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# Eye of Newt, Toe of Frog:

## Finding Materials for YAs on Witchcraft and Satanism

by Kristine Mahood

**T**hose of us serving young adults have the same responsibility to meet their information needs and interests as librarians serving other populations. They need information for school work. They are interested in pursuing subjects that stir their curiosity. They are curious about many controversial subjects they either hear about or experience firsthand. They are curious about sex, drug abuse, gang warfare, pregnancy, AIDS, incest, rape, and political activism. And as are many adults, certain YAs are also curious about two subjects which, in the opinion of some people, go beyond the controversial into the dangerous: witchcraft and satanism.

This article will address the question of how to find materials on these two subjects. It will pose questions to clarify collection development strategy, define and differentiate witchcraft and satanism, and offer suggestions on where to look for materials. Unlike satanism, a belief system directly opposing Christianity and primarily a Western European and American phenomenon, witchcraft has been and still is practiced by many cultures around the world. This article, however, will deal with the aspects of both of these subjects most commonly pursued by library patrons, witchcraft and satanism as it has existed in Western Europe and the United States.

Before plunging into the world of witchcraft and satanism materials, you might ask yourself the following questions: (1) Just how many materials do you need? Do you need reference as well as circulating materials? Would your YA patrons' information needs be satisfied by multiple copies of a few titles, or do they require more variety and depth of subject coverage? (2) What is the returns policy of your vendor? Can you easily return items which you decide, upon examination, are inappropriate? (3) What is your library's policy on minors' access to all library materials? (4) Have your YA patrons requested, or do you think they would be served by, materials that are descriptive (what it is) or prescriptive (how to do it)? Descriptive books recount the history of witchcraft and satanism, such as those about the persecution of alleged witches in Western Europe, and describe contemporary movements and practices. Prescriptive books explain how to perform actual rituals associated with witchcraft and satanism.

The next step is to investigate the subject. What is witchcraft? What is satanism? Are they the same, related, or distinctly different?

*The Encyclopedia of Religion*<sup>1</sup> differentiates among three concepts of witchcraft: (1) simple sorcery, in which the witch manipulates nature for good or for ill to further her or her client's interests; (2) alleged diabolical witchcraft of late medieval and Renaissance Western Europe and its colonies, such as that in Salem, Massachusetts, and (3) the twentieth-century revival of practices both simple and diabolical.

Not all cultures believed that sorcerers and witches were in

contact with spirits, or if they were in contact, that the spirits were necessarily evil. The early Church Fathers limited their disapproval of sorcery to sternly discouraging newly Christianized Europeans from clinging to old customs of simple sorcery. They characterized any belief in the power of witches as delusive. Since God alone had power, they argued, it was foolish to put any stock in the notion of witches' powers.

By the early 1400s, however, the Christian church began to formulate a stricter policy toward witchcraft. The Western European persecutions of alleged diabolical witchcraft gathered momentum from four sources: (1) reports of sorcery and paganistic practices; (2) the codification of Christian heresy (i.e., "heresy became the medium through which sorcery was linked with the Devil"; (3) the concept of dualism, which postulated that the devil, or Satan, had power equal to God and, through his minions, sought to overthrow the Christian church; and (4) the conviction that the Christian community was opposed by a group of heretics, Jews, pagans, and other non-Christians. One might conclude that if you weren't for Christianity, you were against it, and by definition, in league with the Devil.

The persecutions and executions increased during the Renaissance and Reformation, which were periods of social uncertainty and tumult. Thanks to the printing press, sermons and pamphlets describing sexual orgies, baby sacrifices, and black masses flooded Western Europe, lending credibility to the speculation that Satan was plotting to destroy Christian society. The new Lutheran and Calvinist Protestant churches adopted Catholic doctrines on witchcraft and joined the slaughter. While it is possible that there were some practicing witches in Europe, it is unlikely that all of the people, most of them women, who were tortured and killed by the Christian churches were witches. The death toll has been estimated at between 100,000 and 300,000 people.

