' and then punished, or even killed.
7	<p>Where did the European witch-hunts occur?</p> <p>Many of the most severe hunts took place in German territories. Other locations of intense witch-hunting were Scotland, Hungary, Poland, the Spanish Netherlands and some French and Swiss districts. There were fewer executions in England, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Italy (Levack, 2014).</p>
8	<p>Many books were written about witchcraft. The most notorious is the <i>Malleus Maleficarum</i> (Hammer of Witches) by Heinrich Kramer, which was first published in 1486. It presented reasons why witchcraft was real and not imaginary. It also described how to prosecute a witch in a court of law.</p>
9	<p>Beliefs about witches varied. Some common beliefs included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That witches could make people or animals sick or even kill them by magic. In farming communities, sick animals were sometimes blamed on witchcraft. • That they held meetings called 'sabbaths' at night-time, where they would do things considered sinful like dancing naked. Witches were also suspected of doing disgusting or cruel things at sabbaths like killing babies or animals. • That witches would float in water. If you were an accused witch, you might be thrown in a lake. If you swam or floated, then that was proof you were a witch. If you sank and drowned, that was proof you were innocent – but unfortunately you'd be dead! • That when witches made a pact with the Devil he left a mark on their body. This meant that physical marks like moles or warts could be used as evidence of witchcraft. • Most people believed that witches could fly.
10–11	<p>What happened to accused witches?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many accused witches were tortured until they confessed. Do you think these confessions were genuine? • About 90,000 people (mostly women) were accused of witchcraft between 1450 and 1750 (Levak, 2006). • About half of those accused were convicted and executed. • In England, witches were hanged; in the rest of Europe they were usually burned.

What was Meant by 'Witch', 'Witchcraft' and 'Witch-Hunt' in Early Modern Europe?

<p>12</p>	<p>Examples of Witch-Hunts</p> <p>TRIER WITCH TRIALS, GERMANY 1581–1593</p> <p>Between 1587 and 1593, 368 people were burned for being witches in the Trier district in Germany. Two villages were left with only one woman in them.</p> <p>Dietrich Flade, a court judge, opposed the Trier witch-hunts. He spoke out against them publicly and let many suspected witches go free when presiding as judge at their trials. The authorities arrested him, and he was tortured to extract a confession of being 'too lenient with evil-doers'. He was consequently executed.</p> <p>Cornelius Loos, a university professor, was also against the witch-hunts. He wrote letters to city officials saying that confessions made during torture were not real evidence. In his book <i>True and False Magic</i> he questioned the beliefs of the witch-hunters. His writings offended the city's authorities and Loos was tortured until he publicly recanted his opinions (to recant means to say that what you said before was wrong and that it is no longer your belief).</p> <p>See more about the Trier witch persecution at the Hanover Historical Texts Project: http://history.hanover.edu/texts/trier.html#1</p>
<p>13–14</p>	<p>SCOTLAND, 1590–1592</p> <p>The king of Scotland, King James VI, suspected that witches had sent storms against his ship, endangering his life as he travelled back to Scotland from Denmark. He commenced a witch-hunt to find and punish those who he believed had tried to harm him. More than 100 suspected witches in North Berwick were arrested. Many confessed under torture to having met with the Devil in the St Andrews churchyard. They confessed to devoting themselves to doing evil and attempting to sink the king's ship.</p> <p>A young woman named Gillie Duncan was arrested for witchcraft in the town of Tranent near Edinburgh, Scotland.</p> <p>She worked as a servant and had helped to nurse people who were sick. When the people recovered, her cures were described as 'miraculous' and therefore witchcraft. Gillie denied being a witch. She was then tortured and eventually she confessed to witchcraft and named many other people as witches. She was burnt at the stake.</p> <p>Question: Do you think Gillie's confession was the truth?</p> <p>Estimation: Between 3,000 and 4,000 accused witches may have been killed in Scotland from 1560 to 1707 (Smout, 1998).</p> <p>Optional activity:</p> <p>Research Gillie Duncan's life and then compare and contrast her story with a current media story of people being victimised and convicted of crimes.</p>

