**Spartacus Educational Classroom Activity**

# [**Execution of Margaret Cheyney**](http://spartacus-educational.com/ExTEU14.htm) **(Questions & Answers)**

<http://spartacus-educational.com/ExAnTEU14.htm>

This commentary is based on the classroom activity: [Execution of Margaret Cheyney](http://spartacus-educational.com/ExTEU14.htm)

**Q1**: The main events of the [Pilgrimage of Grace](http://spartacus-educational.com/TUDpilgrimgrace.htm) took place during the final months of 1535. Study source 2 and explain why some historians believe [Margaret Cheyney](http://spartacus-educational.com/Margaret_Cheyney.htm) did not play an important role in the Pilgrimage of Grace?

**A1**: Margaret Cheyney gave birth to a child in January 1536. This means she was heavily pregnant during the Pilgrimage of Grace and therefore it is highly unlikely that she was involved in these demonstrations.

**Q2**: Margaret Cheyney and her partner, [John Bulmer](http://spartacus-educational.com/John_Bulmer.htm), both pleaded guilty to the treason charge. Does this mean that they were both guilty of this charge? It will help you to read source 3.

**A2**: [Geoffrey Moorhouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoffrey_Moorhouse), the author of [The Pilgrimage of Grace](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Pilgrimage-Grace-Rebellion-Shook-Throne/dp/0297643932/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1421773673&sr=1-1&keywords=The+Pilgrimage+of+Grace) (2002) suggests that both Cheyney and Bulmer were tortured in order to get them to confess to the crime. At the start of their trial they pleaded not guilty. However, they changed their plea to guilty while the jury was considering its verdict. Moorhouse believes it is possible "that they did so because they had been promised the King's mercy if they admitted their guilt".

**Q3**: Read source 4. Why did [Henry VIII](http://spartacus-educational.com/TUDhenry8.htm) not order the execution of all the leaders of the Pilgrimage of Grace?

**A3**: [Jasper Ridley](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1466429/Jasper-Ridley.html), the author of [*Henry VIII*](http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Jasper%20Ridley%2C%20Henry%20VIII) (1984) points out that "nearly all the noblemen and gentlemen of Yorkshire had joined the Pilgrimage of Grace" and that Henry VIII "could not execute them all". He therefore had to select a few men to serve as examples and the rest were "forgiven and restored to office and favour". The men chosen to be executed had been given a pardon for their offences in December 1535. Therefore, they had to "be executed on framed-up charges of having committed fresh acts of rebellion after the general pardon".

**Q4**: Can you find the mistake made by the author of source 5.

**A4**: [John Bellamy](https://carleton.ca/history/people/john-g-bellamy/), the author of source 5, that there was not a "single instance when a woman was burned for high treason". However, the authors of sources 3 and 7 point out that Margaret Cheyney was burnt at the stake for high treason.

**Q5**: What was the punishment imposed on those involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace? Why was Margaret Cheyney not punished in this way?

**A5**: Source 6 describes the traditional punishment for high treason: "You are to be drawn upon a hurdle to the place of execution, and there you are to be hanged by the neck, and being alive cut down, and your privy-members to be cut off, and your bowels to be taken out of your belly and there burned, you being alive; and your head to be cut off, and your body to be divided into four quarters, and that your head and quarters to be disposed of where his majesty shall think fit."

[Francis Elizabeth Dolan](http://english.ucdavis.edu/people/directory/fdolan) in source 8 points out that "although non-noble women could be whipped or hanged... no women of any class were ever disembowelled and quartered, or hanged in chains". She adds that the main reason for this was the sexual element of the punishment. [Sharon L. Jansen](http://sharonljansen.com/), the author of[*Dangerous Talk and Strange Behaviour*: Women and Popular Resistance to the Reforms of Henry VIII](http://www.amazon.co.uk/Dangerous-Talk-Strange-Behavior-Resistance/dp/0312160909/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1428485933&sr=1-4&keywords=Sharon+L.+Jansen) (1996) explains that Margaret Cheyney was "burned alive at the stake" instead of being "hanged, drawn and quartered".

**Q6:** Why did Henry VIII insist that Margaret Cheyney should be executed for her involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace?

**A6**: After studying the evidence available, [Madeleine Dodds](http://www.sclews.me.uk/m-dodds.html) and [Ruth Dodds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruth_Dodds), the authors of [The Pilgrimage of Grace](http://www.amazon.co.uk/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias=stripbooks&field-keywords=Madeleine+Dodds+and+Ruth+Dodds,+The+Pilgrimage+of+Grace&rh=n%3A266239,k%3AMadeleine+Dodds+and+Ruth+Dodds%5Cc+The+Pilgrimage+of+Grace) (1915) have argued that Margaret Cheyney had "committed no overt act of treason". She was only guilty of keeping her "husband's secrets" and trying "to save his life". The sisters believe that her execution was "intended as an example to others". Henry VIII wanted to send a message to the men and women of Tudor England: "There can be no doubt that many women were ardent supporters of the Pilgrimage.... Lady Bulmer's execution... was an object-lesson to husbands... to teach them to distrust their wives."