

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Getting Started with Hoodoo	5
CHAPTER 1: Seeing the Breadth and Depth of Hoodoo	7
CHAPTER 2: Exploring Hoodoo's History	17
CHAPTER 3: Examining Hoodoo's Cultural Roots	43
CHAPTER 4: Classifying the Study of Hoodoo	61
Part 2: Rooting Around in Hoodoo	77
CHAPTER 5: The Magic of Hoodoo: How Rootwork Works	79
CHAPTER 6: Thinking Like a Rootworker	91
CHAPTER 7: Spirit Work: The Soul of Hoodoo	105
CHAPTER 8: Practicing Divination in Hoodoo	119
Part 3: Living Hoodoo	139
CHAPTER 9: Understanding Hoodoo and Faith	141
CHAPTER 10: Personal Power: Your Spiritual Charge and Authority	159
CHAPTER 11: Hoodoo for Everyday Life	175
CHAPTER 12: Personal Power and Collective Justice	189
Part 4: Embracing the Craft of Hoodoo	203
CHAPTER 13: Workin' Part 1: Materials and Methods	205
CHAPTER 14: Workin' Part 2: The Four Ways of Rootworking	225
Part 5: Checking Out Hoodoo Now and Next	255
CHAPTER 15: Hoodoo between Folk and Modern Medicine	257
CHAPTER 16: Living with Hoodoo Tradition in the Modern World	273
CHAPTER 17: Hoodoo in Entertainment	283
CHAPTER 18: Carrying Hoodoo Forward	299
Part 6: The Part of Tens	311
CHAPTER 19: Ten Signs You Might Have Grown Up with Hoodoo	313
CHAPTER 20: Ten Historical Examples of Hoodoo in Action	321
Appendix	329
Index	339

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	3
Icons Used in This Book	3
Beyond the Book	4
Where to Go from Here	4
PART 1: GETTING STARTED WITH HOODOO	5
CHAPTER 1: Seeing the Breadth and Depth of Hoodoo	7
Recognizing the Roots of Hoodoo	8
Knowing what Hoodoo isn't	8
Exploring the African trunk	9
Recognizing a multicultural synthesis	9
Establishing Hoodoo as Science and Magic	11
Getting the Right Mindset	12
Understanding How Hoodoo Is Practiced	13
Reaching the Heart of Hoodoo	13
Knowing Hoodoo's Place in Society	14
CHAPTER 2: Exploring Hoodoo's History	17
Exploring Origins in West and Central African Roots	18
West African cosmological foundations	19
Central African (Kongo) foundations	19
What they brought with them	21
Journeying through Slavery's Effects in the US	22
Finding survival, secrecy, and resistance in the slavery era	22
Moving through post-emancipation and reconstruction	24
Finding a Foothold in Freedom	27
The Great Migration and urban adaptation	28
Jim Crow era and civil rights	31
Modern renaissance and revival	33
Answering the Hard Questions: Who Can Practice Hoodoo?	34
Knowing what African American means in this context	35
Considering where to learn Hoodoo practices	36
Approaching the spiritual core of the debate	36
Retaining the community service tradition	38
Accepting multiracial, biracial, and adoptive family realities	38

Recognizing the Backbone of Hoodoo: Black Women as Keepers of the Flame	40
Knowing why women became primary keepers.	40
Exploring women's role in Black church and community leadership.	40
Seeing modern women leading the revival.	41
CHAPTER 3: Examining Hoodoo's Cultural Roots	43
Embracing the Foundation of Resistance Magic.	44
Exposing African Matriarchal Roots and Communal Values.	45
West and Central African matriarchal traditions	46
Why the traditions survived in Hoodoo and influence modern practice	46
Looking at African communal values	47
Exploring the Influences of Religion on Hoodoo Roots.	49
Using the Bible as a resistance tool	49
Text-heavy magic: The Jewish Kabbalistic contribution.	50
Ecstatic Worship, Spirit Possession, and Pragmatic Practice	52
West African possession traditions.	52
Hoodoo's pragmatism in practice.	54
Infusing the Cultures of Regional Hoodoo.	55
Lowcountry Hoodoo (coastal Carolinas and Georgia)	55
Louisiana Hoodoo (New Orleans and Gulf Coast)	56
Appalachian Hoodoo (mountain folk magic).	56
Southern Plains Hoodoo (Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas).	57
Urban and commercial Hoodoo	57
Diasporan and solo practitioners	58
Seeing Why Cultural Roots Matter for Your Practice	59
CHAPTER 4: Classifying the Study of Hoodoo	61
Defining Hoodoo's Roots in Science and Engineering	62
Hoodoo as folk science.	62
Hoodoo as folk engineering.	63
Hoodoo's Empirical Foundations: The Science	64
Observation and pattern recognition.	65
Experimentation and testing	66
Cause-and-effect thinking	67
Replicability and consistency.	68
Hoodoo's Creative Problem-Solving: The Engineering.	68
Modern Validation: When Institutional Science Catches Up.	71
Documenting Hoodoo as Systematic Knowledge.	72
Inherent documentation methods.	72
The Carver model: Integrating inquiry and reverence.	73
Practicing Hoodoo Scientifically and Technically (without Losing the Magic).	74

