



Witch Week

Diana Wynne Jones

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There are good witches and bad witches, but the law says that all witches must be burned at the stake. So when an anonymous note warns, "Someone in this class is a witch," the students in 6B are nervous -- especially the boy who's just discovered that he can cast spells and the girl who was named after the most famous witch of all.

Witch Week features the debonair enchanter Chrestomanci, who also appears in *Charmed Life*, *The Magicians of Caprona*, and *The Lives of Christopher Chant*.

Someone in the class is a witch. At least so the anonymous note says. Everyone is only too eager to prove it is someone else -- because in this society, witches are burned at the stake.

Witch Week Details

Date : Published April 1st 2001 by Greenwillow Books (first published 1982)

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Author : Diana Wynne Jones

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Sara says

It all started when I tried to read a book about Palestine and it was entirely too dry for the exhausted state I'm in (I teach - nuff said) so I pulled this from my shelf. Diana Wynne Jones is 'that' author for me. She's the one I crawl to whenever I need a comfort read and Witch Week was no different. She throws you right into the action in class 6B where someone is accused of being a witch.. a dangerous accusation in a world where they burn witches and those suspected of being a witch. All the kids in Larwood orphanage are witch orphans so they suspect each other, yet which among them is a witch? DWJ does an excellent job of creating her characters as they are all flawed in some way and as you read this or any other of her other Chrestomanci series books, you can't help but notice the uncanny parallels with Harry Potter, almost to the point where you could easily claim that JK Rowling pulled a majority of her stuff from DWJ. I'm so sad that DWJ passed away earlier this year... her positive impact on both the genre of children's fantasy literature and my own life is indisputable.

Ayu Palar says

Dunia dalam 'Witch Week' adalah salah satu dari beberapa dunia yang muncul dalam serial Chrestomanci. Namun, berbeda dari buku-buku sebelumnya, di dalam 'Witch Week' menjadi penyihir adalah sebuah aib. Menjadi penyihir adalah menjadi liyan, maka identitas tersebut harus disembunyikan. Siapa pun yang ketahuan sebagai penyihir bisa jadi akan dihukum mati dengan cara dibakar. Maka, ketika secarik kertas memberitahu bahwa salah satu anak di kelas 2Y adalah seorang penyihir, kepanikan muncul. Siapa yang menulis pesan tersebut? Siapa penyihir yang dimaksud? Charles, si kacamata dengan tatapan setan, atau Nan, gadis gemuk yang tak populer?

'Witch Week' tidak melulu bercerita tentang penyihir dan segala keajaiban mantranya. Novel ini juga mengeksplorasi kehidupan dan intrik dalam sekolah asrama. Tentang betapa tak enaknya dihina karena mempunyai nama yang aneh, atau terus menerus dipukul karena ayahmu adalah seorang guru di sekolah. Ya, pengalaman bersosialisasi dan mencari serta memahami identitas diri di sekolah inilah yang menjadi bagian yang maknawi dalam 'Witch Week'. Dan seperti dalam kehidupan nyata, jangan remehkan mereka yang kita anggap 'culun'. Bisa jadi mereka mempunyai kekuatan yang tak terkira.

Lia says

RATING: 3.5/5

I got impatient waiting for my copy of Charmed Life to be delivered so I started my re-read of the Chrestomanci series with Witch Week instead. I did have to ransack my brain from my primary school days to remember the foundations of this universe and how it works, but the book did a decent job in reminding me.

The story is set in a universe much like our own, except there are witches aplenty in this world (and a witch

just means anyone who can do magic, regardless of gender). And of course, magic is illegal and they get burnt. The book is set at Larwood, a boarding school, and begins with one of the best opening lines ever that immediately catches your attention and raises the stakes - *"The note said: SOMEONE IN THIS CLASS IS A WITCH."*

I think the fascinating thing reading this book was how apparent that a lot of the basis for Harry Potter, especially the first book, was probably inspired by this book - but I think that's the most extent as I would go comparing the two. I think this was also where the stereotypical view of British boarding schools became formed in my mind as well.

