

Book Club Discussion Questions: The Witch of Willow Hall

1. Witchcraft has a long and intricate history in America, Britain, and in other countries. What are the implications of a power held solely by women, passed down through generations—especially in certain historical periods? In what ways does this power relate to the women's movement we are experiencing now?
2. Lydia has a complicated relationship with her sister Catherine. How does Lydia manage this relationship, and how does it play into and affect Lydia's power?
3. Did you feel sympathy for Catherine? Why or why not?
4. What do you think of Mrs. Montrose's decision to keep the truth of her family's heritage from her daughters for so long? Why did she do this? Was it the right choice?
5. John Barrett keeps a terrible secret from Lydia throughout most of the story. What do you think motivated him to do so? Was it his own guilt, or simply a desire to win Lydia's heart?
6. This story is about many things, and one of them is a house that is haunted by grief, tragedy, and anger. What other haunted house stories have you read or watched, and what common threads do these stories share with each other? How does *The Witch of Willow Hall* fit into this tradition?
7. In what other metaphorical ways does the past rise to haunt us? Think of major world events in history, and how they come to bear on the present.
8. How does the setting—Willow Hall, its grounds, the pond, the town—function in this novel?
9. John's hobby is birdwatching. What clues does this give us about his character?
10. *The Witch of Willow Hall* explores the rich history of the New England region. How has this area's past—particularly, the Salem Witch Trials—shaped its present?