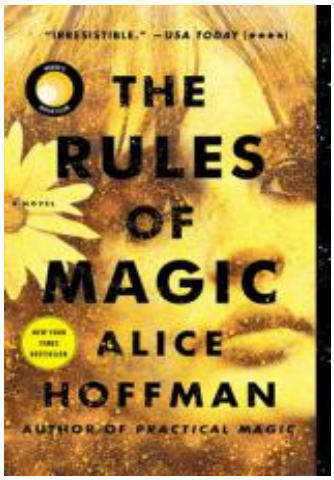
The Rules of Magic

by Alice Hoffman



About the Book

From beloved author Alice Hoffman comes the spellbinding prequel to her bestseller, PRACTICAL MAGIC.

Find your magic.

For the Owens family, love is a curse that began in 1620, when Maria Owens was charged with witchery for loving the wrong man.

Hundreds of years later, in New York City at the cusp of the '60s, when the whole world is about to change, Susanna Owens knows that her three children are dangerously unique. Difficult Franny, with skin as pale as milk and blood red hair; shy and beautiful Jet, who can read other people?s thoughts; and charismatic Vincent, who began looking for trouble on the day he could walk.

From the start, Susanna sets down rules for her children: No walking in the moonlight, no red shoes, no wearing black, no cats, no crows, no candles, no books about magic. And most importantly, never, ever, fall in love. But when her children visit their Aunt Isabelle, in the small Massachusetts town where the Owens family has been blamed for everything that has ever gone wrong, they uncover family secrets and begin to understand the truth of who they are. Back in New York City each begins a risky journey as they try to escape the family curse.

The Owens children cannot escape love even if they try, just as they cannot escape the pains of the human heart. The two beautiful sisters will grow up to be the revered, and sometimes feared, aunts in PRACTICAL MAGIC, while Vincent, their beloved brother, will leave an unexpected legacy.

Thrilling and exquisite, real and fantastical, THE RULES OF MAGIC is a story about the power of love, reminding us that the only remedy for being human is to be true to yourself.

Discussion Guide

1. We learn that the rules of magic are to harm no one, remember that what you give will be returned to you threefold, and fall in love whenever you can. Do Franny, Jet and Vincent live by these rules? What happens when they break them? What set of rules would you live by?

2. Make note of the part titles. What do the titles add to the narrative? Why do you think the author chose the titles she did?

3. Alice Hoffman?s novels are often woven with qualities that earn them a place in the genre of magical realism. Discuss how she achieves this writing style. What details do you notice she includes? What sources of inspiration does she draw from?

4. When the Owens siblings visit Aunt Isabelle for the first time, she tells them a story about a cousin named Maggie, who was turned into a rabbit. She warns Franny, Jet, and Vincent that this ?is what happens when you repudiate who you are? (page 30). Each is certain that the harrowing tale was meant to caution her or him specifically. How do they interpret it differently? Why do you think Isabelle shared this story?

5. If you are familiar with PRACTICAL MAGIC, you already know that the Owenses? ancestor, Maria, cast a curse that brought an end to any man who fell in love with a member of the family. In THE RULES OF MAGIC, we uncover the secret that they are ?all descendants of a witch-finder and a witch? (page 138). What is revealed about Maria?s love affair? Does it help us understand the reasoning behind the curse?

6. Frances in particular seems to wrestle the most with the curse, even with her Maid of Thorns reputation. Why is this so? Why do you think she can?t embrace love the way her siblings do?

7. Forgiveness quickly becomes a large theme of the novel. After their parents die, Jet develops a deep self-hatred. The distrust between Franny and Haylin only grows after the incident at Turtle Pond, and Vincent?s own heavy secrets burden him. Discuss how the characters work through their conflicts, and whether or not they are able to resolve the issues.

8. There is something magical about Vincent?s music. Audiences are spellbound by his performances, even early on in Isabelle?s garden. His song, ?I Walk at Night,? seems to tell the past and the future, like a prophecy. Discuss which lines you liked best. Did you notice any that foreshadowed events? What references do the lyrics make? When he says, ?I walked at night, I longed to fight? (page 217), what do you think he means?

9. One summer night while walking his dog, Harry, Vincent stumbles upon the Stonewall riots, often recognized as the origin of the gay rights movement in the United States. What do you know about this historical event? Do you think the revolt changed him? How do the riots contrast with Vincent and William?s trip to California during the Summer of Love?

10. Jet also wanders through a historical event inspired by the Human Be-In, held in Central Park on Easter Sunday of 1967. She accidentally ingests LSD and almost drowns herself in one of the park?s ponds. What brought Jet to this

moment? Would you consider it her rock bottom? When she meets Rafael, he begins to pull Jet out of her despair. How does their love help her recover, and how does it differ from her relationship with Levi?

11. When Vincent and William visit April in California, she remarks, ?Fate is what you make of it.... You can make the best of it or you can let it make the best of you? (page 220). In a novel that often seems ruled by fate, how do the characters determine their own destinies? How is the advice applicable to April?s own life?

12. Vincent?s fate is altered when he is drafted to Vietnam in one of the country?s most unpopular and controversial wars. Do you think his sisters did the right thing by smuggling him out of the country? What would you have done if you or a loved one were drafted at the time?

13. When Haylin, the love of Franny?s life, dies from cancer, she asks her sister, ?How will I ever love anyone again?? Of course, Sally and Gillian Owens, recently orphaned through a tragedy of their own, become the answer to that question. Still, this is an issue that resurfaces throughout the book. In a family where love is destined to bring loss, how do the characters continue to find the courage to love more, not less?

Author Bio

Alice Hoffman is the author of more than 30 works of fiction, including WHEN WE FLEW AWAY, THE WITCHES OF CAMBRIDGE, THE INVISIBLE HOUR, THE BOOK OF MAGIC, MAGIC LESSONS: The Prequel to *Practical Magic*, THE WORLD THAT WE KNEW, THE RULES OF MAGIC, FAITHFUL, THE MARRIAGE OF OPPOSITES, THE MUSEUM OF EXTRAORDINARY THINGS, THE DOVEKEEPERS, PRACTICAL MAGIC, THE RED GARDEN, and the Oprah's Book Club selection HERE ON EARTH. She lives near Boston.

Photo Credit: Alyssa Peek

The Rules of Magic
by Alice Hoffman

Publication Date: June 26, 2018
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Magical Realism
Paperback: 400 pages
Publisher: Simon & Schuster
ISBN-10: 1501137484
ISBN-13: 9781501137488