What lets this book down slightly is the fact that a lot of the characters are unpleasant human beings. Charles and Brian are a bit insufferable to read towards the end, and Nan thankfully is a nice reprieve from the two boys. Characters like Miss Hodge are just ghastly, and it really drives that mental image of 'boarding schools are bad!!!' into my mind. It certainly has a darker tone compared to a lot of her other books as well. It has been a while since I have read the rest of the Chrestomanci series so I could be wrong, but I don't remember it being quite this overtly upsetting to read, as the children in the story could all potentially be burnt at the stake.

Of course, this is not to say I disliked the book. DWJ is still masterful with her control of language, and her very stark depiction of the setting and the characters paint such vivid pictures in a way that no other author can. Less charming perhaps than her other books, but still a very satisfying read.

Rasha | ??? says

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??? ?????? 100%.

Beth says

Clever, but boring: an odd combination.

Juushika says

A boarding school class falls into chaos when a student is accused of being a witch. Wynne has a great eye for small details and large consequences. The characterization is humane, critical, and innately humorous; the interaction between magics and the mundane is creative and, again, quite funny--a necessary balance against the darker setting and social dynamics. It's the end with which I argue. The meta-narrative concept

remains compelling, and the climax has good logic and scale, but the trend *away* from magic isn't emotionally satisfying to an audience that 1) is probably here for the magic and 2) may be of the age or mindframe to project onto characters who are discovering and forgiving their own magical tendencies. I liked this a lot; I still didn't love it as much as *Charmed Life*, but it came closer. I think I'd enjoy it more upon reread.

Lara Mi says

“It never ceases to amaze me the way people always manage to worry about the wrong things.”

Larwood House faces turbulent times when an anonymous note claims there is a witch in class! In a world where magic is forbidden and witches are burnt, no one wants to be found out. Curious things start to happen and students and teachers alike begin to mistrust each other. If things continue to go wrong, the Inquisitor will come and put an end to it and whoever is behind the witchcraft.

I am glad that I am reading the **Chrestomanci** series in the order that **Diana Wynne Jones** suggested as **Witch Week** might have put me off from reading the rest. I didn't like **Charmed Life** as much but **The Lives of Christopher Chant** and **Conrad's Fate** made me love this series - I absolutely love Christopher's character (which is very likely due to his similarities to Howl). I did not enjoy **Witch Week** nearly as much - and it was one I was looking forward to the most!

I had all kinds of expectations from this book and close to none were met. My biggest problem with **Witch Week** was how unlikeable the majority of the cast was. We have a typical class set-up of those who bully and those who are being bullied. What I could not get my head around was how the bullied ones also thought the others got what they deserve - none of them stuck together and refused to be friends. It was really the lack of friendship and the amount of selfishness that kept me from liking this book any more than I did.

One of the more prominent characters is Nan - she is one of the biggest outcasts in the class and is one of the very few I wouldn't consider selfish. Her parts of the story made the book more enjoyable - especially towards the end when she *does* finally make a friend who I actually found to be the nicest of all the students. Another central character is Charles - I could *not* get myself to like him. There were moments when he seems to be more likeable, but essentially he was incredibly selfish and at times I thought he was simply evil. Brian is another character who I started out feeling sorry for but who also proved to be quite the nasty little devil. Of course, the bullies were nasty but that was the point of it, if only the underdogs would have stuck together it could have made a much nicer read.

Larwood House was dreadful! Once again, had the characters stuck together, this too could have been better. But as it was, it felt like a nasty place with nasty people in it. It didn't help that Christopher (aka Chrestomanci) only showed up for the last of the chapters. Things became more interesting once he got involved but it wasn't enough to change my opinion of this book as a whole. That being said - I *loved* the final chapter. Even the nastiest of bullies got their fair share of a dignified/happy ending. I was happy with the way things turned out for the main cast and an ending like that gave more depth to characters who were otherwise just stereotype bullies. I suppose it just comes to show that in the end, bullies are also just people.

Natalie says

This is the best of the Chrestomanci books. Anyone who says different can FIGHT ME.

Micha says

This was my first DWJ book. I read it because I really liked Harry Potter and was searching for something in a similar vein. I had to be younger than ten at the time. My sister Erin pointed it out to me in the library because the cover of this book had kids riding brooms (or mops, etc.) and I immediately became invested in it. This one is compared to the Potter series the most, because hey, witches in boarding school? But there are a few notable differences.

