

Witch Child

By Celia Rees

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"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 herbeloved 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?

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Witch Child By Celia Rees Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
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*

From Publishers Weekly
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.

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From School Library Journal
Gr 5-9-Journal entries, found and pieced together from pages stitched inside a 17th-century quilt, are said to be the basis of this captivating tale. As her grandmother is executed as a witch by English village folk, Mary Newbury is abducted by a wealthy woman and shipped off to America. During the long, difficult journey,

she makes friends with some of the other Puritan emigrants, finding an older woman to draw her into the community. They join other followers of the Reverend Elias Cornwall to travel to a newly established village deep in the Massachusetts wilderness where their very survival is threatened, not only by the harsh physical conditions, but also, the villagers believe, by savage Native Americans and the presence of the devil among them. The healing skills Mary learned from her grandmother make her useful, but also a target for suspicion. She is befriended by a Native American boy who accepts without question the supernatural talents she must hide from her community. When, inevitably, the village turns against her, she escapes to the woods. There is no more to the story in this volume, but eager readers who visit the accompanying Web site will learn that a sequel is forthcoming. While the quilt premise is an obvious ploy, the historical setting is sound and well developed, and Mary is an entirely believable character. Readers already captivated by stories such as Ann Rinaldi's Break with Charity (Harcourt, 1992) or Elizabeth George Speare's The Witch of Blackbird Pond (Houghton, 1958) will not want to miss this one.

Kathleen Isaacs, Edmund Burke School, Washington, DC

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brenda Taylor:

The book Witch Child make you feel enjoy for your spare time. You can utilize to make your capable far more increase. Book can to become your best friend when you getting strain or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make looking at a book Witch Child to become your habit, you can get far more advantages, like add your current capable, increase your knowledge about many or all subjects. You can know everything if you like open and read a book Witch Child. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science publication or encyclopedia or some others. So , how do you think about this publication?

Susan Rogers:

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Lisa Phelps:

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