Lesson 1

Year 8

<p>15</p>	<p>Matthew Hopkins (Self-appointed witch-finder, England, 1644)</p> <p>Matthew Hopkins charged a fee for 'finding witches'. He travelled around England offering his services. This included 'investigating' accused witches by looking for the 'Devil's mark' on their bodies, forcing sleep deprivation to extract confessions, and throwing accused witches into deep water to see if they floated.</p> <p>Between 1644 and 1647 he assisted in the execution of over 200 accused witches.</p> <p>There were people who openly opposed the witch-hunts. Not everyone supported the persecution of supposed witches. A church vicar named John Gaule, for example, spoke out against Hopkins' fees and torturous treatment of suspected witches in his sermons and a book. There were also court judges who questioned Hopkins about the legality of his methods, since torture was illegal in England. They implied in their questioning that he was like a witch himself because of the harmful ways he treated people (Hay, 2011).</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>Why did the witch-hunts occur?</p> <p>There are many different reasons why the witch-hunts might have happened. Historians still can't fully explain the witch-hunts or agree on their causes. However, here are some of the things that probably contributed to the witch-hunts occurring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in magic was common in the early modern period. Almost all cultures believed that magic was a real part of life, and that humans could do both 'good magic' and 'black magic' if they learned how. • Most Europeans in the early modern period believed in God and the Devil (a spirit hostile to God). Since they already believed that the Devil existed, it wasn't a big step to believe that some people might work for him as instruments of harm. • In different places there were different kinds of social problems: for example, conflicts between rich and poor, or between the authorities and the community. Some historians think that these conflicts contributed to witchcraft accusations. • At this time, people did not know the scientific reasons for natural phenomena like storms, outbreaks of sickness, crop failure, etc. They believed these big problems were caused by magic and they looked for someone to blame. (Significant agricultural failures resulted from the Little Ice Age, for example, which people at the time did not understand.) <p>The witch-hunts probably occurred because of a combination of these factors and also others that were specific to different communities.</p>

Part B: Research Activity

Research more about one of the subjects we have looked at:

- The Trier witch-hunts in Germany
- Scottish King James VI and his persecution of witches
- Gillie Duncan, accused witch
- Matthew Hopkins, witch-finder

Address each of these points in your response:

- How do you feel about the story you have discovered?
- Do you think people were justified in feeling afraid of witches?
- Were the accusations of practising witchcraft fair or unfair? Why?
- Why did the main people in that situation think and feel the way they did?
- Do people today think and feel that way about witches? Why or why not?

Present your research in one of these formats:

1. 500-word essay
2. Four-minute oral presentation
3. Digital media in negotiation with teacher, e.g., animation, video, website



Image: *Matthew Hopkins, Witch-finder* from the 1837 edition of Matthew Hopkins, *Discovery of Witches*. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Lesson 2

HOW WERE WITCHES AND THEIR CRIMES REPRESENTED IN THE NEWS OF EARLY MODERN EUROPE? WHAT MADE THEM SO SCARY? HOW WAS THE MEDIA INFLUENCING EMOTIONS?



Image: Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, 1669 edition, Title Page. Wellcome Trust.

Part A: Teacher-Guided Learning

18	<p>What is media?</p> <p>Brainstorm students' current understandings of the term 'media'.</p>
19	<p>Today we think of 'the media' as TV, the internet, radio, magazines, etc: ways of communicating news, entertainment, advertising and education. The media existed in the early modern period too. 'Media' is a means of communication that reaches large numbers of people. In the early modern period, things like church sermons, news reports, printed books and pamphlets helped information and opinions to be shared widely.</p> <p>The media often had a strong, influential role in telling people what they should fear.</p>
20	<p>Examples of media that influenced people's ideas about witches:</p> <p>1. Demonologies</p> <p>Demonological books aimed to teach people what witches were and how to recognise them (like a bird-watcher's manual, but for witch-hunters!).</p> <p>Heinrich Kramer (author of <i>Malleus Maleficarum</i>) wrote about why witchcraft was real, not imaginary, and how to prosecute a witch.</p> <p>Some demonologists, such as Lambert Daneau and Jean Bodin, believed that witches were marked by the Devil and that examiners could search the body of the suspected witch for this mark. If a needle was stuck into the flesh (where the mark was) and no blood came forth, or the accused felt no sensation, it was taken as a sign that the prisoner was a witch.</p>
21	<p>2. Church sermons</p> <p>Many church authorities delivered sermons on the threat of witchcraft and the importance of eliminating witches.</p>
22	<p>3. Witches' confessions read aloud</p> <p>The witches' confessions (which were most often given under duress) were read aloud at their places of execution. Executions attracted large audiences from near and far, sometimes numbering in the thousands. In this way, the stereotype continued to be propagated. Those in attendance came to know what terrible crimes witches supposedly committed, and how. Consequently, if the onlookers were to find themselves accused and tortured at a later date they would know what they were expected to confess. Stories of witches' executions also made their way into news reports, thus spreading the news of witches' crimes further afield.</p>

