



Ask Rose Ariadne
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Witchcraft Book Reviews

In your own words, compare and contrast, and review some of the best books on Witchcraft out there.

Fifteen to twenty years ago good books on the topic of Witchcraft were as rare as hens' teeth. The subsequent increase in religious tolerance towards the pagan community and the steady re-emergence of Witches from the broom closet, have resulted in an abundance of really good books on the topics of paganism and Witchcraft.

Selecting the best three or even the best ten would be an impossibility. Each author has his or her own unique way of relating the philosophy, history, tradition and practical aspects of the Craft. The Craft is very often practiced by Eclectics, each having incorporated their own special elements into their practice, thus creating greater resonance with their respective beliefs.

I have my favorite authors, much like the next Witch. So, the three books I am about to review were written by Cunningham, Ravenwolf and Starhawk respectively and available in most countries world-wide. The books are very different – one from the other - in some ways. Ravenwolf writes for the young and the young at heart. Starhawk writes for the serious Witch. Cunningham writes for the gentle. Although diverse, these three authors and their many works over the years are probably some of the best available on bookshelves today. It is however up to each individual to decide which of the books (if not all) are the 'right' ones to buy.

Solitary Witch by Silver Ravenwolf (ISBN 0-7387-0319-2: Llewellyn)

This hefty 590-pager comprises of 5 Parts and takes the format of a Book of Shadows. Ravenwolf covers all aspects of the Wiccan Religions and Mysteries in Part 1. Part 2 is dedicated to Objects and Tools. Part 3 provides detailed information on the proficiencies and expertise a Witch needs to acquire.





Magick and Enchantments in Part 4 covers everything from Alchemy to Faeries, offers information on correspondences, astral travel and much, much more. The 5th and final Part shows the practical application of Magick in everyday life.

The book is written in a friendly tone and uses everyday language, which makes it an absolute pleasure to read. As with all Ravenwolf's books, this one too is logically structured, highly informative, entertaining and well researched. In spite of its size, the book comes in at the reasonable price tag of around US\$30.95. 'Solitary Witch' is an excellent buy for anybody who would like to own a single book containing everything conceivable about the Craft.

The Spiral Dance 20th Anniversary Edition by Starhawk (ISBN 0-06-251632-9: Harper San Francisco)

Starhawk is definitely one of the stalwarts of the Craft. Her first edition of this definitive work was in 1979 – a time of great prejudice against all things pagan. She is a peace activist, an eco-feminist, Gaia rights campaigner and forever in the front-line when it comes to the reinstitution of the title 'Witch' in its rightful place in society. Starhawk never misses a beat.

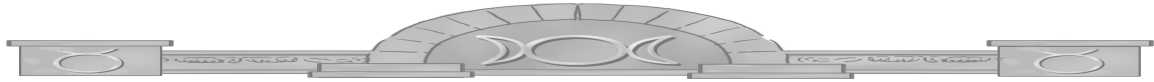
Her book is no different. Over the first 41 pages offers a brief, concise and interesting overview of the modern history of Witchcraft and the worldview on Witchcraft. After that, in true Starhawk fashion, she accurately covers all the practical aspects of the Craft: Rituals, Invocations and Magick. Starhawk goes further than most authors in offering exercises (61 in all) to assist Seekers, Novices and Initiates alike in developing the subconscious mind. This development is a critical aspect of magick. The exercises in 'The Spiral Dance' are, in my opinion, the best of the best out there.

She concludes the 326-page book with a glance at the future – the future of the Craft. This book is a must in the library of any serious Witch. It is written in Starhawk's typical no-nonsense and no-sacred-cow style and underpinned by the absolute love and passion she has for the Lady, for everything of the Lady and for the Craft. At US\$17, one can't afford not to buy this book.

Wicca – A guide for the Solitary Practitioner by Scott Cunningham (ISBN 0-87542-118-0: Llewellyn)

First printed in 1988, this definitive work on Wicca is in its 25th or 26th edition at present. The book at my disposal is the 23rd edition and was printed in 1999. Cunningham realized that most of the books available were aimed at Covens and compiled this work to address the gap at that time. It was an immediate success.





If you read the book, you will understand why. Cunningham is one of the few authors who has the skill of painting pictures by using normal words and still succeeds in getting the lesson across in a pleasurable and understandable way. 'Wicca: A guide for the Solitary Practitioner' offers the Solitary Seeker both the theoretical knowledge and the practical aspects needed to become and to practice as a Solitary. He also provides a short Book of Shadows in the final section of the work to help the readers on their way. Cunningham does not over-elaborate at all and encourages the assimilation of one's own personality into the practical aspects of the Craft.

Also available in a Spanish translation, this is a highly recommended book. 'Wicca, a guide for the Solitary Practitioner' carries a humble price tag of US\$9.95, making it affordable to just about anybody.

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