

Witches historical and fictional

Literature



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Witches Historical & Fictional Throughout history the "witch" and everything connected with the word has changed, and possibly more than anything else, misunderstood. From the historical witch trials and burnings, that even our own country has seen, to fictional characterizations of witches in everything from books to movies to video games, the image of witch covers a myriad of images. Looking at the facts however, one can discern the fact from fiction, and shed some light on this eerie subject.

By definition, a witch is a person who can cast spells, use magic powers, or is at one with the supernatural (Witchcraft). Witches can be either male or female, but usually a different term (warlock, wizard) is given to a male person fitting the mold.

The exact beginning of the term witch is uncertain. Using the "Oxford English Dictionary, the most probable origins of the word witch are the Old English noun forms *wicca* (m.) and *wicce* (f.) from the OE verb *wiccian* ('to practice witchcraft', 'to put a spell upon (a person)') and from a Proto-Germanic predecessor thereof. Earlier, the Proto-Germanic **wikkjaz* ('one who wakes the dead') offers a probable cognate. A contemporary cognate may be found in the Low German *wicker* (soothsayer).[1]. In Old English, *wicca* and *wicce* may have had a specific sense now lost to modern scholars but suggested by the presence of synonyms, such as *gealdricge* and *scinlce* (Witchcraft)."

Through out history, they have been an amazing number of witch trials.

Dating back to the 1600s here in American, one could count hundreds of women (and men) accused and brought to the rope under the accusations of being a witch. Witch trial cases can be seen throughout all of American history, leading up to 1878, where two students were brought to trial in the Ipswich Witchcraft Case (Historical Witches). Between 1645 and 1662, 58

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people were brought up on charges of being a witch. 75 percent of these were women, and 36 of them were hung for being witches (Historical Witches). The numbers rose steeply in the later 1600s where hundreds of people were tried and killed for being witches (Historical Witches).

This negative image of witches dates back to the middle Ages and the Catholic Church. Not wanting other beliefs, and persecuting ideas it didn't hold true, the Church is responsible for the negative dark image it painted on to witches. The Church started the idea of Devil worship, and sent a crusade to rid Europe of all ideas of magic and the supernatural (The Witch Hunts).

In fantasy, the word witch can come with various connotations. From the Witches in the " Wizard of Oz" to the almighty Witch King from " Lord of the Rings", the very idea of a super natural being has fascinated writers of all genres for ages (List of fictional).

In " Lord of the Rings", the image of a Witch is a very unique one. The Witch King is a title given to the leader of the Nazgul, wraiths under control of the dark Lord Sauron. The most powerful of them was named the Witch King, and was a powerful, evil, feared, and dark lord of his time. Contrasting the female human form given to witches, Tolkien created an entirely new fearsome mold for his powerful Witch King.

Witches have even shown up in pop culture, a witch Gruntilda was featured in the video game Banjo-Kazooie, where she was the main evil figure who kidnapped a pretty girl in hopes she could use her to herself look pretty. This game portrayed the main image of a stereotypical witch, the fat, ugly, warty, old lady.

More recently, another book series has given us a whole different picture of a more " modern day" witch figure. The Harry Potter series has offered a

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modern day look into the lives of fictional witches and wizards living in a modern day setting along side humans.

It seems the super natural will always fascinate us. As people we are attracted to that which we don't understand, that which mystifies us that which makes us look and stare in awe. The figure of witches is such as this, a debated and controversial figure of magic and might that most people simply don't understand. There is no one image for a witch, the overall word covers too far to say anyone one thing is a witch. But simply, a witch is a magical being, and one that has been prosecuted against and never been shown in good light throughout history.

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