



## Witches

*Erica Jong , Jos. A. Smith (Illustrator)*

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This witch's brew of a book is back in all its tantalizing glory to enchant a new generation of readers. Best-selling author Erica Jong here turns her attention to the fantastical and factual world of witchcraft. In beguiling poetry and prose, she looks at the figure of the witch both as historical reality and as archetype - as evil crone and full-breasted seductress, as a lingering vestige of a primeval religion and a projection of fear of the unknown. Joseph A. Smith's powerful, haunting illustrations enliven each page, as Jong investigates the witch as a survivor of the age of sorcery, as a scapegoat for male-dominated church-state politics, as a remarkable natural healer, and as a hexer without peer. Real recipes for love potions and flying lotions, along with formulas for spells and incantations, make this book a rich journey of mystery and delight. Available in paperback for the first time, Witches has been a favorite since it was published more than 20 years ago - a testament to the enduring fascination with the myths and truths about these intriguing figures.

## **Witches Details**

Date : Published March 30th 2004 by Harry N. Abrams (first published 1981)

ISBN : 9780810991217

Author : Erica Jong , Jos. A. Smith (Illustrator)

Format : Paperback 176 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Poetry, Art, Religion, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Witches for online ebook

### **Bladestryke says**

The books artwork is what got me interested as it's very much in the vein of Brian Froud. The context leaves much to be desired. A mix of research and silliness it seems this writer tried to base her writing in some facts then goes off into Fantasy. Beautiful but take the information within with a grain of salt!

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### **Leslie says**

Read this on my work downtime, now consider myself a Dianic proofreader-witch & hereby disavow the virgin birth as a false usurpation of the feminine power to give life.

Fun, concise little history of the witch archetype (as a construction of male fear of womyn and our SEXUAL POWAR).

There was a chapter on love potions that I glossed, some of the poetry was eh. Book also has beautiful illustrations.

Recommend to anyone interested in witches. Excuse me while I go perform nocturnal rites with my winged consorts.

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### **Kelly says**

This book is an amazing mix of art, poetry, spells and stories about witches and witchcraft. Not Wicca, but the Craft itself, which is rarely explored independently of Wicca and Paganism. The pictures are raw and honest, as is the prose, so it is definitely not for children's eyes. Women who feel the pull of the moon, keep the secrets and powers of the witch alive, and worship the Goddess will love this book.

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### **Lynley says**

This is an introduction to Wicca by a well-known feminist. It is only an introduction, and that's all it's meant to be. As an intro, it's excellent.

At times it reads almost as if Erica Jong almost believes in the love poppet stuff. She's written it in a tongue-in-cheek, 'but what if this were really true' kind of way, whereas I'd prefer a more distanced view. I can see a thirteen or fourteen year old really getting into this hocus pocus. At that age I may have read this book quite differently.

The ebook had issues, though this could have been iBooks rather than the book itself. It's highly illustrated and takes a while to download. And in the eBook version there's no attribution on the poetry. You can google and find out, but still, this isn't great.

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### **Emily says**

Working from the premise that "witches are, above all, the first liberated women" Jong attempts to articulate the "communal mythology" of witches and witchcraft (in the west) through a diverse collection of writing, poetry and illustrations. At times I thought it was self serious about its claims, and at others it seemed to have a great sense of humor (and she never shied away from nudity/expletives) . I thought the position/perspective she was writing from was confusing. She would go from being open to the differences in practices and perspectives to making strange and specific assumptions. Seemed inconsistent and unspecific and I was never quite sure what was the purpose.

My main concern though was her uncomfortably racialized language ("Mohammedanism was used in place of "Islam" for example) combined with her lack of racial or sexual perspective (appropriative and heteronormative at times).

I wasn't personally into this, but I imagine it has an appeal the same way many tumblr aesthetic blogs do!

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### **Trudie Morton says**

It felt a bit too Wiccan inspired, grossly misinformed about Satanism and seemed kinda anti- Christianity as well. It also sort of felt like beliefs I didn't hold were shoved in my face. I'm a Pagan, but I do not believe in the duality of good and evil. I believe they are extremely subjective and at worst, nonexistence. I also do not practice Paganism because of ecology reasons. I do care about Mother Nature but not in a religious or spiritual sense.

There was also a part where the "history" or what felt like "history" about witches was extremely questionable. Though besides these problems, it was an alright read, but I don't think I would really recommend it to anyone.

