

Learning with a Gen-AI Tool Transcript

Presented by Dr. Bjorn Mercer, Department Chair in the School of Arts, Humanities, and Education

Hello and welcome to this informative video about learning with a Gen-AI tool. My name is Dr. Bjorn Mercer, a Department Chair in the School of Arts, Humanities, and Education. This video specifically discusses using a Gen-AI tool to help with the learning process. Learning something is extraordinarily difficult; it's not just about reading an article and instantly remembering everything. Some people can do that, but most cannot. I know I can't. Think of learning a language, like Spanish. It will take me years, not just days, weeks, or months, of slowly learning Spanish until one day it starts working. Even then, I would probably have to go to a Spanish-speaking country like Mexico, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Venezuela, or Argentina to truly learn the language. Learning can be very challenging.

This video goes over one way in which you can use Copilot to help you learn. The first thing we need, of course, is Copilot. Here we have Copilot. Go to your version of Copilot. I have a book here, "An Unusual Inquisition: Translated Documents from Heinrichus Inquisitoris Witch Hunts in Ravensburg and Innsbruck." This book is specifically about a trial that happened in Innsbruck around 1486. If I'm looking at this book, I know it's about witches or a witch trial. If I have gaps in knowledge, I start reading and the first thing it mentions is the "Malleus Maleficarum." I might wonder, "What is the Malleus Maleficarum?" I copy the term and go to Copilot, asking it to tell me more about the Malleus Maleficarum.

Copilot provides a lot of information. The Malleus Maleficarum, often translated as "The Hammer of Witches," is a notorious treatise on witchcraft written by Heinrich Kramer, a German clergyman, in 1486. It was published in Speyer, Germany. Copilot goes over the key points, purpose and content, parts 1, 2, and 3, impact and influence, controversy and criticism, and historical context. It also provides sources, such as Wikipedia and another source. Remember, Wikipedia is not the best source, but a lot of what is on Wikipedia is accurate. You should double-check the sources.

In this book, the Malleus Maleficarum is one of the best treatises on witchcraft from the early modern period, published around 1486. What does this have to do with "An Unusual Inquisition"? There were people being accused of witchcraft, which was a problem for many, especially women, who were often accused and killed because of this. You can look up the numbers, but many people were executed, burned at the stake, because they were accused of being witches.

Next, we read about the life of the inquisitors, specifically Heinrich Kramer. I might wonder, "Who is Heinrich Kramer?" I go back to Copilot and ask, "Who was Heinrich Kramer?" Copilot tells me Heinrich Kramer, also known as Heinrich Inquisitor, was a German Dominican friar who wrote the Malleus Maleficarum. He joined the Dominican order, studied philosophy, and had a career as an inquisitor starting in 1479. His most notable involvement in witch trials occurred in Innsbruck. After the trial at Innsbruck didn't go the way he wanted, he wrote the Malleus Maleficarum, which influenced people for a long time. His legacy is complex, remembered for his fervent religious dedication and the fear and suffering his actions caused.

I might then ask, "What were the methods of an inquisitor?" or "How did the influence of the church affect witchcraft?" Copilot suggests interesting follow-up questions. I ask, "What was an inquisitor in relation to witches in the 15th century?" Copilot explains that an inquisitor was a church official appointed to investigate and combat heresy, including witchcraft. The role evolved from the medieval Inquisition, initially established to address heretical movements like the Cathars and Waldensians. Copilot provides information on authority, appointment procedures, collaboration, and focus on witchcraft.

We start learning about one thing and then another, deepening our knowledge. For example, heresy was viewed as a serious issue by the Catholic Church, and witchcraft was often seen as heresy. The wonderful religious freedom we have today did not always exist. In the 15th and 16th centuries, many original faiths in Europe, like Norse religions and Celtic practices, were dying off, and their remnants were viewed as heresy or witchcraft.

We continue exploring the book, learning about Heinrich Kramer, the Dominican order, and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III. I might ask, "Who was Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III?" Copilot searches and provides information. Frederick III was Holy Roman Emperor from 1452 to 1493, born in Innsbruck. The capital of the Holy Roman Empire changed from place to place, but Innsbruck was one of them.

This video provides a quick overview of how you can use Copilot to aid in the learning process. It's an iterative, back-and-forth process that requires time. Learning with a Gen-AI tool like Copilot can help you fill gaps in knowledge, deepen your understanding, and enhance your learning experience.

Thank you for watching. My name is Dr. Bjorn Mercer.