**Year of Wonders**: Chapter 12: **The Press of Their Ghosts** – Questions & Notes
This is an important chapter – lots happens, and a lot of the key themes and ideas are developed.

1. Download and read ‘Chapter 12 Analysis.pdf’ and then write ‘Done’. **Done.**
2. How is Anna able to ‘get over’ her father’s death? **Drawing on Elinor as support to stop the pain, she eventually is able to reflect that yes, she was in some ways guilty for his death, but considering the pain he inflicted on her ‘for the manner of my life’ (the way he raised her), meant she was able to balance her guilt.**

Extension 1: What do we learn about her father, and how does this change our sympathies towards him? **That he had a horrible life, with bad childhood that led to him spending time in the navy as a young man (which would have been horrific; most likely abused).**

Extension 2: **Why** do you think Brooks has bothered to include these extra details about her father’s life? **To reinforce the idea that there are (nearly always) reasons for people’s behaviour, and that while it’s easy to blame the person, there is often a deeper underlying ‘reason’ for why people are the way they are (which is not to say that people don’t have a choice in how they choose to act!).**
3. How does Anna change and become more assertive during this chapter?
Start a dot-point list and add to it as you read/listen/study this chapter.
* **Forgives herself for her role in her father’s death.**
* **Starting to doubt god (assertive thinking)**
*
* **Smashes the Mompellions’ dishes;**
1. As you read/listen/study this chapter, take some dot-point notes for **each** of the following:

a) What practical/physical impacts is the plague having on the village:
* **Rise in superstition and people exploiting it (Anys’ ghost – Aphra)**
* **Deaths of farmers and tradesmen means basic services (trades) and food (farmers) are suddenly an issue.**

b) What emotional/human impacts is the plague having on the village:

* **Fear and superstition: people starting to doubt their neighbours; people willing to not only believe in ghosts but buy protective charms and potions from them…**
* **weird behaviour emerges; John Gordon who becomes a penitent flagellant who whips himself in order to be more like Jesus and therefore hope to please God.**
* **Gordon sees the plague as a punishment from God rather than a Test of Love (makes more sense to me).**
* **The young lass (Jane Gordon) starts giving it away very freely (not in a healthy, empowered way).**

1. **Key Comparison:** compare how **Aphra Bont** uses fear and superstition to manipulate and ‘extort’ the local population for her own ends, versus how **Abigail Williams** manipulates the Salem villagers’ fears and superstitions for her own personal ends.

Discuss in terms of similarities and differences. *This could be good SAC material.*

Ultimately, for whom do we feel more sympathy? (if any for either?)

Use language of comparison: *on one hand, in text A, while for text a…, for text B…, similarly, whereas, however, on the other hand, dissimilarly, differently, contrastingly, etc.*

Extension: what ideas are being communicated about fear and superstition? Are they ultimately similar, the same, or different?

**No answer.**

**Key idea/questions**: The Puritan John Gordon’s insistence that the plague has been sent as a curse from God, versus Mompellion’s belief that the curse was sent as a test of love, raises some interesting questions about the nature of God. To what extent does God interfere in the lives of humans? To what extent is God responsible for natural disasters? Should God be blamed for people’s misfortune? People certainly thank God for their good fortune…

**Also, interestingly, this *could* be interpreted as a criticism of Christianity, or any religion that seeks to interpret the will of God** (or was Brooks just criticising how it worked in Eyam in 1666?)

1. A) What change in thought does Anna have regarding the plague and ‘why it is here (there)’?
(it happens after she bumps her foot on a rock). What does she now believe/consider?

**That the plague is a part of nature and God has no part to play in *why* it is here.**

B) How are Anna’s views subversive (undermining) to the society at the time?

**Because it challenges the fundamental nature of how people understood God – i.e. an all knowing God who sits in judgement of humankind, playing with our lives and judging us on our behaviour, keeping a tally to see if “He” likes us enough to let us into His secret society of the privileged and elite, once we die. And sending us famines and plagues and floods to Test us.**

Extension 3: do *you* think Brooks is communicating her own concerns about religion, here?

**Yes, absolutely.**
Extension 4: what do you think she is communicating? **Various concerns about the ways that (17th century) Christianity limited the development of humanity.**

Extension 5: do some research on Brooks and her own religious views, and use this to inform your answer. *I kinda did.*

1. Why does Anna smash the Mompellions’ dishes? What does this reveal about her? (p.229)

**She’s at a Greek wedding and ready to par-tay.**

**Or, because she feels jealous of the Mompellions – but of which one? Or of both? Or just of their love?**