



The Thirteen

By Susie Moloney
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Introduction

The Thirteen is about a tribe of women who just happen to be witches. They are mothers, daughters, sisters, friends.

Questions for Discussion

1. Mothers and daughters and their acrimonious relationships are at the centre of the story of *The Thirteen*. Is it the obvious possibility of "cruel" magic that keeps the relationships more cordial than they really are, or do the women restrain themselves from expressing their true feelings out of familial love? Which is stronger: magic or family ties?
2. If Rowan had not been at risk, do you think Paula would have joined the coven?
3. The women have all used their magic to improve their personal lives in some way, i.e. Glory loses weight, Esme gets boys to love her, Marla makes her husband more successful. If Paula had gone along along with the girls, how do you think she would have used her magic to improve her life?
4. The suburbs are both very public and yet very private. What would be the most difficult part of keeping a coven secret in a community where everyone knows your business?
5. The idea of "every day magic" is very appealing. How could the case be made against it?
6. If you use magic to get ahead, or to improve your life, appearance, cash flow, etc. is that success still real? Is having the skill of magic comparable to skills you might use otherwise to get ahead?
7. The suburbs have been described as clannish and tribal (and therefore, ripe for in-fighting). What makes them so?
8. How would things in Haven Woods be different if David had lived and Walter had died? Where would Paula and Rowan be now? Would Paula already be a witch?
9. Izzy's grandmother is an interesting figure and implies an ancestral connection to witching. In the prequel to *The Thirteen*, she's a young "flapper," a modern woman who finds out it's not so easy to be a modern woman. In that period of American history, what sort of obstacles might have led her to witchcraft?
10. Marla spells her children to encourage their successes, and they go horribly, horribly wrong. What spells would have been better choices ' and still have created beautiful, intelligent, successful children?
11. There is a certain schedule to the rhythm of the suburbs, based on both the work day and the school day. How does this aid the women in their secret lives, and how would it hinder?
12. This story could not have taken place in the middle of a big city. Why not?
13. The so-called serenity of suburban life is legendary and so are the pitfalls of that kind of isolationist living. In this way, it is like public education, where everyone is separated into grades, based primarily on age. What separates one family from another in the 'burbs?

Suggested Reading:

These are some of the books that, to me, typify the suburbs from a woman's point of view (for better or for worse). Enjoy:

The Woman's Room by Marilyn French
The House Next Door by Anne Rivers Siddons
Little Children by Tom Perrotta
Revolutionary Road by Richard Yates
The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan
Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened by Elizabeth Ewen