The artwork was really pretty though.

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### **Aleksandra says**

I would give this 5 stars for the illustrations and 1 star for the content, mainly because the author strongly supports the idea that Margaret Murray's view on witches and witchcraft was the most authentic one. She even acknowledges Murray's research being discredited...

Overall the book is an aesthetic masterpiece but not too reliable.

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### **Gina Herald says**

Exquisite artwork, and not a cloying watered down version of what the witch's tradition is to make it seem

more PC. Said watering down usually occurs via denying sexuality as a powerful tool for the intellect or trivializing the power of radical acceptance (which I use here in reference to the diving into "evil" and "ugliness" to see what truly lies at the heart of such concepts). I appreciate that. There's a reason witches were viewed as being dangerous, as they embody the healer who is guided by the marriage of her intuition and intellect. The synthetic creative brilliance that distills the essence of "becoming" with which the book is crafted is a testament to the original practice, as much as the content is.

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### **Nina says**

This is a book not about witchcraft or witches merely, but about the archetype of the too powerful female figure and how that figure is villianized by patriarchal societies. It is also a commentary on the historical tendency of the Catholic church to ensure that the symbols and gods worshipped by the pagan faiths existent in the middle ages and ancient time were reduced to the anti-gods of the new Christian faith. The poetry is not particularly good, the art is much better. As a whole it is a very thought provoking book about the nature of the female identity in society, art, literature and religion. It deeply urged me to question the entire concept of the archetype of a "witch", why she is considered dangerous, evil and worthy of destruction, and how this archetype has manifested itself again and again in societies throughout history.

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### **Saren Eddy says**

This is not a study on Wicca, or a historical look at witchcraft, or really about "facts" at all. It is more about perceptions of witches as archetypes, fairy-tale characters and/or the wishful daydreams of the mundane human of what it may mean to be something "other"..\

I give it full stars mainly because my mother had a copy of it when I was a child and I loved it dearly then. Also, the illustrations are simply fantastic. Plus, it looks better naked. Take the dust-jacket off.

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### **Sam says**

I wasn't totally sure what to expect from this book but having read and loved Fear of Flying I was looking forward to seeing if Jong could live up to my opinion of her. And didn't she just. As a witch (and one proud to use the title) I was quite intrigued about her views of witches over the centuries and the drivers behind the various witch-hunts that have taken place over the centuries. I found her writing both amusing, enlightening and informative although I did feel it focus a little on the coven and Pagan style of witchcraft, missing out the solitary and more folk side of the craft (which happens to be the path I follow). However, I loved the illustrations by Jos Smith and even some of the poetry pricked my ears up and made me take note, which is impressive as I'm not usually a big poetry fan.

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### **Steve Kruppa says**

This book focuses on the witch as a archetype of female sexuality and expression in a spiritual sense. Kind of what you would expect from Erica Jong. This book takes many aspects of the craft and looks at why they may have been developed and how they fit into feminine spirituality. It shows the witch as the female rebel

against male patriarchal religious practices. Beautifully illustrated book.

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### **Sarah - All The Book Blog Names Are Taken says**

The word 'silly' keeps coming to mind but that's not totally accurate. I do, however, judge the use of exclamation points used so freely (as in, at all) in non-fiction, so I guess silly will have to do.

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### **Claudia Loureiro says**

I want really expecting this book to be so good, I finished it in a day. It's filled with beautiful artwork and writings based on folklore and historic witchcraft. Includes lesser talked about (amongst modern pagans and wiccans) herbs, such as the Solanaceae family, that I was especially happy to see here. Not a manual by far, but an excellent collection of poetry and information that any witch should check out and perhaps even keep as a beautiful coffee table book after reading it.

Funny enough I also think the book looks nicer without the white dust jacket on it as pictured. It's bound in marbled blue with gold writing and a gold symbol. Sitting the dust jacket aside to keep it from getting torn only enhances this one.

My copy was used as I wanted hardcover, but it came in excellent condition!

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### **Mikol says**

This book is just beautiful.

I didn't know that Eric Jong was sympathetic to wicca. I could have guessed based on her other novels. This was kind like finding out the Stevie Nicks was a witch.

I was transported to childhood or a place of childlikeness when I started turning the pages. I can't remember whether this was a book meant for children or if in fact the design of the book was to evoke exactly that feeling I mentioned above.

The graphics and colors are just absolutely gorgeous.

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Mike