Lesson 2

PART A: TEACHER-GUIDED LEARNING

23	<p>4. Broadsheets</p> <p>Broadsheets (also known as broadsides) were large sheets of paper printed on one side only, designed to be pasted onto public walls or sold by street-vendors. They ranged from foolscap size to over 1.5 metres in length.</p> <p>...broadsides tended to report the unusual, the 'monstrous', and the sensational. Strange animals, unusual weather, 'monstrous' human or animal births, criminal behaviour, or accounts of witchcraft were among the most common items of broadside 'news' hawked on the streets of London. Like the modern tabloid, these broadsides emphasized crime, violence, and wonderful cures. The sensational or 'strange but true' were staples of broadside news and newsbooks (Shapiro, 2003, p. 8).</p> <p>They were very popular and often reported stories about the latest witch-hunt.</p> <p>This slide shows an illustrated broadsheet from Germany, c.1600. The opening line exclaims: 'Listen to a new frightful adventure of the monstrous sorcerers'. It is a report of supposed witches and their activities in the area.</p>
24	<p>Common beliefs communicated about witchcraft in the media:</p> <p>1. Witches made a pact with the Devil</p> <p>The Devil, usually in the form of a fine gentleman dressed in black, approached a person in a time of need. He promised them assistance should they agree to do his will. They agreed. From the late sixteenth century many stories also state that witches signed a written pact with the Devil, sometimes with their own blood. Then they could practise <i>maleficium</i> or harmful magic.</p>
25	<p>2. Witches acted together</p> <p>Witches were increasingly believed to be acting together. Rather than one witch bewitching a person or a cow, groups of witches were believed to be coming together under the leadership of the Devil to destroy Christianity. By the second half of the sixteenth century witches were frequently reported to be coming together at special nightly gatherings. Authors claimed that witches travelled to such meetings through the air on oven forks, or simply on sticks, or on animals such as goats and calves.</p>
26	<p>3. Witches had real power to cause harm</p> <p>News reports gave terrifying accounts of how witches killed and lamed people, both young and old, as well as animals. They reportedly destroyed crops, especially grain and wine, through terrible weather magic. Demonologists spent a lot of time discussing how this was possible, suggesting that really it was the Devil who was the one responsible because humans could not do such things, and that even the Devil could only do so with the permission of God. The news reports, however, more often presented witches as frightful beings with real power to cause harm.</p>

Part B: Student Activities

READING COMPREHENSION AND PAIR DISCUSSION

Read Student Resource 1: Excerpt from a 1580 German News Report.

- Highlight the words you think are being used to provoke the reader's emotions, then share and discuss with a partner.
- Imagine you were living in Germany in 1580. This news report was handed to you by a friend. Would you have believed all of the report about witches? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the person who wrote this news report believed their claims to be true? Why or why not?

CLASS DISCUSSION

'Witch-hunt' – the term can be used today to mean unfairly accusing or punishing someone of a wrongdoing without proof (or with made-up proof), just because someone is needed to take the blame.

Where do we find 'witch-hunts' today?

Consider:

- In friendship groups
- In a whole school online (cyberbullying)
- In families
- In our communities through media reports like TV, internet and newspapers
- In Australia as a whole in attitudes towards people from other countries



Image: *Burning of Three Witches in Baden, Switzerland, 1585.*
The Wickiana Collection. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Lesson 2

Part C: Research Activity

"We are in danger of thinking that we are much more rational and just than people in the past. But we are all human. When we feel threatened or afraid, even today, we make monsters out of humans. We 'other', and we scapegoat. Our imagination is a powerful force that can make enemies where there are none. News media can too."

