

BARTON

LIBRARY

Dare to know

Witch Fiction

Fiction that features witches and/or warlocks and the practice of witchcraft.

A sub-genre in which protagonists, both male and female, exhibit the supernatural powers known as witchcraft. The subject of witches and warlocks is an age-old premise, which has roots in folklore and myths. Stories concerning witchcraft share attributes with **Gothic fiction** and **horror fiction**, while themes also appear in **fantasy fiction**. Throughout literary history, the portrayal of witches and warlocks has ranged from benevolent healers and wise counselors to malevolent agents of the Devil. The most popular image of a witch is that of an evil woman wearing a pointed hat, dressed in black, and riding a broomstick. That of the warlock is a sinister practitioner of magic who has made a pact with dark forces. By the twentieth century, authors began portraying witches as women who had transgressed against rigid social conventions; they were too bold, too old, too vain, or too undesirable for polite society. Often, they were antagonists or key supporting characters. Currently, witches are often the protagonists of stories, and the depiction of their magical arts is appealing. Novels depicting warlocks exist in far less numbers.

The Greek goddess Hecate, embodying what would become characterizations of witchcraft, appeared in the epic poet Hesiod's *Theogony* (ca. 8th-7th century BC). The enchantress Morgan le Fey was referenced in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* (1150 AD). A trio of "weyward sisters" confronted Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, in William Shakespeare's Scottish play (1623). Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's "Snow White" (1812) and "Hansel and Gretel" (1812) both feature malevolent witches. L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) introduced readers to a quartet of witches.

Common Elements

Horror
Historical accounts
Strange and disturbing mysteries
Female persecution
Hidden powers

Spells and curses
Supernatural spirits and creatures
Astrology
Forbidden knowledge

Benefits of Reading

Demonstrates to readers a woman in possession of power	Inspires readers to grow and flourish in their potential
Challenges readers to consider the proper uses of one's abilities and talents	Offers to readers cautionary tales on the misuse of power

Modern Literary Examples

<i>For Girls Who Walk Through Fire</i> (2023) by Kim DeRose	<i>We Ride Upon Sticks</i> (2020) by Quan Barry
<i>Hallowdene</i> (2018) by George Mann	<i>What Became of Magic</i> (2023) by Paige Crutcher
<i>Her Majesty Royal Coven</i> (2022) by Juno Dawson	<i>Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West</i> (1995) by Gregory Maguire
<i>Hex</i> (2022) by Jenni Fagan	<i>The Witch and the Tsar</i> (2022) by Olesya Salnikova Gilmore
<i>Hex Education</i> (2023) by Maureen Kilmer	<i>The Witch in the Well</i> (2022) by Camilla Bruce
<i>In the Shadow Grave</i> (2022) by Liz Parker	<i>Witches</i> (2022) by Brenda Long
<i>One for My Enemy</i> (2023) by Olivie Blake	<i>The Witches of Bone Hill</i> (2023) by Ava Morgyn
<i>Playing the Witch Card</i> (2023) by K. J. Dell'Antonia	
<i>Small Town, Big Magic</i> (2022) by Hazel Beck	