

TEXT

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# Color

If what you choose to wear is a song, a poem, an expression of who you are and what you believe about yourself, then what are we, as today's Witches, saying to the world at large? If you go to any big Pagan-friendly event, wander into your local occult bookstore, or hook up with other witches at that odd little coffee shop on the corner, you will find a sort of dress code that will be as natural to you as it is familiar. Nine times out of ten, you will know who the Witches in the room are, and not just because they give off that certain Witchy vibe.

Silver jewelry, ankhs, and pentacles aside, nine times out of ten, you will see your fellow Witches dressed in, you guessed it — **black**.

Deep, dark, mysterious, even a bit wicked, wild, sexy, and ever cool — **black**. Most Witches adore black in all shades and permutations, from lace to leather, from jeans to swishy ankle-length skirts. Black just feels right, black is familiar and comfortable to wear, black simply is what being a Witch is all about. And that's not just our view of ourselves as Witches, but what others expect of us.

## 1 Begin with black.

Black is, of course, the color of **wisdom**, but has also long been the color of **loss and mourning** in Western culture. This custom goes back to Egypt where black was the signature color of the God Osiris: the Ruler of the land of the dead and also Lord of fertility. Even the most ancient name of Egypt, "Kemet," refers to the color, as it means "black earth," referring to the fertile soil of the Nile.



The planetary association for black is **Saturn**, the ancient Roman God of Time and of the harvest. Not surprisingly, Saturn's symbol is the scythe, which has been carried into modern times as the traditional representation of Death with his black hood, scythe, and skeletal hands and skull.

**The Goddess Kali is also associated with the color black** in Her role as the face of the void of chaos and destruction from which all order and new life must come. The dark Abyss which She represents is the place where ideas and dreams must first begin.

(Which makes sense since black holds within it all the other colors of the spectrum.) Perhaps, because of this, black is also a symbol of potentiality and of the infinite possibilities that exist and have always existed.

To put on black clothing of any kind, whether ritual robes or a secular t-shirt and jeans, can serve as a reminder of how the ancient powers make themselves manifest even in today's skeptical world. **Witches should be proud to wear black** not only as a way to connect to their own mysterious heritage, but to connect to the creative forces that live and pulse within.

However, besides black, **three other colors** have long been associated with Witches. If black represents the subtle mysterious essence of what being a Witch is all about, then these colors are the in-your-face Mardi Gras magicks of Witchy power taken to the max. Movie witches, Halloween costumes, even Goth apparel you may find on a Saturday afternoon at the mall, usually include one or more of these three colors.

**2 Add red for romance.** Red is a hot color, emblem of energy, passion, and desire. Associated with sun gods such as Apollo as well as war gods like Mars, red represents the **pure life force** and the ability to ground, since it is the color of the **root chakra**.

Red is usually considered a masculine color because of its "active" properties. In the Medieval period red paint or ink (the color of blood) was used to create magickal sigils and signs to symbolically "bring a



spell to life." Even today, the thread used in most charms and knot magicks is red.

Red is also the color of the Phoenix, the original "poster child" for rebirth as this alchemical bird was consumed by fire, only to rise up time and again from the ashes of its own destruction. The use of red ochre paint to symbolize rebirth may go back to prehistory, as it was the color of the clay painted upon the bodies and bones of the ancient dead, possibly in hopes that they would be reborn again from the womb of the earth to their own tribe or clan.

### 3 Discover the magic of green.

The natural color of healthy, growing plant life, green has long been associated with spring-time and with vegetative deities. The Romans viewed green as the province of their Goddess of Love, Venus, and perhaps that is why it is mainly considered a feminine color today. It is also indicative of joy, love, and abundance, all of which are intimately connected with the **heart chakra**, which also has to do with the power of love and is visualized as being green.

In Arthurian legend, we read of the Green Knight, who had his head chopped off in a contest with Gawain, only to simply pick it up and walk off to wait his own chance at Gawain's neck in a year's time. Clearly, this story an allegory of the renewal of the grain of the fields, whose "heads" were chopped off during the autumn harvest, only to

spring back up from the seeds planted each new year.

In recent revivals of Pagan tradition, we may yet catch a glimpse of the **Green Man**, whose very face is woven of leaves and living branches. The patron spirit of the woodlands, and sometimes also called Jack of the Green, this symbol reminds us of the raw, unstoppable power of sunlight turning into leaf and root. Green was considered an unlucky color by some later (Christian) folklore, because of its association with the greenwood and with the Faery who dwelt there; however, for "canny" folk like modern Wiccans, green is considered lucky for the very



same reason. The color green has also become associated with money (another

symbol of life energy made manifest) and with ecology and environmentalism — another great reason to embrace this lively color!

### 4 The regal power of purple.

Purple is the color of royalty. Like red, purple symbolizes power, but this time in the form of generosity and nobility. The association of purple with royalty comes from the fact that in ancient times purple dye was rare and extremely costly; hence only the rich and powerful could afford to use it. In ancient purple-edged togas were a symbol of royalty; even today, members of the House of Lords (in Britain) wear purple robes on formal



state occasions.

Purple is also associated with Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, and with the glorious drunkenness thought to open the doors of the senses to the world of poetic imagination. Furthermore, the brow chakra — or what some call "the third eye" — is associated with purple. This chakra is the one through which creativity and psychic powers are expressed. Small wonder, then, that the Nine Muses wore violets in their hair!

The Roman god of travelers and messengers, Mercury, had, as one of his duties, the role of *psychopomp*, escorting the newly dead to the land of Hades. How appropriate that the smoky, misty, seductive hues of purple belonged to Him!

As Witches, when we dress in black, we root ourselves in the allure of mystical power. But by adding red, green, and purple, we can move beyond what people expect to see in a Witch into discovering the ways in which we personally connect with the elements — and with the gods.

#### Resources

J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1978

W.C. Hazlitt, *Dictionary of Faiths and Folklore*, Studio Editions Ltd, 1995, first published by Reeves and Turner, London, 1905.

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