2.6 16th-Century Society and Politics

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 24 marks**

KEY WORDS witchcraft • witch hunt • enclosure • household • convent • popular culture

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **society** in the 16th and early 17th centuries: the family, the role of women, rural and urban life, popular culture, and the **witch hunts**.

You must be able to:

- explain how the Reformation changed family life and the role of women
- explain how economic change affected rural and urban people
- explain the causes of the witch hunts

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

Family and women

change	detail
marriage	Protestants allowed clergy to marry (Luther married Katharina von Bora, 1525); the household became a model of a godly community
women's roles	women were to be obedient wives and mothers; Protestants closed convents, which removed one path for women outside marriage
education	Protestants wanted all to read the Bible, so literacy rose for boys and some girls

Rural and urban life

	detail
prices	the price revolution hurt wage workers; real wages fell (Unit 1.10)
land	**enclosure** in England: landowners fenced common land for sheep, pushing out poor tenants
towns	guilds controlled trades; poor relief and new laws against beggars
popular culture	festivals such as Carnival; reformers (Catholic and Protestant) tried to stop drinking, gambling and "superstition"

Witch hunts (about 1580–1630)

About 40,000–60,000 people were executed for **witchcraft** in Europe from about 1450 to 1750 (estimates); about 75–80% were women, often old, poor or widowed. Most trials took place in the Holy Roman Empire, where courts were local and weak.

Causes: religious conflict and fear of the devil; bad harvests and disease (the "Little Ice Age"); local quarrels; legal changes that allowed torture.

Answer shapes: link a change to one group (women, peasants, the urban poor) and say whether it helped or harmed them.

2 Practice

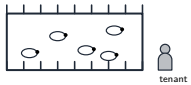
2.1 Identify two ways the Reformation changed the lives of women. [2]



2.2 Explain why most people accused of witchcraft were women. [3]



2.3 Explain how enclosure affected poor families in rural England. [3]



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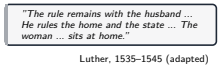
3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Read the source.

> "The rule remains with the husband, and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command. He rules the home and the state, wages war, defends his possessions ... The woman, on the other hand, is like a nail driven into the wall. She sits at home."

Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, 1535–1545 (adapted)

(a) Identify the role Luther gives to women. [1]



(b) Explain why Luther saw the household as so important. [1]

(c) Explain one reason a historian could not use this source alone to show what women's lives were really like. [1]

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3.2 The chart shows the average number of witchcraft executions per decade in Europe in five periods (a schematic based on historians' estimates).

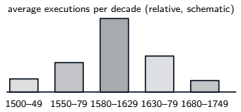
(a) Identify the period when executions peaked. [1]

(b) Explain one reason witch trials were most common in the Holy Roman Empire. [2]

(c) Explain how religious conflict contributed to the witch hunts. [2]

(d) Explain how economic hardship contributed to the witch hunts. [2]

(e) Explain why witch trials declined after about 1650. [3]



(f) Explain how far the Reformation improved the lives of ordinary people. [3]