

What books explain about Paganism?

There are hundreds if not thousands of books about Paganism. Like any other subject some books are good, and some are not. The best approach is to read widely, use common-sense and your personal instinct. Most books are the opinions or recordings of one person's approach to Paganism. If you feel a book contradicts something you read previously, don't panic, it is a typical feeling. If a book makes you feel overwhelmed (or underwhelmed) then it probably means you need to read some different books.

Visit different websites with recommended reading lists, or post requests to Pagan discussions boards explaining what you are looking for and ask for suggested reading.

The internet is a wonderful tool for learning about Paganism, but like books, many websites are filled with misleading or contradictory information.

Some basic books that explain Paganism include:

Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia by Lynne Hume (Melbourne University Press)

Drawing Down the Moon by Margot Adler (Penguin)

Thorsons First Directions: Paganism by Vivienne Crowley (Thorsons)

Pagan Pathways (New Edition) by Charlotte Hardman and Graham Harvey (Thorsons Publishers)

The Urban Pagan by Patricia Telesco (Llewellyn Publications)

This is by no means a comprehensive list.

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Your membership dollar also helps PAN sponsor local groups & events and further its educational aims.

For more information, please contact PAN Inc.



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PAN Inc.

Truth & Tales About Paganism

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Pagan Awareness Network Inc
Australia

The Pagan Awareness Network (PAN Inc.) has created this pamphlet to address some basic facts about Paganism.

Is Paganism an ‘Earth-Based Religion’?

Paganism is often referred to as ‘earth-based’. Although this is correct it must be remembered that Paganism is not a singular or uniform belief-system. It is a complex term with a broad application. Not all pagan pathways are ‘earth-based’, for example Ceremonial Magick.

‘Earth based’ infers an aspiration to be in harmony with the cycles of nature (birth, death, rebirth) and the natural world.

What sort of ‘gods’ do Pagans believe in?

Pagans can approach the idea of ‘Deity’, God’ and/ or ‘Goddess’ from a duotheistic, polytheistic or even pantheistic perspective. Pagans can pray to their deities, have faith in them and cultivate a personal relationship with them, just like any other religion. Pagans draw from any pantheon or specific Deity they feel a connection with.

Some Pagans may prefer to devote themselves exclusively to a particular Goddess or God however most Pagans understand both the masculine and feminine as being equally sacred.

Do Pagans have ‘holidays’ like Christmas or Easter?

Yes — and lots of them too! Pagan holidays are most commonly focused around the cycles of nature, times of personal significance and days sacred to the deities. Not all Pagan celebrations or religious observances are the same nor happen at the same time. Some have a lot of high ceremony and prescribed ritual. Others rely on instinctive or organic approach.

The ‘Wheel of the Year’ refers to eight holidays from Celtic and Northern European cultures, adapted by modern Pagans to create a cycle of holidays that reflects modern and traditional beliefs.

What sort of Pagan am I?

Many Pagans are just ‘Pagan’, however many also identify with self-empowering or descriptive words such as: Witch, Druid, Shaman, Healer, Wiseman/Wisewoman, Magician, etc.

Do I have to be ‘initiated’ to be a Pagan?

Initiation into any kind of coven or tradition is not required to be a Pagan. It may be a requirement for specific paths such as Wicca or some forms of Druidry. Self-directed study and solitary practice is considered as equally important and valid. Choosing to undergo training under a designated teacher is a matter of personal choice.

Newcomers to Paganism may like to dedicate themselves to their deities and demonstrate their commitment through a rite of passage, but this is different from a formal initiation into a ritual group. Such things are optional and depend on what an individual is seeking from Paganism.

Do I have to use Magick? (and why do you spell it with a ‘k’?)

Not all Pagans use Magick and there is no universally accepted code of ethics. It is commonly accepted that Magick is a natural force and, like nature, is neither ‘good’ nor ‘evil’ but merely reflects the aims or desires of the person using it.

Magick, spelt with a k, was devised by Aleister Crowley in order to refer specifically to his definition of Magick. It must be remembered that Crowley was a Ceremonial Magician and his definition, though accepted by many

Pagans, is not the only definition. Most Pagans have their own personal beliefs about Magick and its use.

Should I wear a pentacle to show I’m a Pagan?

It is not a requirement to wear any special symbolic jewellery. Amongst Pagans it is typical to see a wide variety of sacred symbols: from depictions of the God or Goddess, to natural objects such as crystals or shells.

A pentacle is a five pointed star surrounded by a circle. It is the most commonly seen symbol of Paganism but by no means the exclusive one. It can mean different things to different people, e.g. a specific symbol relating to Wicca or a personal symbol reflecting an eclectic Pagan path.

Upright or inverted, a pentacle or a pentagram is just a symbol and has no moral ‘value’ beyond that which the wearer believes it to have.

Do I need to be psychic to be a Pagan?

Psychic abilities are considered as merely an extension of our natural human senses. However psychic ability is not necessary to be a Pagan.

What is a ‘spell’?

A spell is the carrying out of any simple act done to create change (utilising Magick). A spell can also be understood as a type of prayer or observance for a particular God or Goddess.

Spells may take the guise of tying knots in a cord, grinding herbs to put in a sachet, chanting; indeed the variety of spells is infinite. Spells can be followed from a book or created by an individual.

Because of the importance of the natural world, spells often reflect the time of year: e.g. spells for growth and abundance during spring and summer, spells for harvesting or transition in autumn and winter.