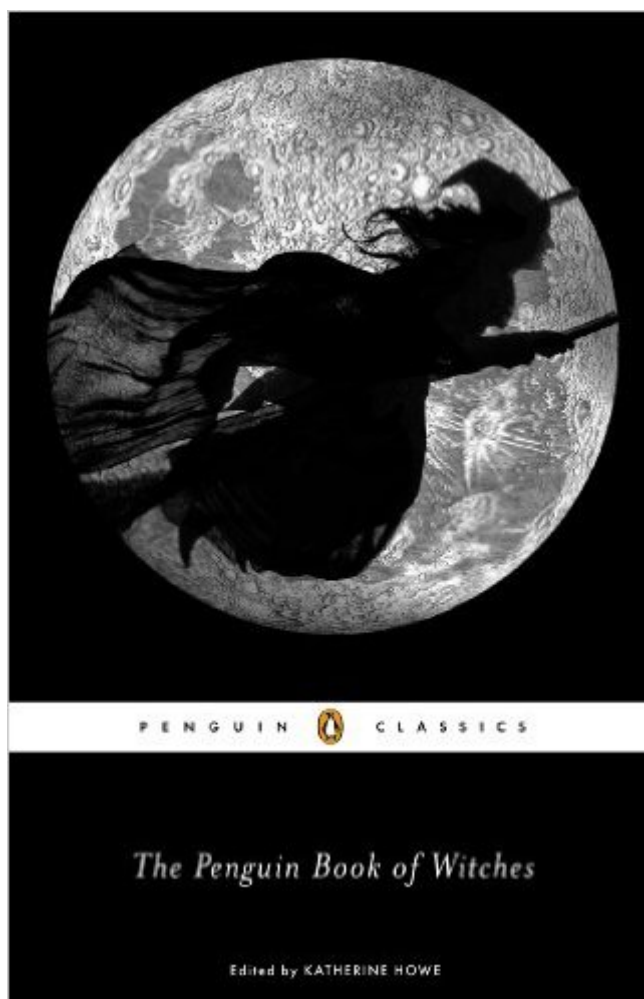


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The Penguin Book Of Witches



Synopsis

Chilling real-life accounts of witches, from medieval Europe through colonial America, compiled by the New York Times bestselling author of *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane* and *Conversion* From a manual for witch hunters written by King James himself in 1597, to court documents from the Salem witch trials of 1692, to newspaper coverage of a woman stoned to death on the streets of Philadelphia while the Continental Congress met, *The Penguin Book of Witches* is a treasury of historical accounts of accused witches that sheds light on the reality behind the legends. Bringing to life stories like that of Eunice Cole, tried for attacking a teenage girl with a rock and buried with a stake through her heart; Jane Jacobs, a Bostonian so often accused of witchcraft that she took her tormentors to court on charges of slander; and Increase Mather, an exorcism-performing minister famed for his knowledge of witches, this volume provides a unique tour through the darkest history of English and North American witchcraft. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

"The first witchcraft act in England was passed in 1542, and the last anti witchcraft statute was not

officially repealed until 1736." This important quote indicates that over 200 years of witchcraft accusations, investigations, trials, and punishments of being thrown in stocks, ducked in water, exorcised, or suffering jail and death that fell on far too many men and women in England and America. Witchcraft was the definitive focus of hyperbolic, potent fury as clearly shown in this collection of stories, arguments, and accounts, usually with dire consequences. There's no clear-cut evidence that witchcraft was a denomination or united group, as it was later to become; but it was clear that superstition raged during the above cited period and its combination with the strange behavior of certain individuals, meticulously described as evidence in warrants, examinations or depositions of the characters presented in this text make for fascinating reading. The fact that some like the slave-maid Tituba in Salem, Massachusetts gathered children with her to celebrate some voodoo practices surely did not help matters and many readers will be familiar with the outcome because of their familiarity with the play, "The Crucible," by Arthur Miller. One particular selection was refreshing in that George Gifford, a Puritan minister in Essex, England in 1593, attempts to assert some reason into what he describes as the "greed, anger, fear and hate" which are the motives behind all witch accusations. His response is to wage spiritual warfare against those motives in one's own heart and to wage spiritual warfare against actual behavior one perceives may or may not be witchery. It is the Devil, he said, that "seduces ignorant men."

THE PENGUIN BOOK OF WITCHES is a fascinating look at the belief in witches and witchcraft via actual historical documents. From the court records to writings by King James I, the skeptic Reginald Scot, and the Puritan minister George Gifford is a wealth of information for anyone interested in the facts about the belief in and persecution of witches. Each section is headed by a brief synopsis that also includes historical details and facts. Ms. Howe looks at the truth behind these trials and the varied driving forces behind them. Women were especially singled out for numerous reasons. Misogyny was rampant in these trials. There were also people like Reginald Scot who was, in comparison, an enlightened man in a time of darkness. Scot saw the trials for what they were and in his work, THE DISCOUERIE OF WITCHCRAFT-1584, points out the bias of the trials. The accused were usually marginalized on the fringes of society for a wide variety of reasons. Scot turns the tables on believers claiming their faith is what should be in question as they ascribe God like abilities to individuals. King James I's DAEMONOLOGIE-1597 promoted both the belief in witchcraft and the persecution of witches. It's believed he wrote it in response to skeptics like Scot. This wasn't exactly an era of free speech. It wasn't always wise to go against the monarch. George Gifford's, A DIALOGUE CONCERNING WITCHES AND

WITCHCRAFTES-1593, hopes for people to renounce the trials as being the work of Satan. The trials, turning neighbors against each other, were playing right into Satan's hands. He wanted his congregants to look to saving their own souls. In addition to these scholarly writings are the actual trials themselves. The Salem witch trials, while the best known perhaps, were not the only ones.

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