

# Crime and Punishment in Puritan England

As you now know Puritans were extreme Protestants who had very strong religious beliefs.

They believed that you would only get to Heaven if you led a very simple life, in which you worked hard and went to church regularly. It was their belief that if you did not live like this, and you involved yourself in gambling or entertainment for example, you were committing a crime because you would end up in Hell rather than Heaven. Therefore Puritan courts were very strict with those people who broke Puritan laws.

Some crimes were punishable by death, including witchcraft, murder and treason, while others crimes were usually punished by whipping, prison, fines or time in the stocks, where your arms and hands were pinned down (sometimes people threw old fruit at you)

## Role Play

The following people have committed crimes and are to be tried in a Puritan Court. You need to read what they have done and fill in the table:

### **Mr White**

A neighbour was on his way to Church last Sunday and saw Mr White working on his fields. He was using his horse to collect his most recent harvest for sale at the local market

### **Mr Smith**

The local taverns (pubs) have recently been closed but he was caught playing cards with another local. They were openly seen playing for money.

### **Mrs Harris**

For the last few Sunday's she has been seen sleeping in bed till late, and has not been to the church for 2 weeks. Her friends know that she is not unwell but they do not know why she has not been to Church.

### **Mrs Martin**

The other day Mrs Martin was seen on her way into town, going to the market. She was spotted wearing make-up and she had on bright earrings

### **Master Thomas**

Last Sunday young Thomas was spotted playing football in the fields behind the church by a friend of his father. This is the second time he has been seen playing football around the village.

### **Mr Greenbank**

While working on his farm one of his friends heard Mr Greenbank shout 'Lord have Mercy' when he dropped his spade onto the floor.