PART 2: ROOTING AROUND IN HOODOO	77
CHAPTER 5: The Magic of Hoodoo: How Rootwork Works	79
Understanding What Magic Means in Hoodoo	80
Working with Core Principles of Rootwork	81
Using sympathy and correspondence: Like affects like	82
Applying contagion: Once connected, always connected	82
Focusing intention and will: The worker's power matters	83
Engaging spiritual assistance: You're not alone	83
Choosing timing and condition: When and how you work matters	84
Evaluating results and adjusting: Magic is pragmatic	85
Practicing the Four Domains of Hoodoo Work	86
Changemaking: Working magic to alter circumstances	86
Divination: Seeing what's hidden	86
Building personal power: Strengthening your spiritual foundation	87
Engaging spirit work: Connecting with the invisible world	88
Addressing Common Questions and Concerns	88
Examining effectiveness: Does the magic actually work?	88
Understanding safety: Should you be afraid of Hoodoo?	89
CHAPTER 6: Thinking Like a Rootworker	91
Identifying the Aspects of Hoodoo's Mindset	92
Applying pragmatism over philosophy	92
Embracing strategic cleverness	93
Understanding magic as practical problem-solving	95
Seeing How Practitioners Manifest the Hoodoo Mindset	97
Bringing trickster traits to the forefront	97
Recognizing practitioners who have the mindset	98
Cultivating the Hoodoo Mindset through Practice	99
Integrating Your Magical and Practical Lives	101
Seeing the Hoodoo mindset in practice	101
Achieving integration as the ultimate goal	102
CHAPTER 7: Spirit Work: The Soul of Hoodoo	105
Understanding Why Spirit Work Defines Hoodoo	106
Identifying Spirit Work and Its Many Facets	107
Recognizing spirit work in Black church traditions	108
Understanding spirit work as religious practice	109
Distinguishing veneration from worship	110
Seeing spirit work in cultural examples	110

Answering the Call to Develop Spirit Work	111
Beginning with general guidance	112
Working with various types of spirits	113
Living as a future honored ancestor	115
Setting up altars as spiritual signal boosters	116
CHAPTER 8: Practicing Divination in Hoodoo	119
Understanding Why Divination Matters	120
Recognizing Three Types of Practitioners	121
Seers: Those who just know.	121
Readers: Those who use divination tools	122
Those who are both: Seers who also use tools	122
Uncovering Hoodoo's Divination Methods	123
Reading natural signs and omens	124
Using oracular devices: Tools of the reader	127
Working with dreams: The night school of Hoodoo	131
Developing Your Divination Ability	133
Overcoming common obstacles	134
Following ethical and safety guidelines when reading for others	134
Understanding divination as spiritual practice	135
Working through a sample reading	135
PART 3: LIVING HOODOO	139
CHAPTER 9: Understanding Hoodoo and Faith	141
Defining Religion and How That Relates to Hoodoo	142
Recognizing Hoodoo as practice	142
Seeing Hoodoo as religion through a broader lens	142
Understanding Hoodoo's Roots in Enslavement and Survival	143
Noticing the deep entanglement with Christianity	144
Taking its shape from Colonial power	144
Comparing Hoodoo with other African traditions	144
Navigating Modern Identity and Reclamation	145
Talking about Hoodoo and faith with care	145
Exploring compatibility with Abrahamic faiths	146
Addressing Hoodoo's three core practices	146
Working with herbalism and rootwork across faiths	147
Navigating divination across religious traditions	149
Understanding ancestor veneration and religious boundaries	151
Fostering Acceptance between Hoodoo and Your Religion	155
Recognizing debated territory	156
Acknowledging clear prohibitions	156
Recognizing denominational differences	156

