



Witchcraft (C1 -Advanced)

A – Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Do you believe there are some human beings that have supernatural powers?
2. If so, who are they? What kinds of powers do they have?
3. Have you read any of the Harry Potter books, or seen any of the films?
4. Is the witchcraft in the Harry Potter stories different from that of the Middle Ages? Why (not)?
5. Do you have a lucky charm? If so, what is it? What is its purpose?

B – Listen and answer

Read these statements. Then listen (without reading) and write T (true) or F (false).

1. Professor Gibson thinks few people believe their lives are affected by good and bad forces.
2. Gibson looks at what goes on people's minds when there is social or religious disturbance.
3. When looking at witch trials of the past, she focuses more on the accusers than on the accused.
4. The peak period of witch trials went from the second half of the 14th century to 1692.
5. Gibson observes that in those days anybody could be accused of being a witch.
6. Monty Summers was an ordinary Anglican priest who wasn't interested in the occult.
7. Nellie Duncan was a medium who used fake objects to trick her clients.
8. Gibson says many were persecuted just for being different, but they seldom defended themselves.
9. According to Gibson, in today's society there is more tolerance and understanding.
10. She thinks we should take no notice of Trump's use of the expression 'witch hunt'.

C – Read and answer

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. What evidence is there that people are still very interested in witchcraft and the supernatural?
2. Why is this strange?
3. What do some people think they can use a spell or charm for?
4. What did Marion Gibson learn by studying the historical documents related to witch trials?
5. What kind of everyday situation could lead to someone being accused of witchcraft?
6. Why does Marion Gibson describe Monty Summers and Nellie Duncan as 'great characters'?
7. Why are people in some parts of the world still accused of being witches or demon-worshippers?
8. What comparisons does Gibson make between disasters of the past and those of modern times?

D – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense, or change from singular to plural.)

1. How can sensible people believe in _____? Nobody can see into the future!
2. I don't like that designer's clothes. The colours are too bright and the styles are too _____.
3. Farmers are afraid the heavy hail storms we had in spring will ruin the cherry _____ this year.
4. Marie never _____ with her mother-in-law. They had totally different mentalities.
5. Somebody stole our bikes from the garden. We never discovered who the _____ was.
6. During the murder trial, the _____ was full of reporters from all over the world.

E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test? (Reading and Use of English, Part 1)

Read the text and decide which word in brackets best fits each gap.

In the late 16th century, in the little village of St Osyth in Essex, an accusation of witchcraft was brought ¹_____ (over/against/to/across) fourteen women. Ten of these were also accused of using magic to murder people, a charge which carried the ²_____ (dead/dying/die/death) penalty.

From surviving records of the trial, it seems that the situation ³_____ (had/was/is/has) been brought about by local quarrels and vendettas. The first person to be arrested was a local woman called Ursula Kempe, who was said to be ⁴_____ (capable/able/used/good) to heal people and remove evil spells. Kempe had cured a young boy of illness but the boy's mother had not allowed her to look ⁵_____ (over/out/for/after) his baby sister. When the baby ⁶_____ (was dead/died/is dead/has died) after falling out of her cot, and the mother became unwell, the family accused Kempe of witchcraft. Kempe was promised clemency if she named other witches. These were called to court and, in ⁷_____ (turn/reverse/accordance/alarm), named others.

In the end, only Ursula Kempe and her friend Elizabeth Bennet were executed. Their skeletons were found in St Osyth in 1921. Both of them had iron rivets in their knees and elbows to stop them ⁸_____ (raising/to raise/to rise/rising) from their graves.

F – Talk about it

In pairs or groups.

1. Have any witch trials ever taken place in your country?
2. If so, when?/where? What was the outcome?
3. Have there been any other forms of persecution in your country over the centuries?
4. If so, what forms? (Religious? Political? Racial? Sexual orientation? Disability or disease?)
5. Do any of these still exist, in your opinion?

Answers: Witchcraft (C1)

B – Listen and answer

1. F – She claims many people believe there are good and bad forces shaping our lives and fortunes.
2. T
3. F – She focuses on both, but primarily on the people accused of witchcraft.
4. F – It went from the second half of the 15th century to 1692.
5. T
6. F – He was interested in demons and believed in vampires, werewolves and witches.
7. T
8. F – She says they fought back.
9. F – She says we don't seem to be moving towards more tolerance and understanding, but rather in the opposite direction.
10. F – She says we've got to pay attention to it.

C – Read and answer

1. The evidence is the abundance of films, TV series and books on the subject.
2. It's strange because in many parts of the world spells and curses have long ceased to be seen as a serious threat.
3. To counteract negative forces and keep themselves safe.
4. She learned about the religious and political motivations behind many of the witch hunts and the ordinariness of the people accused of witchcraft.
5. You could be accused of witchcraft after having a cross word with a neighbour or for being assertive or being seen to cause a problem.
6. She thinks Monty Summers was a fascinating figure who had the courage to be open about his sexuality and she thinks Nellie Duncan may have helped many heartbroken people who had lost loved ones during World War Two.
7. Because there is still the impulse to find some demonic culprit to blame for the more complex problems of society.
8. She talks of past disasters like the Little Ice Age, which ruined harvests and caused panic and dislocation, and the bubonic plague and other diseases, which killed millions of people. She compares these with more recent disasters linked to global warming, the Covid pandemic, the resulting conspiracy theories and the polarisation of politics, and finds that our modern times are quite similar to the period of the witch hunts.

D – Learn it! Use it!

1. fortune tellers
2. flamboyant
3. harvest
4. got along
5. culprit
6. courtroom

E – Ready for the C1 ADVANCED English Test?

1. against
2. death
3. had
4. able
5. after
6. died
7. turn
8. rising