*Abigail Warfield (ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions),
'How Do You Know She is a Witch? The Manufacturing
of Witchcraft Stereotypes in Early Modern Germany'.*

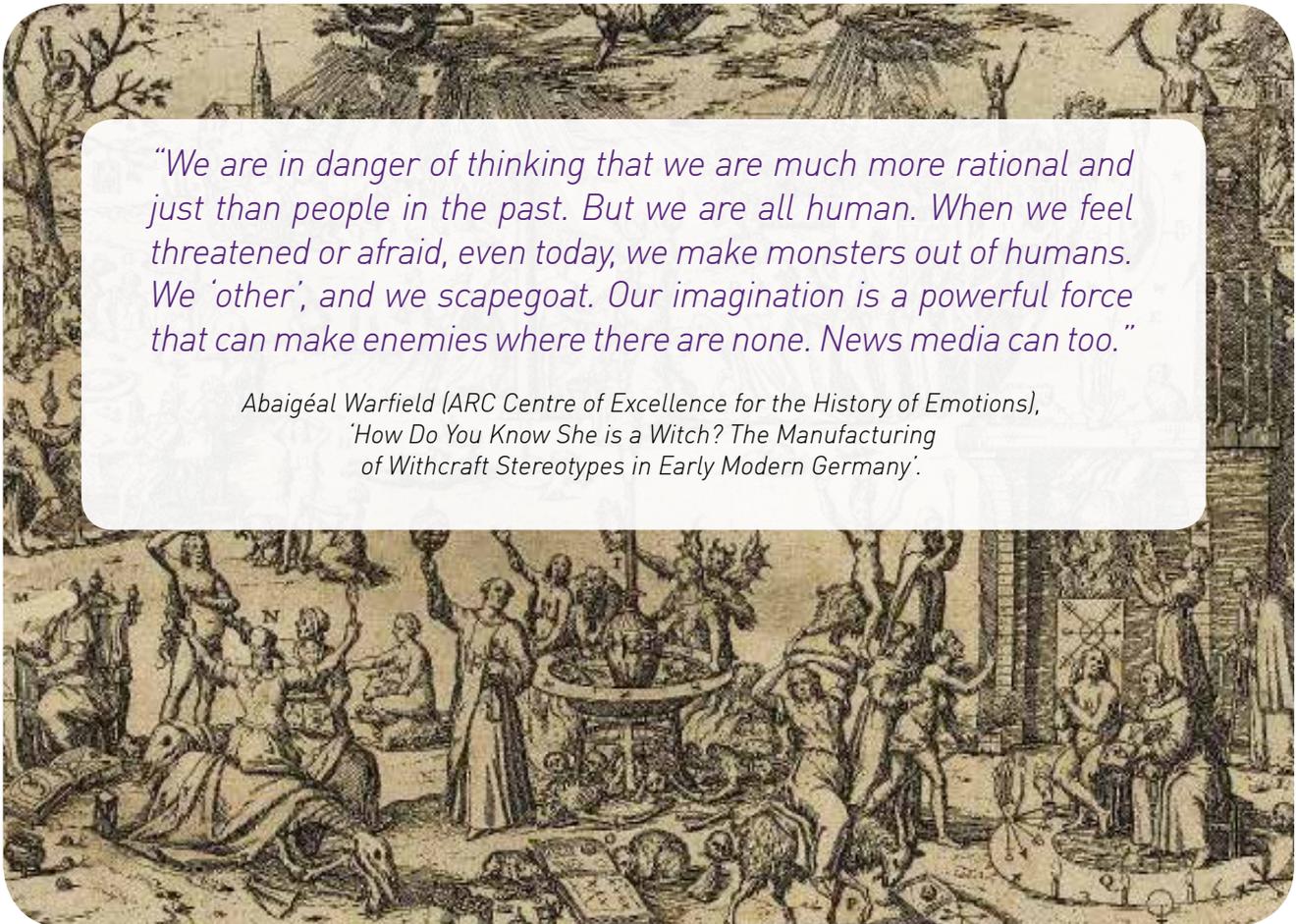


Image: A broadside on witchcraft in the Bishopric of Trier and elsewhere; with an etching depicting various scenes of witchcraft; and with engraved text in six columns, c.1600. The Trustees of the British Museum. Used with permission.

News media today, just like in the past, can persuade us to be afraid.