CHAPTER 10: Personal Power: Your Spiritual Charge and Authority	159
Uncovering the Ashe That Moves through You	160
Describing personal power in Hoodoo	160
Confronting the mojo confusion	161
Grasping why personal power matters	162
Manifesting Ashe for Different Callings	163
Identifying common manifestations of Ashe	163
Recognizing your unique gift	164
Building Personal Power through Daily Work	165
Practicing right living: Daily conduct that sustains power	166
Cleansing and uncrossing: Removing what blocks you	167
Protecting and shielding: Defending your charge	168
Feeding your head: Maintaining your power center	168
Maintaining your sacred space through altar work	169
Managing Your Ashe	170
Identifying factors that deplete your power	170
Recovering depleted power	172
CHAPTER 11: Hoodoo for Everyday Life	175
Fortifying Your Home through Spiritual Power	176
Sweeping with intention	176
Adding spiritual power to cleaning supplies	177
Defending your threshold	178
Offering Personal Care and Protection	178
Shielding children	179
Supporting elders	179
Maintaining peace in multi-generational homes	180
Securing Employment and Economic Stability	181
Working with botanical allies for employment	181
Protecting your income	182
Pursuing Justice When Systems Fail	182
Understanding court case work	182
Taking advice from Dr. Buzzard of the Lowcountry	183
Practicing the ethics of restraint	184
Responding to Collective Crisis and Everyday Needs	184
Surviving the 1918 influenza pandemic	185
Enduring the Red Summer of 1919	185
Avoiding the crisis-only trap	186
Installing passive protections	186
Noting Recent Evolution of Hoodoo	187
Navigating the Great Migration	187
Recognizing commercialized Hoodoo	188
Expanding into the digital age	188

CHAPTER 12: Personal Power and Collective Justice	189
Recognizing that the Two Heads of Hoodoo Have Always Existed	190
Exploring Personal Power: The Selfish Work	191
Recognizing that the ethics are complex	191
Understanding when personal is political	192
Discovering Collective Justice: The Noble Work	193
Recognizing the power of collective work	193
Noting the risk of liberation work	194
Addressing the Tension and the Debates	194
Understanding the “crabs in a bucket” problem	195
Considering the counterargument	195
Examining manifestation culture versus liberation magic	196
Practicing Both Hoodoos: A Practical Approach	197
Knowing your motivations	198
Balancing your practice and adjusting for context	199
Holding tension without resolving it	199
Identifying when personal work undermines justice	200
Recognizing when liberation work becomes performative	200
Honoring both/and, not either/or	201
Looking to Historical Examples	201
Harriet Tubman	201
19th-century root doctors	202
Civil rights era practitioners	202
 PART 4: EMBRACING THE CRAFT OF HOODOO	 203
CHAPTER 13: Workin’ Part 1: Materials and Methods	205
Identifying Materials’ Spiritual Properties and Correspondences	206
Understanding Materia Magica and Its Categories	207
Working with roots: Underground power	208
Using herbs and leaves: Growth and change	209
Harnessing minerals and stones: Permanence and power	209
Understanding animal curios: Specific powers	210
Obtaining personal concerns: The most powerful ingredient	211
Preparing condition oils and powders: Concentrated formulas	211
Building Your Rootworking Knowledge and Skills	212
Recognizing hot versus cool and warm ingredients	214
Balancing formulas: Temperature and structure	215

Sourcing and preparing your materials	216
Making substitutions and adaptations.	219
Exploring key ingredients every rootworker should know	221
CHAPTER 14: Workin' Part 2: The Four Ways of Rootworking	225
Rootwork: Earth Magic (The Foundation)	226
Forming physical materials into earth magic work	226
Embracing the art of the process	228
Sample fixing: Building your own money magnet	229
Spiritual Baths: Water Magic (The Cleanser)	232
Understanding why water works magic.	232
Taking a working bath.	233
Timing bath frequency	235
Sample fixing: Washing away what crosses you	235
Candle Work: Fire Magic (The Transformer)	238
Understanding candle work in fire magic	238
Understanding color correspondences	239
Dressing and fixing candles	240
Reading candle behavior	241
Sample fixing: Clearing the road ahead	241
Prayer and Song: Air Magic (The Voice)	245
Singing your power: Music as spiritual work.	246
Engaging with magic through singing.	247
Using Psalms in Hoodoo.	248
Praying powerfully.	248
Sample fixing: Speaking protection into being	249
Combining the Four Approaches	251
PART 5: CHECKING OUT HOODOO NOW AND NEXT	255
CHAPTER 15: Hoodoo between Folk and Modern Medicine	257
Finding the Foundation of Hoodoo as Folk Medicine	258
Tracing the African roots of the medicine bag	258
Learning from Native nations and European botanicals.	259
Creating the village clinic before there were clinics	259
Recognizing a psychiatric system hiding in plain sight	261
Documenting How Folk Medicine Was Systematically Destroyed	262
Exposing the campaign against ignorance	262
Understanding the licensing trap	263
Revealing the propaganda campaign.	263

