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# How To Hang A Witch



## Synopsis

Jennifer Niven, bestselling author of *All the Bright Places* says "I am utterly addicted to Adriana Mather's electric debut. It keeps you on the edge of your seat, twisting and turning with ghosts, witches, an ancient curse, and-- sigh-- romance. It's beautiful. Haunting. The characters are vivid and real. I. Could. Not. Put. It. Down." It's the Salem Witch Trials meets *Mean Girls* in a debut novel from one of the descendants of Cotton Mather, where the trials of high school start to feel like a modern day witch hunt for a teen with all the wrong connections to Salem's past. Salem, Massachusetts is the site of the infamous witch trials and the new home of Samantha Mather. Recently transplanted from New York City, Sam and her stepmother are not exactly welcomed with open arms. Sam is the descendant of Cotton Mather, one of the men responsible for those trials and almost immediately, she becomes the enemy of a group of girls who call themselves The Descendants. And guess who their ancestors were? If dealing with that weren't enough, Sam also comes face to face with a real live (well technically dead) ghost. A handsome, angry ghost who wants Sam to stop touching his stuff. But soon Sam discovers she is at the center of a centuries old curse affecting anyone with ties to the trials. Sam must come to terms with the ghost and find a way to work with the Descendants to stop a deadly cycle that has been going on since the first accused witch was hanged. If any town should have learned its lesson, it's Salem. But history may be about to repeat itself. It's like *Mean Girls* meets history class in the best possible way. • --Seventeen Magazine "Mather shines a light on the lessons the Salem Witch Trials can teach us about modern-day bullying and what we can do about it." --Bustle.com "Strikes a careful balance of creepy, fun, and thoughtful." --NPR

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (109 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #7,959 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 in Books > Teens > Literature &

Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Emotions & Feelings #46 inÂ Books > Teens > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Horror #70 inÂ Books > Teens > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Fantasy > Paranormal & Urban

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

"How to Hang a Witch" is a really spooky, twists and turns, must read novel. It's written by a descendant of one of the key players in the Salem Witch Trials, Cotton Mather. The book's main character is the fictional, Samantha "Sam" Mather. She moves into her grandmother's old house with her step-mother while her father is in a coma. It's isn't long before bad things happen and Sam gets accused of being the cause of the troubles, especially by The Descendants ( a group of teens whose ancestors deaths were because they were accused of witchcraft. While Sam works out the mystery, she encounters her next door neighbor, Jaxon. There's definitely a romantic attraction there. She also encounters the spirit of Elijah, who lived in Salem at the time of the Salem Witch Trials. I love a spooky read and "How to Hang a Witch" did not disappoint me. There were definitely some give you the creep moments while reading the book. I had a feeling who the villain of the book was but didn't put it completely together until it was revealed. Adriana Mather did a great job in crafting the story and making the reader want to not put the book down. I also really liked the way Salem was written and made me want to book a trip there and go right now. If you like spooky atmospheres in your books, this is a great one for you. Highly recommended reading for a chilly October night or better yet, on a trip to Salem, Massachusetts.

I really enjoyed this book. I love witch books in general, and this one really hit that mark. It's set in Salem, it has a curse, a ghost, scary woods with a creepy abandoned house, a historical backdrop, a coven and a rambling old house with secret passages. What's not to love about that? The writing is excellent. It grabbed me and I'd read several chapters before I knew it. I had a bit of work to do but the first chance I got, I went right back to it and didn't put it down until I was done. For me, it was a page turner. It starts as a mystery, and a story of a social misfit, Sam, in the uncomfortable situation of having to move to a new town, and a new school, and it seems no one much likes her. As the story evolves the mystery deepens and the action picks up. Sam, and the main male characters are well developed, but our mean girl entourage is rather cliché. It works for this story though. The story is a bit of a social commentary on bullying, and compares high school bullying that to targeted

scapegoating of the witch trials in early America. That's really my only complaint with the book, and it's not with the story, but the notes at the end. While I get the comparison the author makes, it can leave people with the impression that bullying is the strongest form of scapegoating hysteria that is alive today. In fact, on almost all continents weaker members of society, children in Nigeria, teen girls and elderly women in India, ect., are still being targeted and brutally murdered because of accusations of witchcraft very frequently. The burning times isn't in the past, but I suppose it can feel safer to think they are. Because of that, the comparison fell flat with me. Bullying is serious, but I'd choose that any day over my entire family and village repeatedly pushing me into a brush fire and not letting me out until I was painfully murdered. Perhaps that's my highhorse though, so I'll not deduct my rating for it..I did appreciate that spellcraft was handled in a neutral manner, and that the history of Salem, as well as its present, was fairly accurate and handled respectfully. There was a bit of artistic license with the Ann Putnam character for the sake of the story, but this was well explained. I loved that the story highlighted the problem with Gallow's Hill being considered the site of the hangings. (Very recently Proctor's Lodge was confirmed to be the site, though a few still debate that.) The way that changing landscapes was mentioned, and how that plays into our understanding of history was a great inclusion threaded through the tale. It's nice to see such a fun book that is intelligent too. The language is not bad in this book, and there's no sex, only a bit of kissing. To me, the values are very good - the main characters' motivations are helping their loved ones.

Oh, rating this was pretty hard. There are places where I'd bump that star rating up to three, and even moments where it might have hit four, but for the most part it kept sliding back to two. The concept is actually interesting--the main character is a descendant of Cotton Mather, who was involved in leading the Salem Witch trials. She shows up in town and strange things start happening, dangerous things, and people begin to die. It all seems to be tied to a curse placed on her ancestors and the ancestors of witches who were hanged as a result of Cotton's actions. I will say that there is some cleverness in the way things are connected, but I had the "whodunit" figured out rather early. The main issues I had were with the flatness of the characters and the fact that everything felt so typical and trope-y for a YA novel. Sarcastic main character (and if you don't believe she is, she does tell you herself) is forced to move from big city to small town, where she proves to be completely clumsy, and everyone hates her, except the hot and very sweet guy she meets on her first day. Oh, but then she meets another guy, more mysterious and unattainable... Other things that bothered me: The pacing didn't feel right, the romantic moments felt

awkward, the cussing felt wedged in, and the characters were either pretty much stereotypes or they were inconsistent. I just never felt connected to the characters or the setting. The only thing that kept me reading at all past the half-way point was my desire to find out if I was right about who was responsible for the curse. I really, really wish I could be more positive about this book. It sounded like such a cool novel. I expected dark, and creepy, and to be sucked into a deep mystery, but the execution (pardon the pun) fell flat for me.

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