Find examples of reports in current news media which might influence readers to exclude or persecute other people. Does the report use emotive language to portray certain people as different, scary or dangerous?

Is there reason to believe, contrary to the report, that the subjects of the report are not dangerous?

Present your research in one of these formats:

1. 500-word essay
2. Four-minute oral presentation
3. Digital media in negotiation with teacher, e.g., animation, video, website

Extension Activities

Extend student learning with these multimodal activities and adaptations

Activity 1: Analysis of Sources

Develop interpretive skills by analysing **one** of the following sources:

- A news report (See Student Resource 1)
The Witches Who Have Been Burned from the 7th of February to the 20th of July, 1580, and Where and What They Confessed.
- A letter (See Student Resource 2)
Johannes Junius' letter to his daughter before his execution.
- A woodcut illustration (See PowerPoint image no. 27)
Ulrich Molitor. *Witches Cause a Storm*, woodcut 1489.
- A ballad (Go to <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/31034/player>)
Witchcraft Discovered and Punished, text facsimiles and sound recording

Consider:

1. When and where was the source made?
2. What was its purpose?
3. Is it a primary or secondary source?
4. Is it a reliable source?
5. What conclusions can we draw from it?

Present your analysis as a 400-word report.

Activity 2: Defending the Accused

Choose a character from a TV show or movie who you think was misunderstood or wrongly accused. Write a speech defending the character and explaining their true nature.

Extension Activities Continued

Activity 3: Celebrity Heads

Playing the well-known game 'Celebrity Heads', students wear labels with key terms: e.g., people (Heinrich Kramer, Gillie Duncan, King James VI of Scotland, Matthew Hopkins), events (Trier Witch-Hunt, North Berwick Witch-Hunt), or media sources (broadsheet, sermons, demonological books, confessions read aloud publicly).

Activity 4: Design a Facebook or Instagram Page

Choose a character that you have learned about in this unit (e.g., Gillie Duncan, Matthew Hopkins). Design a Facebook profile or Instagram feed for this character. Include five key pieces of information about your chosen character.

Adapting for Other Years/Subjects

If adapting this lesson for Year 10 or above, include a viewing of *The Crucible* – a 1996 drama film by Arthur Miller. The film was inspired by the American witchcraft trials in Salem, Massachusetts, in the late 1600s but it shows many aspects which are similar to the European trials.

If your school has a counsellor, social worker or someone suitably qualified to assist, you might like to run an extension activity about exclusion and bullying:

Write about a time you were excluded. Why did others want to exclude you? How did they feel? How did you feel? What did they do? Could there have been a way to resolve the conflict without excluding you?

or

Write about a time you (alone or with others) excluded someone. Why did you want to exclude that person? How did you feel? How did he/she feel? What did you do? Could there have been a way to resolve the conflict without excluding them?

Student Resource 1

Excerpt from a 1580 German News Report

The Witches Who Have Been Burned from the 7th of February to the 20th of July, 1580, and Where and What They Confessed.

Hear Oh Christians, what is now sung to you; listen eagerly to what has recently happened – great misery and a miracle! Behold an evil deed, this year, as I will show. They executed many witch-women, as I will shortly show, and what they did; behold the great wonder.

In 1580 I was amazed that on 7 February in Wurzach nine witches were executed. They confessed to many miserable deeds, as I will explain. At Biberach, I tell you, [the people] burned five of them at the same time. At Kirch they burned four all at once without hesitation; [the witches] were all old and very rich, and had caused much misery, as I will describe later.

In Allgau I must report that [the people] burned nine at once openly at Wanga, and three more at Isny. And at Fissach they burned eleven at the end of the same month. Three [witches] fled to Lindau thinking they would be safe there. At Rottenburg on the Neckar and at Horb [the people] burned nine [witches]. And at Drieburg on the Walde and at Rottweil they burned a godly number of witches, nearly thirty in all, who had wretchedly killed many children. Constance on Lake Constance burned two on the 6th of May, who confessed an evil crime. At Uberlingen they burned three who with great sorrow confessed many crimes, as I will tell later. Mr Lazarus von Schwendi burned many of them.

At Kuppenen they burned six and three more nearby. In the Wanzenau in the city of Keisersberg they burned one on St. Vitus Day and others still lie in prison... At Rastatt [the people] burned seven and five in Baden, who had done strange things to men, women and children with magic and poison.

