Foxford Learning

YEAR 12 History
Paper 3, Option 33: The Witch Craze in Britain, Europe and North America, c1580–c1750

Over the course of the topic, I will be able to: -

Depth Topic 4: Matthew Hopkins and the East Anglian witch craze, 1645–47

Key Vocabulary

Matthew Hopkins	Self-styled Witchfinder General; instigator of the East Anglian witch hunt.
John Stearne	Hopkins's associate; co-prosecutor and later author of an account of the hunt.
Witchfinder General	A title Hopkins adopted to imply official authority he did not legally hold.
Swimming test	A method of 'testing' accused witches by immersing them in water.
Pricking	Searching the body for the supposed insensible 'Devil's mark' as evidence.
Civil War	The English Civil Wars 1642–51; severely disrupted local legal authority.
Assize courts	Regular courts for serious criminal cases; disrupted during the Civil War.
John Gaule	A clergyman who publicly criticised Hopkins's methods in print in 1646.
Gender	The majority of Hopkins's victims were women; a key dimension of the craze.
Class	Victims tended to come from poorer, more vulnerable social backgrounds.
Economic crisis	Harvest failures and wartime disruption created acute social tensions.
Traditional authority	The restoration of normal legal structures ended Hopkins's influence.

Key Skills

- Analyse and explain the social, economic, religious and political factors behind witch persecution.
- Evaluate the roles of key individuals and institutions in prosecuting or challenging witch belief.
- Analyse and evaluate contemporary source material related to the witch craze.
- Retrieve knowledge to construct verbal and written arguments related to the key topics.
- Compose effective responses to essay questions.

I will understand

Topic 1. Economic and political context, 1645–47 - The breakdown of traditional authority and legal structures during the Civil War; economic crises including harvest failure; how the collapse of normal governance created the conditions for Hopkins's activities.

Topic 2. Geography, numbers, victims, roles and methods - The geography and scale of the hunt; class and gender of victims; the roles and methods of Matthew Hopkins and John Stearne; the reasons for their influence and the power they accumulated 1645–47.

Topic 3. The ending of the East Anglian witch craze, 1647 - The growing financial and logistical cost of the hunt; the re-establishment of traditional legal authority; the role of John Gaule's printed criticism in undermining Hopkins and ending his prosecutions.