

MYTHS AND MAGIC

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Fairies, magic, witches, spells, and prophecies (utterances that foretell the future) all formed part of the Elizabethan view of life. Folklore and superstition were often as important to people as the official religious beliefs taught by the Church.

Many Elizabethans thought that fairies, goblins, and sprites came out at night to play tricks on innocent people. It was believed they could make people go insane, give them terrible nightmares, or even lure them into a devilish underworld.

Diseases and disasters were often blamed on witches. Many women who didn't fit into society were branded as witches and accused of working for the devil. Astrology -- the belief that the position and movement of the stars can foretell and influence events on Earth -- was more important than it is today. Respected astrologers could have great influence over people's lives. The astrologer John Dee was said to influence Elizabeth I.