Tracing the slow strangulation	264
Counting what was actually lost	265
Examining How Modern Medicine Confronts the Folk Practice It Destroyed.	266
Discovering the psychiatric dimension: Houston and beyond	266
Revealing the concordance breakthrough.	267
Evaluating the statistics	268
Connecting this confrontation to Hoodoo.	269
Recognizing that “If it doesn’t get results, it’s not Hoodoo”.	270
Seeing Why Folk Medicine Acceptance Matters Now.	271
 CHAPTER 16: Living with Hoodoo Tradition in the Modern World	273
Understanding the Modern Revival	274
Reclaiming cultural heritage	274
Recognizing academic and artistic validation	275
Connecting Hoodoo to modern social justice.	276
Navigating digital Hoodoo	276
Acquiring Materials and Adapting Workspace in the Modern Era	277
Sourcing quality materials	278
Avoiding common problems with online supplies.	278
Working in small spaces	279
Managing smoke and scent.	279
Disposing of ritual materials	280
Finding Teachers and Community	281
Vetting potential teachers	281
Recognizing red flags	281
Building genuine relationships	282
 CHAPTER 17: Hoodoo in Entertainment	283
Understanding Why Representation Matters	284
Confronting the History of Misrepresentation	285
Tracing early cinematic portrayals	285
Identifying persistent tropes	285
Recognizing counternarratives	286
Embracing the rise of expert consultants	286
Welcoming new voices	287
Using entertainment as a gateway	288
Engaging with Hoodoo in Music and Film	289
Decoding the blues as Hoodoo archive	289
Following the musical thread forward	290

Critiquing The Skeleton Key	291
Celebrating Daughters of the Dust	291
Welcoming Sinners	292
Recognizing problematic film examples	292
Exploring Approaches to Hoodoo	292
Watching Beyoncé conjure	293
Analyzing Supernatural's complicated legacy	294
Celebrating P-Valley's authentic portrayal	295
Appreciating Queen Sugar's subtle approach	296
Looking at the Future of Hoodoo in Entertainment	297
CHAPTER 18: Carrying Hoodoo Forward	299
Understanding Hoodoo's Link to Cyclical Time	300
Seeing patterns that repeat	300
Seeing historical patterns in current trends	301
Embracing what Hoodoo has done repeatedly	302
Continuing the cycles	304
Engaging with Ongoing Conversations and Timeless Principles	305
Embracing Your Responsibility to the Practice	307
If you're ADOS and reclaiming	307
If you're within the broader Black diaspora	307
If you're not Black	307
Whatever your position	308
Taking practical next steps	308
PART 6: THE PART OF TENS	311
CHAPTER 19: Ten Signs You Might Have Grown Up with Hoodoo	313
You Were Told Never to Put Your Purse on the Floor	314
Someone Told You Not to Sweep Their Feet	314
Your Porch Ceiling Was Painted Blue	315
You Had Coins above Your Door	315
You Carefully Disposed of Hair and Nail Clippings	316
Your Family Discussed Dreams as Real Communications	316
You Sipped Special Tea for Every Condition	317
Your Parents Sprinkled Salt in Corners or at Doorways	317
Red Brick Dust Lined Your Steps	318
You Were Warned Never to Split the Pole	318
You Recognize Your Inheritance	319

CHAPTER 20: Ten Historical Examples of Hoodoo in Action	321
The Policy Game: How Black Communities Invented the Lottery	322
Peter Doctor and the 1712 New York Uprising	323
Gullah Jack and the Denmark Vesey Conspiracy	323
Bras Coupé: The Conjuring Maroon of Louisiana	324
Zora Neale Hurston's Initiation	325
Madame Stephanie St. Clair: Numbers Queen	325
The Great Migration Spiritual Shops	326
Haint Blue across the South	327
The Clementine Barnabet Case: Hoodoo as Accusation	327
Removing the Superdome Curse	328
APPENDIX	329
INDEX	339