



# Witches, Beliefs & the Supernatural

A single lesson, cross-curriculum Curiosity Pack for Year 8

## At a Glance

**Topic:** Beliefs, Fear & Society

**Age Level:** Year 8

**Session Length:** 45–60 minutes

Pathfinders will:

- investigate why people believed in witches and supernatural forces
- explore how people explained the unknown before modern science
- examine fear, rumours, and social influence
- compare historical beliefs with modern explanations
- identify how beliefs can influence behaviour and decision-making
- create a Beliefs Investigation Project

## Lesson Overview

This Curiosity Pack introduces Pathfinders to the idea that beliefs influence how people understand the world and make decisions.

Learners investigate why people in the past believed in witches, magic, and supernatural forces. They explore how fear, religion, culture, and limited scientific knowledge shaped the way people explained illness, disasters, unusual behaviour, and other events they did not understand.

Pathfinders examine examples from medieval society and witch trials while considering how communities responded to uncertainty and fear. They compare historical explanations with modern scientific understandings and investigate how beliefs can influence behaviour, decisions, and social attitudes.

The lesson combines history, sociology, science, literacy, critical thinking, and inquiry learning through investigation, comparison, analysis, and project creation.

This learning experience supports:

- observation and questioning
- historical understanding
- critical and creative thinking
- comparison and analysis
- scientific reasoning
- communication and discussion
- inquiry and investigation skills



The lesson is designed using inclusive learning principles, supporting diverse learning needs through:

- self-paced learning
- visual supports
- flexible activity choices
- hands-on exploration
- multiple ways to show learning

## **Session Length**

**Total learning time:** 45–60 minutes

Pathfinders may:

- ✓ complete the lesson in one session
- ✓ pause and return later
- ✓ spend longer on favourite activities
- ✓ simplify or extend the task

## **Learning Focus**

This Curiosity Pack explores:

- beliefs and superstition
- witches and witch trials
- medieval society
- fear and rumours
- science and evidence
- social influence and behaviour
- historical investigation

Learners will:

- ✓ investigate why people believed in witches
- ✓ identify factors that influenced historical beliefs
- ✓ compare historical and scientific explanations
- ✓ explore how fear and rumours affect communities
- ✓ organise ideas visually
- ✓ communicate discoveries through drawing, writing, discussion, or design
- ✓ create a Beliefs Investigation Project

## **Success Looks Like**

Success may look different for each Pathfinder.

Examples may include:

- ✓ identifying reasons people believed in witches



- ✓ explaining how fear influenced communities
- ✓ recording observations about historical beliefs
- ✓ comparing past and present explanations
- ✓ creating a timeline, diagram, or chart
- ✓ designing a Beliefs Investigation Project
- ✓ sharing discoveries in a way that works for them

Exploring, noticing, investigating, and creating are all part of success.

## **Materials**

You may want:

- paper or workbook
- pencils and coloured pencils
- ruler
- books or websites about medieval history
- historical pictures or illustrations
- maps or timelines
- sticky notes or index cards
- scissors
- glue

Optional:

- tablet or computer
- printer
- poster paper
- modelling materials
- digital design tools

## **Suggested Learning Resources**

### **Britannica Kids – Witchcraft and History**

<https://kids.britannica.com>

Student-friendly information about historical beliefs, witchcraft, and society.

### **BBC Bitesize – Medieval Life**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>





Articles and videos exploring medieval society, religion, and everyday life.

### **National Geographic Kids – History**



#### **Online Safety Reminder**

When exploring online, remember:

-  Ask an adult first
-  Use trusted learning websites
-  Keep personal information private
-  Tell an adult if something feels wrong

Stay curious and stay safe.

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com>

Images, articles, and videos about historical societies and cultures.

### **Horrible Histories**

<https://www.youtube.com>

Educational videos exploring medieval history and historical beliefs.

### **ABC Education – History and Critical Thinking**

<https://education.abc.net.au>

Resources that support investigation, evidence, and historical understanding.

### **Universal Design for Learning Supports**

This Curiosity Pack supports different ways of learning by providing flexible choices for engagement, learning, and expression.

