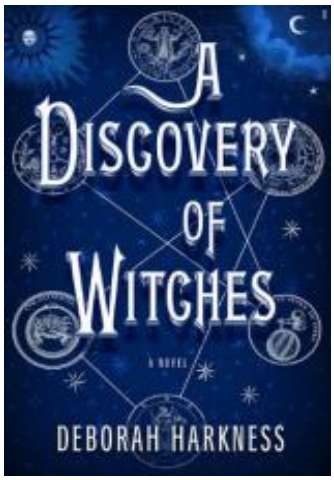
A Discovery of Witches

by Deborah Harkness



About the Book

Diana Bishop has spent her entire life trying to deny who she really is. The only child of two powerful witches, orphaned when she was just seven years old, Diana has rejected her magical abilities, determined to pass as human. But with her unwitting discovery of a mysterious manuscript long hidden in the archives of the Bodleian Library, Diana is forced to face the heritage she has tried so hard to forget. The power of the enchanted manuscript, known only as Ashmole 782, is both tantalizing and intimidating and she quickly sends the book back to the stacks, hoping to return to her normal life. Unbeknownst to her, she has discovered a volume that can unlock all the secrets of her world and, in doing so, has ignited a war --- and made herself the prime target.

Drawing on a wealth of knowledge about alchemy and the history of witchcraft, Deborah Harkness has crafted a fast-paced, intensely readable novel of magic, adventure, and romance. **A Discovery of Witches** charts Diana's struggle to accept her family's magical legacy, her growing understanding of the scope of the battle she has begun, and her dangerous alliance with handsome geneticist --- and fifteen-hundred-year-old vampire --- Matthew Clairmont.

Vampires, known for their jaw-dropping good looks and seductive charm, aren't supposed to associate with witches, but Diana's discovery has caught Matthew's attention. Contrary to everything she has been taught and despite her initial reluctance and suspicion, Diana joins forces with Matthew to battle the dark spirits that are gathering around them. But cooperation quickly leads to attraction as Diana and Matthew begin to fall in love --- an act forbidden by the Congregation, the covenant of witches, daemons, and vampires who dictate the rules of behavior for all underworld species and have the power to cruelly punish those who break them.

A complicated yet entirely relatable heroine, Diana must discover the surprising truth of her own legacy and realize the strength of her magic in order to prevent Ashmole 782 from falling into the wrong hands. Her journey, as well as her relationship with Matthew, will keep readers turning pages late into the night and have them hotly anticipating the next stage in her adventure. A world filled with enchantment and danger, sorcery and science, **A Discovery of Witches** is a

sophisticated and smart novel that blends the excitement of a classic supernatural thriller with the intelligence that could be provided only by a respected scholar and skilled storyteller like Deborah Harkness.

Discussion Guide

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? If you could use magic in your daily life, what would you use it for?

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?

Author Bio

Deborah Harkness is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of A DISCOVERY OF WITCHES, SHADOW OF NIGHT, THE BOOK OF LIFE, TIME'S CONVERT and THE BLACK BIRD ORACLE. A history professor at the University of Southern California, Harkness has received Fulbright, Guggenheim, and National Humanities Center fellowships. She lives in Los Angeles.

Critical Praise

"Romantic, erudite, and suspenseful? Harkness attends to every scholarly and emotional detail with whimsy, sensuality, and humor."

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