



The History of Witchcraft

Lois Martin

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Witchcraft has recently been undergoing a huge popular revival, but does modern pagan witchcraft really bear any resemblance to its historical antecedents? The witch in history was a very different creature from her modern counterpart, and this book sets out to explore the historical background to the European witchcraft phenomenon. It examines in detail the growth of the ideological, cultural and legal concepts that eventually led to the carnage of the Witch Craze in the 16th and 17th centuries, which, it is estimated, may have claimed the lives of around 40,000 people. For both Medieval and Reformation scholars alike the Devil and all his works were a very real threat. Their conviction that witches were the servants of Satan led to the formation of perhaps one of the greatest conspiracy theories of all time: a belief that witches were working in league with the Devil in a diabolical plot against all Christendom. Witches were transformed from poor deluded old women who rode out at night with the pagan goddess Diana into devil-worshipping heretics who became the focus of a centuries-long, Europe-wide campaign determined to seek out and destroy this evil wherever it was to be found, regardless of whether any of its victims were actually guilty or not.

The History of Witchcraft Details

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From Reader Review The History of Witchcraft for online ebook

B. Barron says

Not bad.

A little simplistic, but it is a short book.

Plateresca says

Lots of interesting facts cleverly packed into a short book. The audio version is narrated in a cute accent, too.

Rosie says

An interesting quick read, giving an overview of the history of the idea of witchcraft in England and Western Europe. The development of how the ideas we have today on the subject, were gradually formed, from many disparate pieces of old folklore and pagan belief, as well as the Christian Church itself molding and changing many aspects of it themselves.

It's interesting how the Church, in many ways, created their own version of witchcraft to give themselves something to persecute.

It's often a brutal, ugly, terrible affair. Filled with centuries of horror, torment and brutality. It's hard understanding beliefs which many people and myself today find almost impossible to take seriously. I also see reflections of it in many different ways, in particular how people continue to twist things that are either harmless in themselves, or inconveniant facts for others into things they are not, to suit the purposes of organisations and individuals.

I can see how the thinking is still part of humanity.

Amanda Sweden says

Very informative, though grammatical errors made it difficult at times to properly comprehend.

G. Lawrence says

A short, but informative introduction to the history of witchcraft. Does what it says on the tin really. Some criticise the writing as poor, but I enjoyed this. Not an in depth guide, but a sturdy introduction

Spencer Fancutt says

Charts the development of witchcraft through the centuries and the primary elements of the witch folklore as it emerged and grew. Written with a non-historian reader in mind, it is nonetheless as dry as old toast. Lots of great background here if you are already super-interested in the topic, but I can't see it winning any new converts to the field. A reference text that reminded me of my high school experience in its introduction of historical information.

Melanie Rippon says

OK as a very brief intro to the medieval/Renaissance ideas on witchcraft, how they evolved, the consequences in terms of trials, witch-hunts etc. Could have done with some sort of epilogue/afterword detailing the repeal of anti-witchcraft laws, the book ends rather abruptly so feels a little unfinished. Does have a list for further reading for anyone wanting to dig deeper into specific parts of history.

Adel Fulcher says

A plethora of information for a quick read. Some toe curling re counts of the trials and overall very interesting.

Bianca says

Pretty basic overview of the history of witchcraft, mostly through Europe. The plain language made it easy to read and didn't have any assumed knowledge. Enjoyable but not groundbreaking.

Patricia says

Una lectura muy sencilla y amena. Me habría gustado que se parase más a describir algunos casos de brujería en Europa, pero siendo un libro tan fino, no puedo pedir más ^^

Oana Birtea says

Interesting subject but excruciatingly boring read.

Madeleine says

I LOVED this book! So so interesting, I couldn't put it down. I read the majority of this on the subway to and

from The Loose Moose. I couldn't help my jaw from dropping while reading this in public. This book has definitely encouraged me to read further on the history of witchcraft. It was so interesting to see how this history has shaped the portrayal of witches, the Devil and witchcraft in cinema. Would love to write an essay on The Witch (2015) and its use of lore and historical fragments from witch trials of New England.

Emily says

A super short fun read that is obviously well written and well researched, I'm seriously considering buying a copy of my own and I plan on checking out her other book!

Claire Biggs says

This is great if you want the basic information on Witchcraft, great for a quick read too

Coaldust says

A very brief history, but serves very well as a non religious overview on the origins of the witch hunt phenomenon and the main social and political driving forces behind it.