#### **Multiple ways to engage**

Learners can:

- choose which aspect of beliefs or history to investigate
- focus on one example or compare several examples
- take movement or sensory breaks
- work independently or with support
- connect ideas to history, science, or society interests
- investigate questions that feel interesting to them

#### **Multiple ways to learn**

Learners can:

- read facts and information
- watch short videos
- explore pictures and historical illustrations
- examine timelines and maps
- compare historical and scientific explanations
- discuss discoveries and ideas

#### **Multiple ways to show learning**

Learners can:

- draw and label
- write notes
- create a poster
- build a model
- explain ideas verbally
- create digitally
- make comparison charts or timelines





## Witches, Beliefs & the Supernatural

### **Pathfinder Guide**







Welcome Pathfinder!

Pathfinders explore how people explain the world by investigating beliefs, traditions, stories, and historical events.




For hundreds of years, people tried to understand illness, disasters, unusual behaviour, and events they could not explain. Before modern science, many communities used religion, superstition, folklore, and beliefs about magic to make sense of the unknown.

These beliefs influenced the way people lived, the decisions they made, and sometimes the way they treated others. Looking closely at these ideas can help Pathfinders understand how beliefs shape societies and why people sometimes fear things they do not fully understand.

During this Pathfinder Journey, Pathfinders may:

-  explore beliefs about witches and magic
-  investigate witch trials and accusations
-  examine medieval society
-  think about fear, rumours, and the unknown
-  explore how beliefs influenced decisions
-  create a Witches Investigation Project


Ideas may be shown in many ways:

-  drawing
-  writing notes
-  creating charts



 designing

 creating digitally

 explaining ideas aloud

Activities may be completed in order or Pathfinders may begin with the part that feels most interesting.

Taking breaks, noticing patterns, asking questions, and making discoveries are all part of the Pathfinder Journey.

## **Pathfinder Investigation**


Pathfinders sometimes notice that beliefs can become powerful enough to influence how people think and behave.

During the medieval period and beyond, some communities believed that witches could cause illness, bad weather, crop failures, or other problems. These beliefs sometimes led to accusations, trials, and punishments.

Historians study these events to understand why people believed what they did and how fear, culture, religion, and limited scientific knowledge influenced society.

 Some Pathfinders investigate by:

- looking at historical pictures and illustrations
- examining maps and timelines
- reading information about witch trials
- watching short history videos
- comparing different historical accounts
- discussing ideas and discoveries

 Pathfinders may investigate:

- What did people believe about witches?
- Why did people fear witches?
- What was life like during medieval times?
- How did religion influence beliefs?
- Why were some people accused of witchcraft?
- How do historians know what happened?
- How might science explain some of these events today?


 When Pathfinders investigate, they sometimes keep track of what they discover.

Ideas may be recorded by:

- drawing scenes from medieval life
- creating a timeline
- writing notes
- recording interesting facts
- making comparison charts



- creating belief-and-evidence tables

 Some Pathfinders may compare:

- historical beliefs and modern explanations
- different witch trials
- medieval society and modern society
- superstition and science
- facts and rumours

Looking closely at similarities and differences can help Pathfinders understand how beliefs influence people and societies.


## **Pathfinder Studio**

Pathfinders now bring their discoveries together.

Historians, researchers, and writers often use timelines, diagrams, displays, and visual explanations to communicate what they have learned.


In this activity, Pathfinders may create something that shows what they discovered about witches, beliefs, and medieval society.


Some Pathfinders choose to focus on:

 beliefs about witches

 a witch trial

 medieval society

 accusations and justice

 fear and rumours


 science and explanation


Or another idea that interests them.

 Before creating, Pathfinders may think about:

- What was the most interesting idea?
- What did people believe?
- Why did they believe it?
- What evidence exists today?
- How can these ideas be shown clearly?

You may create:

 a poster

 a fact page

 a timeline

 a comparison chart


 a model

 a digital design



 a mini booklet


You may include:


 beliefs


 historical events

 explanations

 comparisons

 maps

 timelines

 interesting facts


As you create, you may notice new connections between beliefs, fear, history, and society.

There is no single correct way to create.


Different Pathfinders may choose different ways to share their discoveries.


## **Reflection**

How did this Curiosity Pack feel?

 Loved it

 Interesting

 Okay

 Challenging

Pathfinders may think about:

- What was the most interesting thing you discovered?
- Why did people believe in witches?
- What surprised you about medieval society?
- How did fear influence people's decisions?
- What would you like to learn more about?
- Which activity did you enjoy most?

You may reflect by:

- talking
- drawing
- writing
- building
- recording a short explanation