The secular, scientific, and progressive values of eighteenth century Europe dampened this hysteria except for outbreaks of what late twentieth century dwellers might identify as "satanic cults." The most well-known of these, the "Affair of the Poisons," seethed among the lords and ladies of Louis XV's court. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was a revival of interest in non-Christian beliefs ranging from performing neo-pagan rites to using Ouija boards. Popular books, such as Margaret Murray's *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (1921), characterized witchcraft as a pre-Christian fertility cult of ancient Egyptian origin.

The tenets of modern witchcraft include reverence for nature, rituals, and the release of sexual inhibitions. Present-day practitioners of witchcraft can be divided into three groups: neo-pagans, witches, and practitioners of ceremonial magic. Neo-pagans strive to replicate the polytheistic religions of the ancient Celts, Greeks, Egyptians, or Norsemen, peoples whose beliefs and practices stressed harmony with nature. Modern witchcraft, or "Wicca," also emphasizes harmony with nature,

together with a belief in a supreme God and Goddess. In neither group is there belief in or worship of a devil. As for the practitioners of magic rituals, their evocations of multiple deities have been compared to medieval Cabalism.

As defined in *Man, Myth, and Magic*<sup>3</sup>, satanism is based upon the worship of Satan or the Devil. The concept of Satan as the ultimate evil in the world derived in part from Babylonian, Chaldean, and Persian doctrines. The Zoroastrians of Persia, for example, conceived of the world as an eternal struggle between the equally powerful forces of light and darkness, a concept reminiscent of Western European dualism. Practitioners both past and present appear to draw chiefly upon a vituperative hatred of Christianity for many of their beliefs and practices. Satanic rituals were designed with the express purpose of turning conventional Christian values upside down. The Christian values of meekness, chastity, and purity became those of dominance, lust, and degradation. The Mass was opposed by the Black Mass, and adherents worshiped not God but Satan. The systematic inversion of Christian values and practices suggests how haunted satanists are by Christianity.

To Renaissance witch-hunters, all witches were devil-worshipping satanists and vice versa. Among those charged with satanism were groups such as the Gnostics, Cathars, and Bogomils who departed from established Church doctrine. Nonetheless, few of them were witches or satanists.

Contemporary satanism takes two forms. Satanists, aligned to organizations such as the Church of Satan which was founded in 1966, maintain that Satan represents the normal human desires which are anathema to Christian doctrine. Their rites are designed to allow adherents to indulge their desires without harming others, and they and organizations such as the Temple of Set totally disavow so-called "satanic cults." This latter form of satanism, practiced by small groups, encourages such practices as the kidnapping, degradation, and murder of innocent victims.

The intermittent discovery of small groups of cultists makes "SATANIC CULT RITUALS UNCOVERED" a screaming newspaper headline, and in many minds, cultist means satanist means witch, and vice versa, as it did to Western Europeans reading pamphlets describing sexual orgies, baby sacrifices, and black masses.

With this background in mind, begin the collection development process by examining the bibliographies which follow pertinent articles in sources such as *The Encyclopedia of Religion* and *The World Book Encyclopedia*<sup>4</sup>. If books have made it into mainstream reference sources, they are probably descriptive. The citations will vary according to source. For example, the *World Book* describes some introductory materials as "suitable for younger readers." More scholarly books are cited after articles in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* and *Encyclopaedia Britannica*<sup>5</sup>. By reading the annotations, however, you can discern which works will be more accessible to YAs. As with any exploration into a new subject area, when particular books or authors are repeated, the chances are that they will suit your needs.

Other reference tools will also be useful. *Junior High School Library Catalog*<sup>6</sup> describes a half dozen works of non-fiction under "witchcraft," but there are no entries under

"satan" or "devil," except fiction under the latter. *Senior High School Library Catalog*<sup>7</sup> describes several works of nonfiction under "witchcraft." *The Reader's Adviser*<sup>8</sup> offers brief annotated bibliographies on books about modern witchcraft as well as satanism. Another source of materials is *The Reader's Catalog*<sup>9</sup>. Books on witchcraft are described in sections about Early Modern Europe, U.S. History, Religion, and New Age: Ancient Roots and Traditions.

