

Witch's Curse

In the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, Margaret Hamilton played the Wicked Witch of the West. She had green skin and a black hat and rode around on a broomstick. Her cackling laugh scared young children who watched the movie.

But in real life, Margaret was a kind woman. In fact, she was a kindergarten teacher. She was beloved by her students and their parents.

Margaret appreciated the fame that her witchly role brought her. But sometimes she thought that playing the part of the Wicked Witch of the West was more of a curse than a blessing. She didn't like it when people were afraid of her. And she was disappointed that afterward she only got offered scary parts in movies and plays.

The role of the Wicked Witch may have been cursed in other ways, too. Margaret had to wear green makeup with copper in it, which was bad for her skin. She also had to perform dangerous stunts on the movie set.

One of the most dangerous stunts happened in the scene where the witch leaves Munchkinland. She disappears in a flaming ball of fire, while waving her broom and cackling. In order to film the scene, Margaret had to go through a trap door before the fire started.

Once while they were practicing, the flames spread before Margaret got to the trap door. Her broom caught fire and she got burned on her face and hands. People on the movie set came to her rescue. They tried to put out the fire, and they rushed to get her make-up off. The copper in the green makeup could be very dangerous if it got into her bloodstream.

The pain was intense. Margaret took weeks to recover and she had to wear green gloves to cover the scars on her hands. She was sure that the role was cursed. But she continued with the movie.

Even though Margaret only appeared for 12 minutes in the film, she was one of the most memorable characters. People still quote her lines and copy her laugh today. So was playing the Wicked Witch of the West a curse or a blessing? Margaret Hamilton would likely say it was both.



This page has been intentionally left blank.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. What was wrong with the copper in Margaret's green makeup?
 - a. It made the makeup turn orange
 - b. It could be dangerous if it got into her bloodstream
 - c. It was bad for her skin
 - d. B&C

2. Which of the following was NOT mentioned as a "curse" for Margaret for playing the Wicked Witch?
 - a. She scared people even though she was kind.
 - b. She only got offered scary parts in other movies.
 - c. She lost her voice due to cackling.
 - d. She caught on fire and was burned.

3. Why did Margaret wear green gloves?
 - a. Because she had scars on her hands
 - b. Because she had a rash from the makeup
 - c. Because she didn't want to touch anything
 - d. Because her hands were cold

4. Which of the following is most likely the reason why Margaret didn't want people to be afraid of her?
 - a. Because she was an actress
 - b. Because she was kind
 - c. Because she was a teacher
 - d. Because she was famous

Instructions for teachers:

These questions can be used to assess understanding of the reading passage.

The item in bold is the correct answer for each question.

1. What was wrong with the copper in Margaret’s green makeup?
 - a. It made the makeup turn orange
 - b. It could be dangerous if it got into her bloodstream
 - c. It was bad for her skin
 - d. **B&C**
2. Which of the following was NOT mentioned as a “curse” for Margaret for playing the Wicked Witch?
 - a. She scared people even though she was kind.
 - b. She only got offered scary parts in other movies.
 - c. **She lost her voice due to cackling.**
 - d. She caught on fire and was burned.
3. Why did Margaret wear green gloves?
 - a. **Because she had scars on her hands**
 - b. Because she had a rash from the makeup
 - c. Because she didn’t want to touch anything
 - d. Because her hands were cold
4. Which of the following is **most** likely the reason why Margaret didn’t want people to be afraid of her?
 - a. Because she was an actress
 - b. **Because she was kind**
 - c. Because she was a teacher
 - d. Because she was famous