- 1) All the kids hate each other. There is no Golden Trio bullshit. They're all unhappy and annoyed by everyone else, and it is hilarious.
- 2) This predates Harry by at least a decade.
- 3) Larwood House (likely a spin-off of Jane Eyre's Lowood) is an unhappy place to be. No Great Hall, no cheerful Headmaster.
- 4) Witchcraft is a bad thing here. However, almost all of the students are witches. Isn't THAT a dilemma.

On top of that the plot is just so much more complex, particularly around the end, which is sort of Diana's trademark. Endings you aren't expecting that have more than one level to them, and, I've noticed, she tends to culminate things with very large groups present all talking at once, with this book as no exception.

Oh yes, and Christopher Chant/Chrestomanci? Is still the best ever.

Sophie says

A brilliant classic book. Diana Wynne Jones was a masterful writer - and a lot of fun, too!

mark monday says

Jones continues her delightfully nonchalant Chrestomanci series with Witch Week, set in a boarding school in a dimension very much like our own - except one with magic galore. magic that can get you burned alive. hide, little witches, hide! no one wants to see a child on a pyre.

for a children's book, this is surprisingly grim and tense. the tone is still light, dry, and rather deadpan, but the potential outcome for many of the young characters - and the flashbacks to a particular witch dying by fire - made the novel interestingly intense and unpleasant. and unfortunately, therein lies my issue: this is an

unpleasant book. simple as that. and not only is the central situation depressingly unpleasant, nearly all of the characters are repulsively selfish and unpleasant as well. with the potential of inquisitors visiting the school, the kids - and adults - scramble and blame and plot like vicious little human rodents. quite unpleasant.

but 3 stars means I Liked It and overall I did like this book. its bleak subject matter and dour perspective on life combined with the author's nonchalance and that lightness of tone made for a unique experience. Jones is an unsentimental writer (quite obviously, given this scenario) and she is a highly intelligent writer as well. she does not let fantasy get in the way of her understanding of reality. most kids are not heroic, and the same goes for most adults - and that is certainly the case presented here. people turn on each other and people sell each other out and people are petty and vindictive and unkind. and in a malevolent, small-minded world... kids are mainly malevolent and small-minded. but all of that in a children's book? oh boy. not one that I'd give my nephews and nieces.

I was quite relieved when trans-dimensional supercop and enchanter Chrestomanci finally appears on the scene to save the day. the tension may have disappeared but suddenly the whole experience became a lot more pleasant and endearing. the fun came back along with Chrestomanci.

Deborah O'Carroll says

Read March 2015

Re-read January 2017

CHRESTOMANCIIIIII! <3

Olga Godim says

I think it is too harsh for its intended readers - middle grade. And too didactic for the adults. The usual author's charm is missing from this book as well. Definitely not my favorite.

Bettie? says

Bettie's Books

Buddy says

Unexpectedly brutal. Two stars seems a bit harsh but I don't think I'm the target audience anymore.

First Second Books says

This is the book that made me suspect that English boarding schools are secretly terrible and horrible! Even if they don't (always) have people doing malicious magic in them. But then Year of the Griffin always dissuades me of this opinion.

Melissa McShane says

Witch Week, while not my favorite Chrestomanci novel (I think I've said before that I don't like them as much as other books by Diana Wynne Jones), still charms me in its depiction of a boarding school in alternate-universe England, an England in which witchcraft is illegal and punished by being burned at the stake.

DWJ's fourteenth published novel begins with a typical classroom and a note to the teacher that reads "Someone in this class is a witch." Somewhat atypically, DWJ introduces many characters in this first chapter, and while some are clearly going to be our villains, it's not obvious at first who the hero will be. As time passes, the answer is--all of them. DWJ passes the narrative between these POV characters so smoothly that it's easy to lose track--and I mean this in a good way--of whose head we're in at the time. It turns out that some of the members of class 6B are, in fact, witches, and in the end it takes Chrestomanci to sort out the biggest problem, which is that this reality shouldn't even exist.