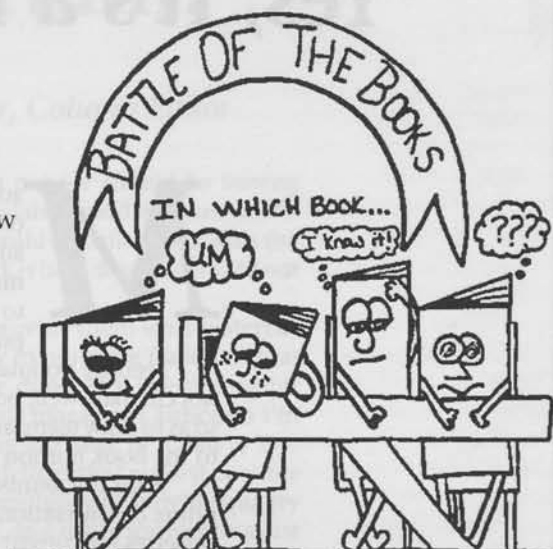
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## Bibliography and Suggested Reading

- Adler, Margot. *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987. "A thorough and sympathetic account of neopagan groups," says *Reader's Catalog*. "By far the best book on the subject," adds *Reader's Adviser*.
- Barton, Blanche. *The Church of Satan*. New York: Hells Kitchen, 1990. This history of the Church of Satan, complete with such chapters as "How to Perform Satanic Rituals," seeks to clarify what it refers to as myths and misconceptions about satanism. Note the name of the publisher. This is definitely a prescriptive work.
- Crowley, Vivianne. *Wicca: The Old Religion in the New Age*. United Kingdom: Aquarian Press, 1989. The author explains "the way of the Witch" and describes in detail present-day initiations, chants, rites, practices, and beliefs.
- Demos, John Putnam. *Entertaining Satan: Witchcraft and the Culture of Early New England*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. "An outstanding work," notes *Reader's Catalog*, "on the social and psychological roots of witchcraft."
- Guiley, Rosemary. *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*. New York: Facts on File, 1990. This reference work has a wealth of historic information, explanations of modern Wiccan philosophy and practices, and biographies of twentieth century witches.
- Hansen, Chadwick. *Witchcraft at Salem*. New York: Braziller, 1969. Hansen analyses the social forces at work in late seventeenth century New England which led to persecutions. *Reader's Catalog* adds that the author argues that witchcraft was actually practiced in the area.
- Rhodes, H. T. *The Satanic Mass*. New York: Citadel Press, 1974. This study of the European background of contemporary Satanism, cited by *Reader's Adviser*, appears to be one of the few books on the subject which neither advocates nor condemns it.
- Russell, Jeffrey B. *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics, and Pagans*. Magnolia, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1983. "The text is intelligent, interesting, and enlightening," notes *Senior High School Library Catalog*, "and the layout and illustrations are inviting to browsers. An excellent reference for high school libraries." Russell has written numerous books and articles on the subject, including the article on witchcraft in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*.
- Russell, Jeffrey B. *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988. This work is a one-volume distillation of the author's four-volume series tracing concepts of evil from antiquity through medieval Christianity to the present day.
- Stevens, Bryna. *Witches: Opposing Viewpoints*. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1988. This is one of the volumes in the "Great Mysteries" series, written for grades 3 through 10.

