

**ProTalk**

Discussion Files

# C2. Witch hunts

Afaq Language Center

Language Center

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# Goals

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



# Did you know that?

**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?**

## Discuss the meanings with your teacher and use each in a sentence.

| | |
|---|---|
| **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. |

## Discuss the meanings with your teacher and use each in a sentence.

| | |
|---|---|
| **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. |

**Read the text and summarize it.**

# 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.

**Read the text and summarize it.**

# 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.

# Over to you

**Answer these questions with your teacher.**



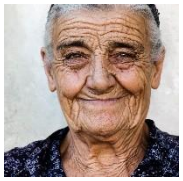
1 Why do you think the rural, uneducated poor were more likely to believe in witches? What other superstitions may they have held?

# Over to you

**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?



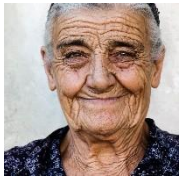
2 Why do you think most of those accused of witchcraft were women?

# 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?

# Did anything in the text surprise you?







**Exercise p. 10**

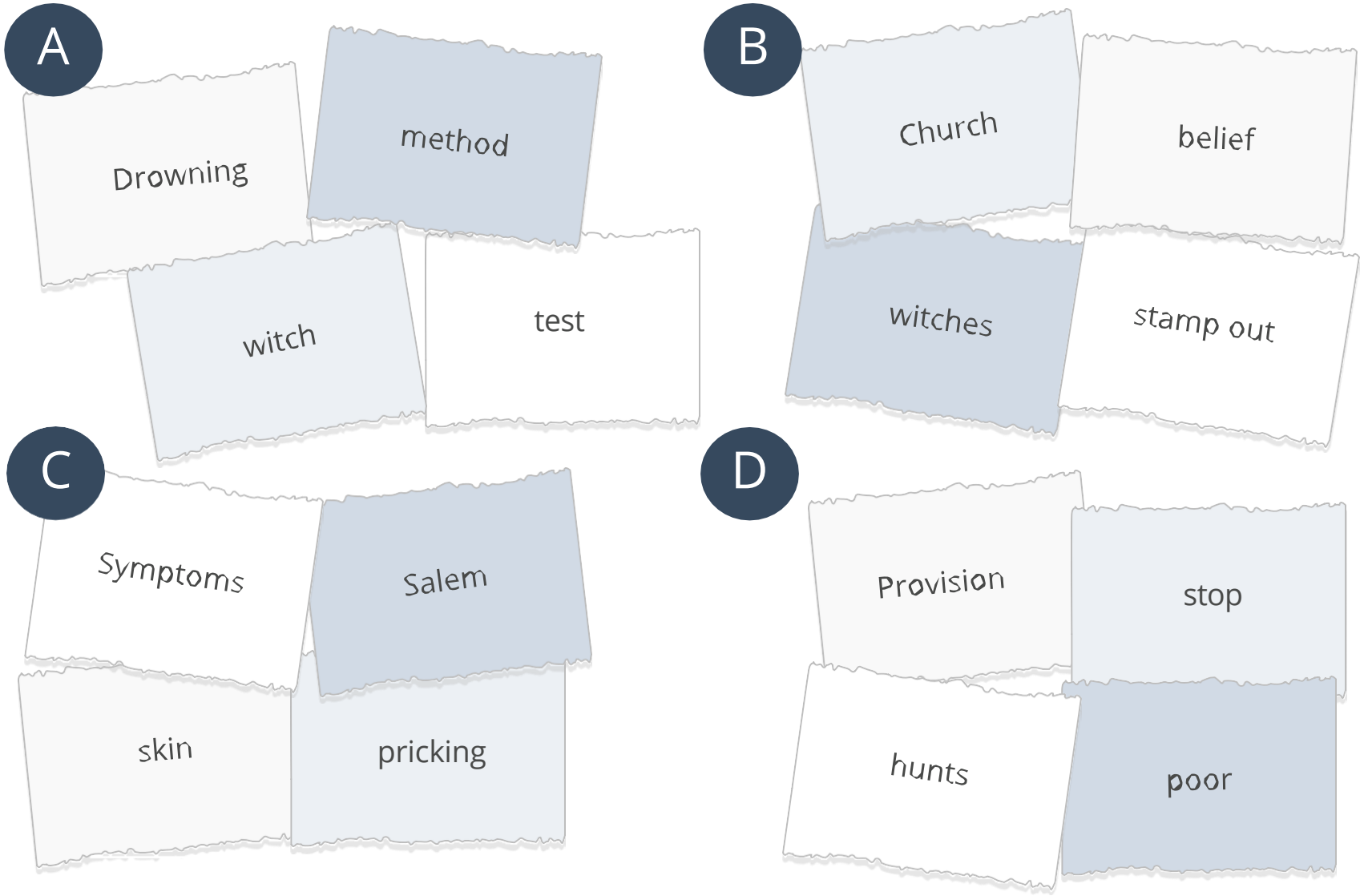
1. stamp out/eliminate, paganism – 2. rural, black magic – 3. widows, herbal remedies – 4. drowning, searching for marks

# Match the beginnings and the endings

1. 70% of those killed on...
2. The church aligned black magic...
3. It was the rural, uneducated poor...
4. Those who gave out herbal remedies...
5. Mass hysteria prompted...
6. Begging by neighbours is thought to be...
7. The advent of the Enlightenment...

a. one cause of witch hunts.
b. were often targeted.
c. with the devil.
d. the Salem witch trials.
e. helped eliminate witch hunts.
f. suspicion of being witches were women.
g. who often believed in witches.

# Make full sentences with the words below



**Exercise p. 23**

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

**Exercise p. 24**

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.

# Presentation

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 organized.

Prepare a two-minute presentation.

Include several reasons to support your  point of view.
Give your presentation to the class. Answer questions and get feedback.

- 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.

