



Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A Level History A

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

Wednesday 6 June 2018 – Afternoon

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes



You must have:

- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet
(OCR12 sent with general stationery)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Answer Question 1 in Section A and any **two** questions in Section B.
- Write your answers in the Answer Booklet. The question number(s) must be clearly shown.
- Do **not** write in the barcodes.

INFORMATION

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

SECTION A

Read the two passages and then 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 Matthew Hopkins' motives in the East Anglia witch hunt of 1645–7. [30]

Passage A

A witch trial was a risky undertaking: costly in time and money, and liable to backfire if the defendant was acquitted. For a prosecution to gain momentum, plaintiffs had to be unusually confident or foolhardy, or unusually afraid or angry. John Rivet was the latter and did not hesitate to broadcast his convictions. Word spread quickly through the gossip networks of Manningtree and Mistley, and so reached the ears of a callow*, vainglorious** gentleman named Matthew Hopkins. For a younger son of a clergyman, whose life so far held few ambitions or adventures, the news was electrifying. At last Hopkins sensed a mission, a chance to make his mark. Although it is easy to imagine that he was sly and sarcastic, there is no reason to think him insincere in his convictions: a Calvinist belief in his own predestined salvation, and a loathing of witchcraft and idolatry as cancers at the heart of Christian society. And so, Rivet's accusation focused his mind. Not that Hopkins lacked first-hand experience of witches – or so he said. For some time now, once every six weeks or so and always on a Friday night, he had been disturbed by eerie voices drifting over the fields near his house. Standing at his bedchamber he had caught snatches of conversation between the witches of Manningtree and their accomplices from neighbouring villages. Convinced that the witches had detected his spying, Hopkins later claimed that they had dispatched a bear-like spirit to kill him. He added that the coven had commanded some imps to assist a particular witch living in Manningtree: the name he overheard was that of an old widow, Elizabeth Clarke.

* *callow* = immature

** *vainglorious* = arrogant

Adapted from M. Gaskill, *Witchfinders, A Seventeenth Century English Tragedy*, published in 2005.

Passage B

Hopkins was a devout Puritan, anxious to serve the Parliamentary cause and concerned about witchcraft. Hopkins, Stearne and several other local people sat with Clarke for several nights, waiting for her familiars to appear. Eventually, various creatures put in an appearance – a creature like a cat, an imp like a dog, another dog like a greyhound, followed by an imp like a ferret and another like a toad. Clarke now admitted that she had allowed the Devil the use of her body six or seven years before and implicated Anne West, a suspected witch from the nearby village of Lawford, in her confession.

By July 1645, Hopkins and Stearne had moved their witch-finding to Suffolk, Hopkins operating in the east of the county, Stearne in the west. The witch-finders chose their destinations carefully. While they preferred a written invitation, local knowledge did much to ensure they received a warm reception. Communities noted for their godly enthusiasm were most likely to find their way on to their itinerary, especially those where there had been much destruction of church images in 1643–4.

Hopkins and Stearne made obtaining admissions of guilt their business. They had the potential to earn more in a week than most people earned in a year. It has been suggested that this motivated their actions. But it remains likely that they were spurred on by religious conviction. [However], the costs to the local community of Hopkins' work were such that in 1645 a special local tax rate had to be levied in Ipswich. The Aldeburgh witch-hunt was a severe drain on the town, costing a seventh of its annual expenses. Costs included Matthew Hopkins' fees (£8).

Adapted from A. Farmer, *The Witchcraze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, published in 2016.

SECTION B

Answer **TWO** of the following three questions.

- 2*** How different was urban and rural popular culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? **[25]**
- 3*** To what extent were political developments the most important reason for the growth and decline in the persecution of witches in the period from 1500 to 1700? **[25]**
- 4*** 'Witch hunts were rural not urban affairs.' How far do you agree with this view of the persecution of witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? **[25]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER



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