

Experimental Strategies

What are Tarot Cards?

“R.J. Stewart suggests that the Tarot had its own origins in ‘The storytelling traditions and images preserved by travelling entertainers, originally the bards or filid of Celtic culture.’ He points out the images of the Tarot have clear connections with images described in the Vita Merlini, a text that pre-dates the earliest known Tarot deck by three centuries. It clearly describes The Empress, The Hanged Man, The Wheel of Fortune, The Fool, and so on, which are derived from the bardic Celtic tradition of preserving images of the God, Goddesses and Cosmology.” – Anna Franklin, The Sacred Circle Tarot.

Tarot cards became an Occult tool in 1789 and their design was based off Renaissance playing cards, whose design also inspired out modern day playing card deck. The tarot consists of a suits such as swords, cups, pentacles and wands ranging from Ace to 10 as in a regular card deck and this is called the Minor Arcana, these cards represent features of life:

- Wands – Creativity and will
- Pentacles – Material body or Possessions
- Cups – Emotions
- Swords – Reason

The Major Arcana is a bit more complex as there are 22 cards and they all hold a different life lesson and how they are interpreted varies on the reader.

0 The Fool – Innocence, Beginnings, Trust, Hope, Opportunity

I The Magician – Hidden Power, Magical Ability, Mastering Unseen Forces, Inner Guidance

II The High Priestess – Intuition, Emotion, Feminine Power, Imagination, Spirituality

III The Empress – Creativity, Feminine Power, Mature Women, Fertility, Pleasure

IV The Emperor – Leadership, Masculine Power, Mature Men, Material Success

V The Hierophant – Spiritual Authority, Leadership, Tradition, Institutions

VI The Lovers – Partnership, Union of Opposites, Choices, Harmony, Cooperation

VII The Chariot – Controlling Opposing Forces, Willpower, Resolving Conflict, Travel

VIII Strength – Inner Power, Overcoming Weakness, Courage, Persistence

IX The Hermit – Guidance, Solitude, Inner Wisdom, Self-Evaluation

X Wheel of Fortune – Change, Destiny, Unexpected Turn of Events, Good Luck

XI Justice – Rectification, Decision, Balance, Legal Matters

XII The Hanged Man – Letting Go, Surrender, Sacrifice

XIII Death – Transformation, An Ending, Sacrifice, Rebirth

XIV Temperance – Moderation, Harmony, Acceptance, Resolution, Cooperation, Patience

XV The Devil – Obsession, Indulgence, Fear, Materialism, Egotism

XVI The Tower – Change, Chaos, Freedom, Upset, Destruction of the Old

XVII The Star - Happiness, Hope, Light at the End of the Tunnel, Good Fortune

XVIII The Moon – Intuition, The Unconscious, Mystery, Illusion, Secrets

XIX The Sun – Happiness, Success, Pleasure, Self-Expression, Clarity, Vitality

XX Judgement- Awakening, Self-Realization, Choices, Assessment, Rebirth

XXI The World – Fulfilment, Completion, Achievement, Mastery, Wholeness

“The beauty and richness of each card reflects clarity and wisdom. Each image and symbol has a message designed to empower us spiritually and make every day and special life decisions easier” – Kisma K. Stephanich, Faery Wicca Tarot.

Symbolism in Tarot

“Tarot is above all a symbolic system of self-knowledge, self-integration, and self-transformation. Vital to integration is the union of opposites within, a process which Jung says ‘on a higher level of consciousness is not a rational thin, nor is it a matter of will; it is a psychic process of development which expresses itself in symbols.’” – Richard Roberts, The Original Tarot & You.

Colour correspondences are important for gaining a deeper understanding of the cards as the colours themselves have meaning and were used carefully when designing the cards.

Colour	Qualities
Red	Passion, Vitality, Courage
Orange	Warmth, Energy, Activity, Drive, Confidence
Yellow	Creativity, Optimism, Enthusiasm
Green	Healing, Growth, Fertility, Prosperity
Light Blue	Purity, Serenity, Mental Clarity, Compassion
Royal Blue	Loyalty, Insight, Inspiration, Independence
Indigo	Intuition, Focus, Stability
Purple	Wisdom, Spirituality, Power
White	Purity, Wholeness, Protection
Black	Power, The Unconscious, Banishing, Wisdom

Pink	Love, Friendship, Affection, Joy, Self-Esteem
Brown	Grounding, Permanence, Practicality

Symbols found in the design of the cards also hold meanings they come from different spiritual, cultural and psychological traditions.

