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Witch Child



Synopsis

"With its theme of religious intolerance and its touches of the supernatural, this is sure to be in high demand for a long time." —Kirkus Reviews
Welcome to the world of young Mary Newbury, a world where simply being different can cost a person her life. Hidden until now in the pages of her diary, Mary's startling story begins in 1659, the year her beloved grandmother is hanged in the public square as a witch. Mary narrowly escapes a similar fate, only to face intolerance and new danger among the Puritans in the New World. How long can she hide her true identity? Will she ever find a place where her healing powers will not be feared?

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

During the witch hunts of the mid-1600s, many young Englishwomen died on the gallows, innocent victims of false or hysterical accusations of witchcraft. But what of those women who actually claimed the name "witch" as their own? In the pages of her secret journal, Mary Nuttall reveals what it is like to live in a climate of mistrust and piety in which differences are dangerous and rumors can kill, where she must hide her heritage as a healer and pagan. With a sure hand, she describes her beloved grandmother's trial and hanging as a witch, her own rescue by a mysterious noblewoman, and her eventual passage to the New World and the forest settlement of Beulah. There Mary falls

under a curtain of suspicion when she willingly chooses to explore the dark woods shunned by the fearful colonists and makes friends with some of the spiritual native people. When several girls in the community begin to shriek and swoon, and the same minister who damned Mary's grandmother comes to search for signs of witchcraft, Mary is subjected to close and deadly scrutiny. Breaking with most historical fiction about witchcraft (such as Elizabeth Speare's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*), British author Celia Rees raises the stakes and the tension by placing a real witch at the center of her story. *Witch Child* is an engrossing, suspenseful novel that will cast a spell over both readers of historical fiction and fans of witchcraft series from *Circle of Three* to *Sweep*. --Jennifer Hubert --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Though much of Rees's debut novel moves at a lackadaisical pace, its opening scenes are riveting: Mary, 14, watches as her grandmother the only family she has ever known is tortured, tried and finally hung as a witch. Afterward, a mysterious protector sends Mary away from England with a group of Puritans bound for a remote Massachusetts settlement an odd haven indeed for a girl reputed to be a witch. The book unfolds through Mary's diary entries. She tries to be "the perfect little Puritan maid" during the voyage and, upon reaching America, travels with her fellow passengers to a new settlement. But there Mary is drawn to the forest and a Native American boy, Jaybird (grandson of an elder who is, of course, a wise healer), raising the suspicions of her neighbors. Crisis looms when Mary becomes the scapegoat of a witch trial centering on the hysterical behavior of a gaggle of privileged Puritan girls (shades of *The Crucible*). Though the story is filled with authentic-seeming historic detail, Mary behaves more like a 21st-century teenager with a penchant for things New Age than a product of her own era: she is, for example, one of the only settlers enlightened enough to appreciate the local Native Americans ("The Indians go lightly in the world, that is all"). An afterword provides links to a Web site, as well as a request for "information regarding any of the individuals and families mentioned." A sequel is forthcoming. Hampered by wandering story lines and some stereotyped supporting cast members, this seductive material never quite comes together. Nevertheless, it will likely attract teen horror fans who flocked to *The Blair Witch Project* (a "foreword" hints at similar trappings, claiming that the story has been pieced together from a collection of papers found sewn into a colonial-era quilt). Ages 12-up. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I couldn't put it down. I love reading historical novels and especially about early America. This book

leaves you wanting more. Sure you could write several possible extended endings for this story in your own imagination...and I have. But I can't wait to see what the author gives us with Sorceress.

I didn't think I would like this book when I first saw the title in my sister-in-law's stack of books. I hadn't read the author before, but the cover intrigued me. Now I bought my own copy and I have read Witch Child three times and shared it with two friends who also loved it. She tells a very touching story. I am hooked on her books and the sequel was excellent. I enjoy reading Ceila Rees because her books are geared to younger readers so the words flow with appealing characters and heart-felt and intriguing plots.

Very well written. Although one knows where this subject leads a story. People can be both ignorant, zealots, bullies and conniving. I found the last page most interesting. I'm not going to spoil it for anyone, other than to say it made me look again at the story I had just read in a different light

I highly recommend this book. I thought it started out slow but after the first few pages, I couldn't put it down. Thank you Celia for sharing this journal. It definitely left me wondering about all the possibilities as to what could have happened to Mary.

Good read. Enjoyed.

An interesting look at social customs of different Westerner settlements in early recorded American history. To think how far we have come in human history, yet realize how far yet we have to go to really change age-old habits!

I came across this book on Google Books and read all the preview pages. I picked up where I left off once I got the book and finished it in one day! Excellent story telling and I am looking forward to the conclusion in Sorceress.

I love witch stories and journal like books, so I loved this book. I only wished the character would've been more of a rebel. Anyway, it was fun to read.

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