## NCASL Battle of the Books 1992 Booklist

Author	Title	Publisher
Alcott, Louisa M.	<i>Little Women</i>	Little, Brown
Banks, Lynn Reid	<i>Indian in the Cupboard</i>	Avon
Bauer, Marion	<i>On My Honor</i>	Clarion
Burnett, Frances	<i>Secret Garden</i>	Lippincott
Cooney, Caroline	<i>The Face on the Milk Carton</i>	Bantam
Frank, Anne	<i>Diary of a Young Girl</i>	Doubleday
George, Jean C.	<i>My Side of the Mountain</i>	Dutton
Greene, Bette	<i>Summer of My German Soldier</i>	Dial
Hamilton, Virginia	<i>Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush</i>	Philomel
Konigsburg, E. L.	<i>From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler</i>	Atheneum
L'Engle, Madeline	<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i>	Farrar
Lewis, C. S.	<i>The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i>	Macmillan
London, Jack	<i>The Call of the Wild</i>	Macmillan
Merrill, Jean	<i>The Pushcart War</i>	Harper & Row
Newman, Robert	<i>The Case of the Baker Street Irregular</i>	Atheneum
Newton, Suzanne	<i>I Will Call It Georgie's Blues</i>	Viking
Paterson, Katherine	<i>The Great Gilly Hopkins</i>	Crowell
Paulsen, Gary	<i>Dogsong</i>	Bradbury
Peck, Richard	<i>Remembering the Good Times</i>	Delacorte
Speare, Elizabeth	<i>The Sign of the Beaver</i>	Houghton
Spinelli, Jerry	<i>Maniac Magee</i>	Little
Stevenson, Robert L.	<i>Treasure Island</i>	Scribners
Taylor, Mildred	<i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>	Dial
Voigt, Cynthia	<i>Izzy, Willy-Nilly</i>	Fawcett



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*continued from page 84.*

With the exception of *The Reader's Adviser* and *The Reader's Catalog*, reference books tend to cite chiefly historical works. For materials about contemporary activities, both descriptive and prescriptive, take a look at "witchcraft" and "satanism" in the *Subject Guide to Books in Print*<sup>10</sup>. Although you can't always judge a book by its cover, particularly when you can't see it, you can find a few clues in its title. If you're looking for prescriptive (how to do it) books, words such as "handbook" and "workbook" are excellent clues. Another thing to notice is the name of the publisher. Publishers' names, such as "Magickal Child" and "KABEL Publications" under "witchcraft," and "Hells Kitchen" and "Feral House" under "satanism," suggest presses specializing in, and probably espousing, their subject matter. Publishers' names, such as "Good News," "Crossroads Ministries," and "Glory Ministries" under "satanism" suggest presses with a different point of view. You may also find other publishers with less colorful names, such as "Carol Pub Group," who publish witchcraft-related materials.

Before ordering any books from presses with which you are not familiar, send away for their catalogs. Not only will you be able to find out just what they are selling, you will also have their backlist. As in *Books in Print*, the reading level is sometimes given in parentheses, a handy guide when looking for YA-level materials.

After looking through reference books and *BIP*, look up the titles you have chosen in the appropriate year of *Book Review Digest*<sup>11</sup>. Double-check in the subject index under "witchcraft" and "satanism" for any books you may have missed. Not every

book worth buying makes it into the mainstream review media, however. This is particularly true for small, specialty presses or for books on controversial subjects. Thus the only description that you will find of some materials will be in their publisher's catalog, a resource that may not be objective, but can certainly be revealing. Remember to find out your vendor's returns policy before ordering anything you're not sure of.

Selecting materials on witchcraft and satanism is no different from selecting materials for any other subject. Define your collection needs; know your access policy; investigate the subject; and turn to standard reference tools. Listed on page 84 is an annotated bibliography of titles selected from the sources cited. Remember: look before you leap.

## References

<sup>1</sup>*Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1987), 15:415-28.

<sup>2</sup>*Encyclopedia of Religion*, 417.

<sup>3</sup>*Man, Myth, and Magic: The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mythology, Religion, and the Unknown*, ed. Richard Cavendish (New York: Marshall Cavendish Ltd., 1985), 9:2477-78.

<sup>4</sup>*World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book Inc. 1989), 21:373-75.

<sup>5</sup>*Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1986), 25:92-97.

<sup>6</sup>*Junior High School Library Catalog* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1990).

<sup>7</sup>*Senior High School Library Catalog* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1988).

<sup>8</sup>*The Reader's Adviser* (New York and London: R. R. Bowker Co., 1988), vol. 4.

<sup>9</sup>*The Reader's Catalog*, ed. Geoffrey O'Brien (New York: The Reader's Catalog, Inc., 1989).

<sup>10</sup>*Subject Guide to Books in Print* (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1990-91).

<sup>11</sup>*Book Review Digest* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1990).