My favorite parts of this book are the set pieces, the brilliant little scenes such as all the shoes disappearing and reappearing in a great heap, or Nan's adventures on an overeager broomstick, or (this one really is my favorite) the Simon Says spell which causes everything Simon says to come true. Everything. Even the part where he calls himself stupid. It's magnificent.

As always, DWJ's characterization is perfect, and I noticed in this reading that her description of *places* tends to be minimal where her description of *people* is detailed. There's never any difficulty picturing what her characters are doing, or how they look. I think this is where *Witch Week*, for me, edges out the two earlier Chrestomanci books (*Charmed Life* and *The Magicians of Caprona*) because there are more characters who are fleshed out, even the ancillary ones, than in the other two books. It's an enjoyable read, though I look forward to the next books in my reading project, all of which are in my top five DWJ books of all time.

Shawn Thrasher says

Witch Week is probably one of my favorite books of all time - I think it's perfectly written. The characters are really, really well drawn and fleshed out. And there is many of them, so that makes DWJ's writing skills even more amazing. She doesn't ever mince words; adults are always bumbler or fools (except for the good ones, and even they are often oblivious). Which, maybe, is how children really see adults to some extent. Characters have layers, even the evil ones (although their layers aren't usually as thick). The mean girls and bully boys in Witch Week seem so real. Theresa and Simon and the rest are all pulled right out of Blubber, but in a much more funny, less frightening way. Simon and Theresa are as evil as those awful mean girls in Blubber, but for some reason they seem less threatening. It probably helps that Charles and Nan had both their own magical powers and Chrestomanci to help them; poor old Blubber had no one (similarly, with the exception of Chrestomanci, who essentially made them solve the problem on their own, both books are full of bullies and the oblivious teachers who don't seem to notice or do notice but don't care).

10/19/17 I haven't re-read Witch Week in almost exactly seven years, far too long to have gone without reading it. I listened to Gerard Doyle's excellently narrated audio version; his voice was perfect (I particularly liked his elegant, deep-voiced Chrestomanci). I haven't changed my mind about Witch Week or DWJ. I wondered if Nan Pilgrim was a stand-in for DWJ herself?

Elizabeth says

Witch Week is perhaps my least favorite book in the Chronicles of Chrestomanci. That being said, I love Chrestomanci's appearance in this book. His reprimands to the students who sought him out, and in fact, his entire dealings with them were spot-on and satisfying, if only because here, at last, is someone who can handle them. I love this passage: "[Chrestomanci] seemed astounded, and not vague at all. The room seemed to go very quiet and sinister and unloving" (Jones 480). When Chrestomanci is not vague, that is the time to pay attention to what he is saying or doing.

I also like how the problem was resolved. It was essentially turning a bad, destructive thing into a good thing. What previously could have torn apart the world fixed it, instead. And everything leading up to it was great, as well, especially Charles's turn-around. And the last few sentences of the book were a great parallel to the beginning. I also found it hilarious that (view spoiler). Essentially, I liked everything in the book after Chrestomanci showed up. I also liked seeing the school life, and Nan was probably my favorite, if I had to pick, although Nirupam is up there, too.

"The note said: SOMEONE IN THIS CLASS IS A WITCH" is the best way to start a book ever.

But...ugh, the students. Especially Charles and Brian. Charles is okay, at first, but towards the end he's just mean, and arrogant, and really, really stubborn. He's ornery for the sake of being ornery. Brian is whiny and a bit arrogant, as well. I got sick of Charles, towards the end, and once Brian started playing a bigger role, I got sick of him, too.

The book has a good start, and a great end, but the middle really just drags a bit, and Charles gets more and more irritating with every viewpoint (and his attitude towards "Simon Says" is just awful). I started disliking him when Simon says "Drop dead" to Theresa and Charles thinks it's a pity that the truth spell doesn't work anymore. Really? Chrestomanci was right, you weren't thinking, Charles.

Witch Week also lacks some of the humor and charm that I love about Jones's works.

Yehudit says

This book was quite an adventure, in the most positive sense of the word. It had quite a number of moments that had me outright giggling, and an eclectic cast of characters that you alternated between rooting for one moment and cursing the next. Which I greatly appreciated. Also, I found Chrestomanci to be at his absolute best. So, really liked this one.
