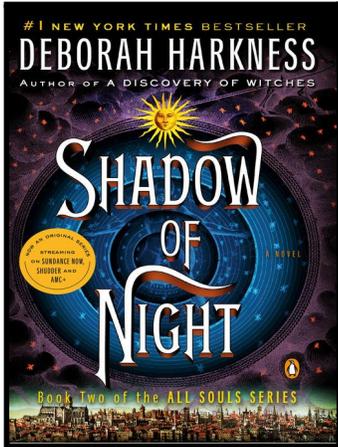




BOOK BUZZ

Shadow of Night Reader's Guide



**Shadow of Night: All Souls
Trilogy, Book 2**
By Deborah Harkness
Penguin Books

[A Penguin Random House Reading Group Guide](#)

Questions and Topics for Discussion

Introduction

Deborah Harkness's *A Discovery of Witches*, the thrilling debut novel in the All Souls trilogy, exploded onto the literary scene, becoming an instant bestseller and leaving fans breathless with its cliffhanger ending. Now, in *Shadow of Night*, Harkness returns with feisty heroine Diana Bishop and her continuing search for the enchanted manuscript known only as Ashmole 782. The new novel finds that Diana has traveled back in time, embraced her magical abilities, and confronted Matthew's complex past as a fifteen-hundred-year-old vampire—but is she risking too much?

The year is 1590, Elizabeth is queen, and all of Europe is aflame with witch burnings. Into this world of danger and conspiracy arrive Diana and Matthew. She has timewalked them from today to sixteenth-century England in the hope that they will track down Ashmole 782 and unlock its secrets. But Diana must also find a guide to help her master her powerful yet unpredictable magic. From the moment they arrive in the past, Diana can see the threads of time unraveling, but has no idea how to control them.



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Harkness draws on her talent for storytelling and her experience as a historian to create a richly textured, authentic world, surrounding her characters with details of Elizabethan life large and small: Diana mingles with Sir Walter Raleigh and Christopher Marlowe, is present for the invention of the telescope, and dances at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor. For Matthew, sixteenth-century life is a return home: to his country manor, to his family, and to his life of royal espionage and international intrigue. This meticulously researched milieu is the setting for an expansive and fast-paced adventure that stretches through centuries and around the globe.

In a world filled with supernatural subterfuge where even thoughts can be dangerous, Diana and Matthew discover unexpected allies; loyalties hundreds of years in the making are tested, and courage comes from the least likely of corners. From royalty to half-mad alchemists, Matthew and Diana find that they aren't the only ones seeking the manuscript. While Matthew attempts to make peace with his troubled past, Diana uncovers a disturbing prophecy for her future—one that could put those she loves most at risk—as Ashmole 782 begins to reveal its dark secrets.

Alchemy, history, and magic—Harkness is in her element, and her smooth control of plot and prose is a pleasure to read. By turns sexy and suspenseful, entertaining and exhilarating, *Shadow of Night* is a massive achievement that will leave her fans clamoring for the final installment in the gripping All Souls trilogy.

About Deborah Harkness

Deborah Harkness is the author of the bestselling *A Discovery of Witches* and is also a historian specializing in the history of science, magic, and alchemy. She has received numerous awards, including Fulbright, Guggenheim, and National Humanities Center fellowships, and is currently a professor of history at the University of Southern California.

A Conversation with Deborah Harkness

Q. Because you are a scholar, your work is based on constant research and analysis; the novel is filled with details that could come only from extended historical work. Do you find a difference between researching for academic purposes and for creative writing? How long did it take you to gather the information for *Shadow of Night*?



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In a way I've been researching *Shadow of Night* since 1982, when I first began studying this period in earnest, though my interest in Elizabethan England extends beyond that into my childhood and teen years. No matter how much I've read or how many documents I've consulted for my scholarship, however, when writing *Shadow of Night* I found there was still so much I didn't know, such as how far and fast a horse could travel in a single day in November or what people ate in December. It was an exciting, humbling experience to write this book.

Q. Your field of specialty is Elizabethan England and the history of science. Is there anything about the period you'd like readers to know that didn't make it into *Shadow of Night*? Did you have to leave anything out?

How much space do we have for my answer? Seriously, if I had put everything into the book I wanted to in terms of historical detail, the book would have been six or seven times as long! In the end, I set myself this test: If I was writing about the present, would I stop to describe this shoe/breakfast/shop? If the answer was no, I kept the story moving. If the answer was yes, then I tried to tell the reader the most important historical details, but it was still not everything that I might have shared.

Q. When we last spoke, you had just published your debut novel, *A Discovery of Witches*. At the time, you said, "Novelists, like the alchemists of old, know that true creation takes time and patience, and that it's likely you will have many disasters and failures before you achieve success." Does this statement still reflect your feelings about writing? Could you share a few details about your development as a novelist between the two books?

