

A Discovery of Witches

by Deborah Harkness

Book Club Discussion Questions

1. Diana's mother says that fear is 'the strongest force on earth' (p.5). What does she mean? Do you agree?
2. Early in the novel, Harkness describes the typical personalities and physical traits of daemons, witches, and vampires. If you could be any one of these beings, which would you choose and why?
3. Who is the Congregation? Is it a force for good or a force for evil?
4. What happened to Diana's parents? What were they trying to hide?
5. Diana studies alchemy, which she defines as a type of 'science with magic' (p.73) used to explore and understand unexplained phenomena. Do you use astrology, fortune-telling, or ESP to provide a deeper understanding of events in your own life?
6. Why is Diana and Matthew's love forbidden? Have you ever loved someone whom your family or friends thought was inappropriate? How did their reaction influence your feelings?
7. Most of the book is told from Diana's perspective, yet a few chapters are written in the third person. Why? What feature or purpose unites those chapters?
8. Diana and Matthew travel back to the sixteenth century. If you had the power to time walk, as she does, what period in history would you visit?
9. In chapter 31, Diana remembers the bedtime story her mother told her as a child. In what ways does that story foreshadow the events of Diana's life?
10. Harkness presents the use of witchcraft not only as an otherworldly ability but also as a part of everyday life; for example, Diana uses a spell to fix her washing machine. Which example of the novel's blending of the magical with the mundane did you find most entertaining or creative?
11. Look at the last page of the book. What is the significance of the blood and mercury? What is the reason behind the sense of relief felt in the house? What does the last sentence of the book mean?

Discussion Questions by the publisher

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