And in the Margravate Baden [the witches] took away the wife of a tile maker, carrying her magically through the air together with a child. [The people] found her on the second day at Gersbach, miserably bound to the child. At Rastatt, as I said, they were

busy burning. A rain and thunderstorm brought misery and wretchedness to that place, and it sounded as if armoured men and horses were up there. Furthermore I must tell what [the witches] confessed; I cannot remain silent.

Listen Oh men and women! Three hundred [witches] plainly came together in the Black Forest and they resolved on a crime by which they should cause frost throughout the land on Holy Pentecost. They prayed to the devil for help and counsel. At once they buried three pails of corn, wine and grain in three places. There was a young maid there from Wurzach, who was the daughter of a witch.

[The people] looked and found the pails deep in the woods, full of all kinds of fruit. They seized her at once and said the devil had taught her to harm man, woman and child. [The witches] then confessed how [they] come together; I cannot keep from telling you this. The devil came to them quickly and told them to make a storm so that no one would bring sickles to the fields for thirty German miles around.

And [the witches] said that they wanted it to start in that place on the day of Christ's Ascension. But God used his power to protect so that the storm went no farther than five German miles, starting in the Black Forest and having a width of one-half mile. It destroyed most of the grain in the fields at Biberach.

Finally they confessed openly that with their own hands they had ruined the fruit of the trees at Breisach and a great many grapes at Kestenholtz. May God have mercy, for they quickly confessed how they had harmed 200 children, both rich and poor, and had made them dumb; and had killed many poor men's cattle in their stalls.

Afterward [the witches] confessed that on a Saturday night the devil held an assembly at a castle high on a mountain one German mile from Colmar. Large and

small came together there. Nearly 500 persons came from many lands and from far away, riding on cats and on calves. Many of them were dead, and yet they too had strange adventures at that place. They danced and jumped over sticks and stones.

And each one brought along his lover-demon, who had strange names. I must tell you what these lovers commanded them to do. They told them to make a huge storm. With their strange help it could happen. So they tried five times to make a hail which was to wreck destruction. [The witches] couldn't make a storm as large as they wanted but a rainstorm came that did much harm to houses, mills, grain and corn, which drowned in the fields of many pious folk.

Shortly afterward they confessed that if they hadn't been caught so quickly, they would have made a storm for forty German miles around that would have caused much more damage. They would have ruined so much grain and wine so far around that no pious upright man could have made even half a measure of wine or brought even half a bushel of grain into his barn. And whatever cattle and men were in the fields would have been hit with hail stones weighing five or even seven pounds.

[The witches] were indeed so angry that they went crazy, and no one knew what they might have gone on to freeze with frost: corn, wine and fruit in the fields. But the frost was prevented at Villington.

So throughout you have heard how 114 witches in all were convicted and executed, who confessed such things as they did in many a place. Oh God, grant us a pious magistracy who may truly root out such godless folk at any time, and grant us eternal salvation.

Source: H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Witchcraft, Madness, Society, and Religion in Early Modern Germany* (Ashgate, 2013), III, p. 211.

Student Resource 2

Excerpt from a Letter, 1628

Source: Hanover Historical Texts Project, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/bamberg.html>

Johannes Junius, who had been the mayor of Bamberg, Germany, was convicted of witchcraft in 1628. He wrote to his daughter Veronica shortly before his execution.

The letter never reached her, however. It was intercepted by the authorities and placed with the other materials in Junius' trial record (which is how it has come down to us today). The letter offers a unique opportunity to hear from someone who had been accused and tortured.

Many hundred thousand good-nights, dearly beloved daughter Veronica. Innocent have I come into prison, innocent have I been tortured, innocent must I die. For whoever comes into the witch prison must become a witch or be tortured until he invents something out of his head and – God pity him – bethinks him of something.

I will tell you how it has gone with me. When I was the first time put to the torture, Dr. Braun, Dr. Kotzendorffer, and two strange doctors were there. Then Dr. Braun asks me, "Kinsman, how come you here?" I answer, "Through falsehood, through misfortune." "Hear, you," he says, "you are a witch; will you confess it voluntarily? If not, we'll bring in witnesses and the executioner for you."