Symbol	Meaning
Circle	Wholeness, Unity, Protection, Continuity
Square	Stability, Equality, Structure
Triangle	Trinity, Three-Dimensional Existence, Movement
Downward Triangle	Divine Feminine, Earth or Water Elements
Upward Triangle	Divine Masculine, Fire or Air Elements
Star	Hope, Promise
Five-Pointed Star	Protection, The Human Body, Physical Incarnation
Six-Pointed Star	Union of Male/Female or Earth/Sky, Integration, Manifestation
Vertical Line	Movement, Heaven, Sky, Masculine Energy
Horizontal Line	Stability, Earth, Feminine Energy
Cross	Union of Male/Female or Earth/Sky, Integration, Manifestation

Spiral	Life Energy, Renewal, Movement Toward the Center
Sun	Clarity, Vitality, Optimism, Contentment, Masculine Energy
Moon	Secrets, Intuition, Emotions, Feminine Energy
Dove	Peace, Reconciliation, Promise
Crane	Wisdom
Rose	Love
Mountain	Challenge, Vision, Achievement
Water	Emotions, The Unknown Depths of the Psyche
Snake	Transformation, Hidden Knowledge
Egg	Birth, Fertility
Rainbow	Renewal, Hope, Happiness
Book	Knowledge
Lantern	Guidance, Clarity, Hope
Bridge	Connection, Harmony, Overcoming Difficulty
Tree	Knowledge, Growth, Protection, Strength
Butterfly	Transformation

Poems inspired by Tarot cards

Wanting to Die

Anne Sexton - 1928-1974

Since you ask, most days I cannot remember.
I walk in my clothing, unmarked by that voyage.
Then the almost unnameable lust returns.

Even then I have nothing against life.
I know well the grass blades you mention,
the furniture you have placed under the sun.

But suicides have a special language.
Like carpenters they want to know *which tools*.
They never ask *why build*.

Twice I have so simply declared myself,
have possessed the enemy, eaten the enemy,
have taken on his craft, his magic.

In this way, heavy and thoughtful,
warmer than oil or water,
I have rested, drooling at the mouth-hole.

I did not think of my body at needle point.
Even the cornea and the leftover urine were gone.
Suicides have already betrayed the body.

Still-born, they don't always die,
but dazzled, they can't forget a drug so sweet
that even children would look on and smile.

To thrust all that life under your tongue!--
that, all by itself, becomes a passion.
Death's a sad Bone; bruised, you'd say,

and yet she waits for me, year after year,
to so delicately undo an old wound,
to empty my breath from its bad prison.

Balanced there, suicides sometimes meet,
raging at the fruit, a pumped-up moon,
leaving the bread they mistook for a kiss,

leaving the page of the book carelessly open,
something unsaid, the phone off the hook
and the love, whatever it was, an infection.

The Kindness

Jan Beatty

Banff, Alberta

The mother elk and 2 babies are sniffing
the metal handle of the bear-proof trash bin.

I remember the instructions for city people:

*3 football fields of space between you &
the elk if their babies are with them.*

I'm backing up slowly,
watching the calves run into each other
as they bend to eat grass/look up
at the mother at the same time.

The caramel color of their coat,
the sloping line of their small snouts &
I want to hold that beauty,

steal it for me,
but I'm only on football field # 2 & walking
into the woods past the lodge pole pines.

Their fragility, their awkward bumping
opens me to a long ago time—

a hand on the door,

I was walking in

to the psych hospital in Pittsburgh,
feeling broken and stripped down—

a hand on the door

from around my body

& I looked up to see the body
of a man, who said:

Let me get that for you—

a hand on the door

& the bottom of me

dropped/

I couldn't breathe for the kindness.

I couldn't say how deep that went
for me.

I had been backing up, awkward/
I had been blind to my own beauty.

XVI The Tower

the devil's lightning tail
cracks above
(a harbinger of doom).
a white shoot of bamboo,
built up in elephant ivory blocks,
grows from beneath
tornado black skies.

we flail our arms
as the ground
prepares to swallow us up
like Jonah's famished whale.

fire drops from clouds
caress your arms
and red riding hood cloak.
I still wonder why you chose that ensemble
for our excursion,
and if the spat that followed
caused this collapse, and
if you blame me for it.

my face and a single
molasses tear
reflect an understanding
of the ravenous beast beneath
smacking its rocky lips
to gobble us,
crown and all.

IX The Hermit

greet the dead-eyed statue, once all of my heart,
toss a lantern at his fixed grin

watch him crumble before me.
chunks of granite,
his cold remains, cradled to chest, slice my hands
as i gather them into the skeleton of the lantern.
they arise again, screaming,
screaming of love
of hate
of me.
i run for sanctuary, for solitude— but cannot escape,
even when buried in the mountainside.

a futile act, this self-graving,
because i can't get away,
for his sliver still remains in my palm.

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