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## **“ Wicca” a research paper I did about the religion Essay Sample**

Throughout the ages, people have been looking for explanations for the unknown. Life's mysteries have fueled mankind's quest for knowledge. These journeys for the answers have often resulted in the formation of religions. Christianity has been the backbone of this nation since it's beginning, and any other religion, no matter how peaceful it may seem, is believed to be, by most Christians, evil. Once thought of as a cult and recently recognized as a religion, Wicca, in its peaceful existence, is still considered by many to be a Satanistic practice.

In the 1985 case of Dettmer vs. Landon, the District Court of Virginia pursuant to rule 52 (a) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, ruled that Witchcraft / Wicca falls within a recognizable religious category and therefore is protected by the Constitution. Wicca comes from the word " witch" and means one who works with natural forces by shaping or bending them. Wicca is a religion that was inspired by pre-Christian rites and folklore. Wicca is without any structure or command. Feminism, environmentalism, and liberalism all come together in this religion that is centered on nature. Their object of worship is the Moon Goddess, also known as the All, which is composed of everything It ever created. The All does not rule over the Universe; It is the Universe. She consists of three stages: the Maiden, the Mother, and the Crone. The priestess is her representative. The earth and its seasons are the sources of sacred rites. There is no leader or founder, nor is there any sacred text. Wiccans have to be brutally honest with everything, especially themselves. Wicca teaches responsibility for one's own actions.

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The central tenet, also known as the Wiccan Rede, is, " If it harms none, do what you will." Spells, brews, chants, and talismans are all weapons of the Wiccans.

The biggest misconception about Wicca is that they are Satanists. This is just not so. Wiccans don't even believe in the concept of heaven or hell, so they certainly don't believe in Satan. Herne Tullius, a practitioner of five years states, " We do not worship Satan or consort with Demons. Satan is a Christian creation and they can keep him. We do not need a paranoid creation of supreme evil and eternal damnation to scare us into doing the right thing and helping others. We choose to do the right thing and love our brothers and sisters because it IS the right thing and it feels good to do it. I suppose it is a maturity thing."

Both male and female Wiccans are called witches. Male witches are not warlocks. Warlock is a Scottish word that means " oath breaker." Most male witches are incredibly insulted when they are referred to as warlocks because of the simple fact that Wiccans often use that word to identify a witch who has been kicked out of a coven for betraying a coven member or members. " When most people hear the word " witches," they most likely think of scary Halloween characters or black magic. This is not true," says Wicca practitioner Meghan Pino.

Selena Fox, a Wicca practitioner, said in 1999, " Life is a circle with many cycles." The Circle connotes the idea of oneness and unity of all things. The " magic circle" is within the self, the ultimate divinity, at the power-wielding center. No one is at the head of the circle, but every member is equal. Their

belief in the interconnection of all things, and because they lack any written scripture, leaves their views on death open to the practitioner.

Since death is ultimately left up to the practitioner, there are oodles of different beliefs on this topic inside of this religion that has no structure. However, all Wiccans do believe that upon death, one goes to a state of rest and reflection in another plane (often called the Summerlands. "For no particular reason other than we think it sounds cool," says Richard Hubble, a witch of twelve years.), and eventually will be reborn. They believe that rebirth is not a penalty, but a gift of the Divine. Death is not a tool for punishment or reward is why there is not a heaven or a hell. Some Wiccans believe that eventually we will learn all our lessons and have eternal rest in the Summerlands. Others believe that we will continue to be reborn for eternity.

As in every religion, Wicca has many symbols to signify their beliefs.

The symbol that is the most associated with this religion is the pentagram. It is a symbol of power and protection. A pentagram is a five-pointed star enclosed in a circle. Each point of the star stands for a different resource: Earth, Water, Air, Fire, and Spirit. It is often mistaken for a satanic symbol by those who are obviously uneducated. The way a pentagram is distinguished as "satanic" is when it's turned upside down. There is the altar, which is a special, flat surface set aside exclusively for magickal workings or religious acknowledgment. Another symbol is the nine-inch daggers or "athames." It is a cleansed and consecrated ritual blade. Usually it is double edged, and black handled. It is never used to cut anything on the physical plane.

Wiccans also use tarot cards, wands, staffs, and wear robes that generally drag the floor.

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A big part of Wiccan culture is the practice of magick. Magick is spelled with a "k" to distinguish it from the types of illusions performed by stage magicians. There is nothing supernatural about magick, it is simply using the natural energies found in yourself, in the Divine and everything created by the Divine to bring about a desired result. A witch always practices magick for positive purposes because they believe in the law of return (also known as the Karmic law). The law of return says that whatever energy, whether positive or negative, that is sent out, returns to the sender. Terry Riley, an owner of a neo-Pagan bookstore states, " We don't ride around on broomsticks and cast spells. That's all Hollywood stuff." David Snoke, a school teacher in Massachusetts says, " Magick is within you. With it you can create your dreams, heal your world, love your life and find the peace that lives in every human heart." Just like Christianity, they have beliefs, that if broken have serious consequences. Since, they have no scripture, those consequences are also left up to the witches own interpretation. As hard as this may be to grasp for some, for the most part, they basically believe like Christians do about what is right or wrong. Their religion is all about encouraging themselves to discover their own beliefs, unlike most religions that pretty much tell you what your beliefs are.

The spells that they do involve healing, love, harmony, wisdom and creativity. The potions that they stir might be a headache remedy, a cold tonic, or an herbal flea bath for our pets. They strive to gain knowledge of and use the natural remedies placed on this earth by the divine for their benefit instead of using synthetic drugs unless absolutely necessary.

Wiccans acknowledge the cycles of nature, the lunar phases and the seasons to celebrate their spirituality and to worship the divine. It is a belief system that allows the Witch to work with, not in supplication to deities with the intent of living in harmony and achieving balance with all things. The rituals of the Wiccan religion are usually performed at the New and Full Moons. There are eight Sabbat festivals, which mark the wheel of the year and changing of the seasons. They are performed within groups that are referred to as "covens." Also, when an individual decides to perform these rituals on his or her own, he or she is called a solitaire.

Wiccans learn from and revere the gift of nature from divine creation by celebrating the cycles of the sun, moon and seasons. They search within themselves for the cycles that correspond to those of the natural world and try to live in harmony with the movement of this universal energy. Their teachers are the trees, rivers, lakes, meadows, mountains and animals as well as others who have walked this path before them. This belief creates a reverence and respect for the environment, and all life upon the Earth.

Wicca is arguably one of the most controversial religions of this day and age. There is an estimated 100,000 Americans practicing Wicca, and the number is growing rapidly. Sully Erna, the lead singer of the hard rock group Godsmack, is helping spread his religion through his lyrics. Most Christians view Wicca to be simply another term for Satanism. This is just not so. Since America was founded by Christian Puritans, it seems that this view has always been felt. Wiccans have had to endure a tremendous amount of flack for their beliefs. If it can survive the notorious Salem witch trials, then it

looks as if it will make it for many years to come. It seems as if the land of the free should be renamed to the land of the legally free, but not culturally.