I said "I am no witch, I have a pure conscience in the matter; if there are a thousand witnesses, I am not anxious, but I'll gladly hear the witnesses." Now the chancellor's son was set before me... and afterward Hoppfen Elss. She had seen me dance on Haupts-moor...

I answered: "I have never renounced God, and will never do it--God graciously keep me from it. I'll rather bear whatever I must." And then came also – God in highest Heaven have mercy – the executioner, and put the thumb-screws on me I thought heaven and earth were at an end... I suffered terrible agony...

And this happened on Friday, June 30, and with God's help I had to bear the torture. . . . When at last the executioner led me back into the prison, he said to me: "Sir, I beg you, for God's sake confess something, whether it be true or not. Invent something, for you cannot endure the torture which you will be put to; and, even if you

bear it all, yet you will not escape, not even if you were an earl, but one torture will follow after another until you say you are a witch. Not before that," he said, "will they let you go, as you may see by all their trials, for one is just like another."

And so I begged, since I was in wretched plight, to be given one day for thought and a priest. The priest was refused me, but the time for thought was given. Now, my dear child, see in what hazard I stood and still stand. I must say that I am a witch, though I am not, – must now renounce God, though I have never done it before. Day and night I was deeply troubled, but at last there came to me a new idea. I would not be anxious, but, since I had been given no priest with whom I could take counsel, I would myself think of something and say it.

It were surely better that I just say it with mouth and words, even though I had not really done it; and afterwards I would confess it to the priest, and let those answer for it who compel me to do it... And so I made my confession, as follows; but it was all a lie.

Now follows, dear child, what I confessed in order to escape the great anguish and bitter torture, which it was impossible for me longer to bear...

Then I had to tell what people I had seen [at the witch-sabbath]. I said that I had not recognized them. "You old rascal, I must set the executioner at you. Say – was not the Chancellor there?" So I said yes. "Who besides?" I had not recognized anybody. So he said: "Take one street after another; begin at the market, go out on one street and back on the next." I had to name several persons there. Then came the long street. I knew nobody. Had to name eight persons there. Then the Zinkenwert – one

Excerpt from a Letter, 1628

person more. Then over the upper bridge to the Georghor, on both sides. Knew nobody again. Did I know nobody in the castle – whoever it might be, I should speak without fear.

And thus continuously they asked me on all the streets, though I could not and would not say more. So they gave me to the executioner, told him to... put me to the torture. "The rascal knows one on the market-place, is with him daily, and yet won't name him." By that they meant Dietmeyer: so I had to name him too.

Then I had to tell what crimes I had committed. I said nothing.

"Draw the rascal up!" [they said]. So I said that I was to kill my children, but I had killed a horse instead. It did not help. I had also taken a sacred wafer, and had desecrated it. When I had said this, they left me in peace.

Now, dear child, here you have all my confession, for which I must die. And they are sheer lies and made-up things, so help me God. For all this I was forced to say through fear of the torture which was threatened beyond what I had already endured. For they never leave off with the torture till one confesses something; be he never so good, he must be a witch. Nobody escapes, though he were an earl...

Dear child, keep this letter secret so that people do not find it, else I shall be tortured most piteously and the jailers will be beheaded. So strictly is it forbidden... Dear child, pay this man a dollar... I have taken several days to write this: my hands are both lame. I am in a sad plight...

Good night, for your father Johannes Junius will never see you more. July 24, 1628.

