



The Return of the Witch

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READING GROUP GUIDE

About the book:

I approached writing 'The Return of the Witch' with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. I was happy to be spending time once again with characters who had become very dear to me. I wanted to see what they would do next. To travel with them on new adventures. To share their triumphs and disasters. At the same time, I was aware of the pressure of expectation. Readers who had taken Elizabeth and Tegan to their hearts would surely relish reading more about them, but would the characters and the stories develop in a way that pleased them? In a way that fulfilled the possibilities conjured in their own imaginations?

Of course you cannot write to please other people. A writer who tries to guess what readers want is doomed to failure, for there are as many different opinions as there are readers. Before starting, I had to shrug off all these considerations and reconnect with the characters. They would lead me where they wanted to go, I trusted them to do that. And they did.

To have some say in the shape of the book at least (and not to let the characters have it all their own way!) I decided to set part of the story in the middle of the seventeenth century, and part in the middle of the nineteenth. These are both periods in British history which fascinate me, and which have distinctive characteristics. I hope that made them easily identifiable and imaginable for readers. There is something gothic about those years, too, and such a mood inherent in the setting colours the story itself, helping to set the tone.

Another aspect of 'The Return of the Witch' that gave me the greatest joy to write was recounting Tegan's training as a witch. She had a busy five years! I spent happy hours reading up on many kinds of magic, and learning about a wide variety of practices and beliefs throughout the world. It was hard to pick just three, but I'm happy with the choices I made in the end. I hope readers will be as intrigued and inspired by Tegan's teachers as she was, and indeed, as I was, too!





How I imagine the windmill near
Batchcombe.



Siberian frozen lake.



A scorpion from the Deserts of the
Dead.



Houses near Primrose Hill, London.



Discussion Questions

- * If you read 'The Witch's Daughter', how did you feel about rejoining Elizabeth and Tegan as their story continued? If you met them in 'The Return of the Witch' for the first time, will you now go back and read the first book?
- * The structure of the novel involves flashbacks with Tegan where we learn about what she has been up to for the past five years. Was this a successful element of the book for you? What did you think of her encounters with other people of magic? Did you have a favourite witch or shaman? Which type of magic would you most like to learn, and why?
- * Which was your favourite setting in the book? If you could Time Step, which point in history would you choose to visit?
- * Lucrecia and Florencia were truly dangerous, and devoted to Gideon, but did you see them as wicked or as victims?
- * What was your reaction to what William did to help Bess? Was there anything that could have been done differently so that he did not have to make such a sacrifice? What might you have done in Elizabeth's position?
- * Gideon is the one being hunted through much of this story. He is prepared to pay a very high price for his freedom from the Summerlands, and in some way he is trapped by this. Did you feel he was more or less powerful than before? Did you feel sorry for him at all?
- * Aloysius has a very important part to play in the story. How do you feel about animals as characters? Were you worried that something bad would happen to him? What would your reaction have been if he had been harmed? Did you feel equally protective towards Nipper?
- * In this book, it is Tegan who becomes the more powerful witch. Elizabeth watches her pupil grow in wisdom, magic, and power. Do you think this was difficult for her in some ways? Or was she ultimately relieved to see her prodigy able to take care of herself?
- * Erasmus is a complicated character, with a dangerous job. What did you think of him? Do you think he is right for Elizabeth? What might the future hold for them?
- * By the end of the book, Tegan has one old friend and one new companion to travel through life with. What do you think she should do next? Where would you like to see her go? Do you think she will ever return to Willow Cottage, or see Elizabeth again?

I hope you enjoyed reading 'The Return of the Witch'. I am always happy to hear from readers. You can contact me on my website www.paulabrackston.com or my Facebook page, or leave your thoughts about the book on Goodreads.