Writing a second novel was very different. Writers I've spoken to often tell me that books are like children: No two are the same. That was certainly the case with *Shadow of Night*. I really struggled with the beginning and the most effective way to arrange the plot, much more so than with *Discovery of Witches*. Even in the last month of writing, I was making major changes in the sequence of events.

Q. You added notes at the end of the book that some of the characters (major and minor) are historical figures. Can you say something about the interplay between real people and fictional characters in the novel?



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Back when I started *A Discovery of Witches* and was first imagining this story about an ancient vampire scientist and a reluctant witch, I thought, “Wouldn’t it be fun if my vampire was someone who really lived, someone mysterious who knew interesting people but remained in the shadows?” I knew of just such a person in Elizabethan England, the poet–spy Matthew Roydon. From that moment on—and this was in 2008, so it was some time ago—Matthew Roydon’s life story determined a great deal about Matthew Clairmont’s intellectual habits and his taste in friends. A historical figure like Matthew Roydon is a novelist’s dream, because what little we know about him is so fascinating and leaves so much room for creative invention. I like to think that the historical characters add the same air of verisimilitude to this book set in 1590 as going to yoga and entertaining trick–or–treaters did to *A Discovery of Witches*. As for the minor characters, I drew them from interesting individuals I’d come across in my research. They are usually people about whom I wanted to know more, but there is, alas, no further evidence about them.

Q. In this novel, Diana learns to use her magic and Matthew comes face–to–face with his past. How does this empower and change them?

Facing who you are is the most empowering thing a person can do, so it isn’t surprising that their experiences in 1590 change Matthew and Diana enormously. And long–lasting relationships are built on honesty and acceptance, so this changes not only Diana and Matthew individually, but also who they are as a couple.

Q. Two of our characters are Hancock and Gallowglass. How did they arrive on the scene?

One of the most exciting aspects of writing fiction is I never quite know what’s going to happen next. In *A Discovery of Witches*, Matthew was suddenly driving around in a car and when he stopped, Hamish was there to greet him. I had no plans for Matthew to have a best friend, but now I can’t imagine life without Hamish. It was the same thing with Gallowglass and Hancock—although slightly more dramatic as befits their characters! I was settling in to a cozy evening in front of a fire at the Old Lodge when a storm blew in, carrying Gallowglass and Hancock with it. Once they were there, I fell in love with their banter and the way they are constantly puncturing Matthew’s confidence.



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Q. In your personal reading, do you gravitate toward supernatural and/or historical fiction? How have your own reading tastes shaped this novel?

I don't read much fiction, to be honest, and with the exception of the Harry Potter series I haven't read supernatural fiction since I was a student and read Anne Rice. As for historical fiction, I like historical mysteries set in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but don't read much else. I find it hard to relax when reading works set in the periods of history I know best.

Q. If you had to pick one book (besides your own) to be a companion piece to *Shadow of Night*, what would it be?

That's a great question. I think it would have to be Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or a book about Marlowe, like Charles Nicholl's *The Reckoning*, which brilliantly conveys how tricky it was to lead a double (or triple) life in Elizabethan England. Of course, a Shakespeare play like *Loves Labours Lost* or *The Tempest* would also be an excellent choice.

Q. Any hints about what will happen next to Diana and Matthew?

Diana and Matthew will face an interesting problem in the next book: They have been dropped into a world where time has passed and people have lived their lives as best they could, and they will be expected to step back into a whirl of action and reaction. I would expect some reunions and some farewells, some fascinating new characters as well as old friends and, of course, finally learning what it was that the witches discovered...

Discussion Questions

1. Harkness opens *Shadow of Night* with a quote by Queen Elizabeth I. How is the quote significant to the book?
2. The Elizabethan era is made vivid in the novel through the everyday details that Diana must contend with. What did you find most surprising, funny, or intriguing about life in the sixteenth century?
3. When Diana arrives in 1590, she is thrilled to experience firsthand a world that she had studied as a historian. If you could go back in time, what era would you visit? What would you do while there?



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4. There is no question that Matthew is a compelling character, but is he a traditional romantic hero? Compare him with some of your favorite leading men in literature.
5. Who were the School of Night? What is the meaning behind the title *Shadow of Night*?
6. In *Shadow of Night* Harkness cheekily refers to Shakespeare's plays without naming them. Can you recognize which work she's referring to?
7. What does Diana learn about the materials used to make Ashmole 782?
8. If *Shadow of Night* was a film, which celebrities would you cast in the starring roles?
9. Did you read *A Discovery of Witches*? If so, in what ways has Diana changed since the last novel? If not, how did your own opinion about Diana change through the course of the book?
10. *A Discovery of Witches* ended with a cliffhanger. At the end of *Shadow of Night*, what do you think lies ahead?



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