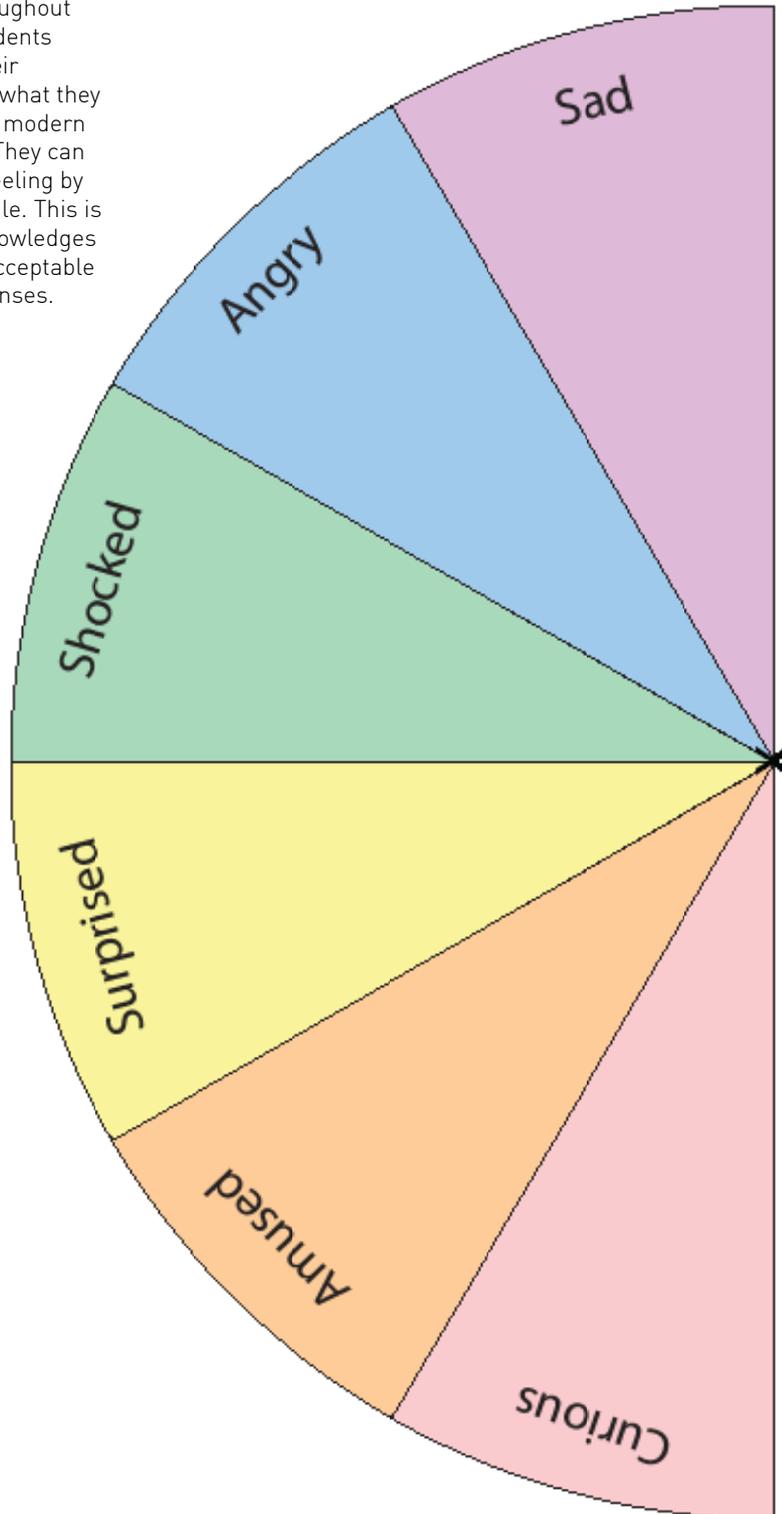
Editor's note: And on the margin of the letter he adds:

Dear child, six have confessed against me at once: the Chancellor, his son, Neudecker, Zaner, Hoffmaisters Ursel, and Hoppfen Els – all false, through compulsion, as they have all told me, and begged my forgiveness in God's name before they were executed. They know nothing but good of me. They were forced to say it, just as I myself was...

Student Resource 3

Emotions Metre

At various intervals throughout the lessons give the students opportunity to gauge their emotional responses to what they are learning about early modern European witch-hunts. They can indicate what they are feeling by setting the metre's needle. This is a private activity. It acknowledges that it is common and acceptable to have emotional responses.



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IMAGES

Title page: Mary Hoare, *The Three Witches from Macbeth: Double, Double, Toil and Trouble*. c.1781.

Courtesy of Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

p. 5: *Witchcraft: A Witch and a Devil Making a Nail with Which to Make a Boy Lame*. Woodcut, c.1720.

Courtesy of Wellcome Collection.

p. 10: *Matthew Hopkins, Witch-finder* from the 1837 edition of Matthew Hopkins, *Discovery of Witches*.

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

p. 11: Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, c.1486, Title Page. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

p. 13: Witchcraft Broadsheet from c.1600. The Trustees of the British Museum. Used with permission.

p.14: *Burning of Three Witches in Baden, Switzerland*, 1585. The Wickiana Collection. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



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