

The Tarot

Your Guide to Tarot Mastery

Welcome to the inaugural edition of your Tarot newsletter, which is dedicated to enhancing your knowledge of the cards.

This training course will include tips on Tarot reading, more information about the meanings of the symbols on the cards, and listings of Tarot-related events.

In this edition, we'll focus on the energies of the card which has no number—The Fool. That's why this first newsletter is numbered zero, it corresponds with the opening sequence of the Major Arcana cards, as accepted by most Tarot enthusiasts.

The first Tarot cards (circa 1441) were not numbered, but the card now known as The Fool always began the sequence of these trump cards. It was later given the number zero to indicate that it stands apart from the rest of the cards. The author Rachel Pollack suggests that this is so that we can imagine him as being, 'the hero of the Tarot, who journeys through all the experiences.'

Over the coming years we'll take an exciting journey through the Tarot cards, learning their secrets and unraveling their mysteries.

Don McLeod



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Foolish or Crazy?

The Fool's Background

One of the oldest Tarot decks is the Visconti-Sforza Tarot. In this set of images, The Fool is not a well-dressed adventurer who is wandering through the mountains on a spiritual quest. He is a homeless beggar, stumbling around a village in a bedraggled state. He has feathers in his hair and he is clothed in filthy rags.

Early writers on the Tarot gave the meaning of this card as 'madness' and 'folly'. The Golden Dawn (founded in 1888) described card 0 as 'The Foolish Man', but they also included qualities such as 'spirituality'. From that point in time, The Fool was endowed with an aura of 'the holy fool', or jester—one who had no fixed position in the hierarchy of society—hence, he was associated with zero.

In the game of Tarocchi, from which modern Tarot is derived, *le Fou* (The Fool) is not part of the trump series. He is unable to capture any cards, and he may not be taken either. When you cannot win the hand, but you do not want to sacrifice your more valuable cards, you play *le Fou*.

In many ways The Fool card had a similar role in card games as the Joker, or Wild Card. In the Marseille Tarot from the 17th century, The Fool, with his colourful jester cap and bells even looks similar to the Joker of modern playing cards, but the Joker was an independent creation from the 19th century.

A. E. Waite gave us the modern version of The Fool. His new description was, "He is a prince of the other world on his travels through this one—all amidst the morning glory, in the keen air. The sun, which shines behind him, knows whence he came, whither he is going, and how he will return by another path after many days. He is the spirit in search of experience."

The modern Fool image is one of innocence and simplicity. He represents a person with pure intentions—especially the individual who has awakened to their spiritual purpose and who is embarking upon the quest for higher knowledge. He is a blend of the inner child and the wise old man.



Above: The Fool from the Visconti-Sforza Tarocchi.
Below: The Marseilles Tarot & the modern Joker



Book Review

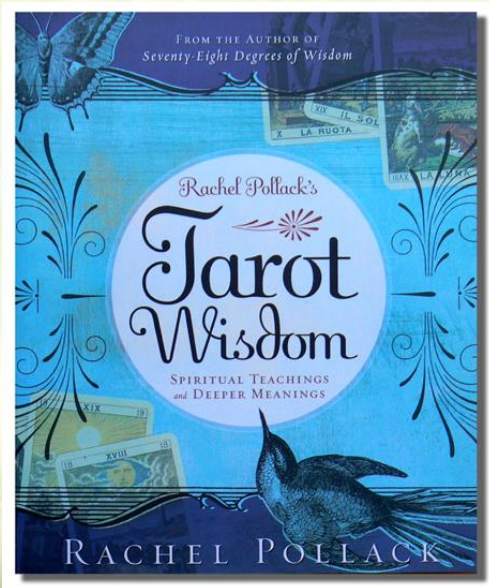
Tarot Wisdom

Rachel Pollack has written over a dozen books on the subject of Tarot, including the classic guidebook *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom*, so I expected to be impressed with her latest offering. But I didn't expect to be so surprised, delighted and awed by it!

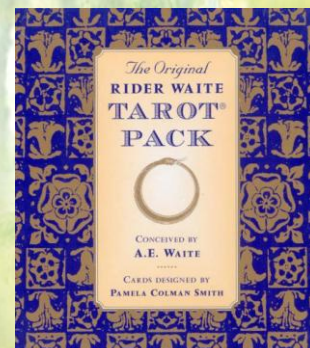
Since publishing *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom*, Rachel has spent the last three decades exploring the deeper aspects of the cards, and this book overflows with insights and esoteric knowledge.

Actually, the term "book" doesn't do it justice, this is more like a manual of cartomancy—one that seamlessly blends Kabbalistic and Pythagorean concepts with astrology, fairy tales, and grail legends. It was an ambitious undertaking, but one that is unequalled in its scope and brilliance.

Tarot Wisdom will transform the way that you look at each and every card. It's a fresh approach to a fascinating subject, and no serious student of Tarot should be without it.



The Rider-Waite pack was created in 1909. It cost only fifty pence at the time. Since then, more than 6 million copies have been sold.



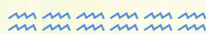
Future Events

Ever used the Mythic Tarot deck, by Juliet Sharman-Burke and Liz Greene? Although it's loosely based on the Rider-Waite imagery, the suits in this deck follow the storylines of four Greek myths, which makes the meanings of the cards easy to understand.

The Major Arcana is illustrated with a variety of Greek Gods and Goddesses, whom the authors suggest, 'are symbols of raw nature, our own raw human nature with its deep ambivalence of body and spirit and its mutually contradictory drives toward self-realization and unconsciousness.'

The authors use the traditional meanings of the cards, and merge the Rider-Waite interpretations with the design and story of these Greek tales.

Juliet Sharman-Burke will be running workshops in Melbourne, Australia on 21st and 22nd of August. She will be in Sydney on 27th and 28th August. Her workshop topics are: The Magical Mythical Major Arcana, The Magical Mythical Minor Arcana, and The Magical Mythical Court Cards. Cost is \$130 per workshop. For booking information contact The Tarot Guild of Australia.



Heading to London in October? The UK Tarot Conference is held on 8th and 9th October 2010. Special guest for this event is Mary Greer, author of *21 Ways to Read a Tarot Card*. During this conference, Mary's main workshop is called, "Prediction, or Insight?" Here's how Mary describes this topic: 'Did you know that at one time cartomancy was most known for helping to find lost or stolen objects (in addition to finding a spouse and discovering if a spouse was unfaithful)? What is the best purpose of a Tarot reading? Is it best at prediction? Or is it more ideal for giving advice? Or exploring options? Or discovering life lessons? In this talk we'll discuss the pros and cons of the various purposes of and resulting approaches to reading the cards.' Looks like a great event. For more information, see: <http://www.tarotconference.co.uk>

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"The way in which Tarot 'works' in a predictive sense is as a kind of mirror of the psyche. The archetypal nature of the images strikes hidden, unconscious chords in the card-reader, and reflects hitherto unknown knowledge or insight in relation to the client's situation - thus apparently revealing things which could not possibly, in any rational way, be discoverable."

- from The Mythic Tarot Book





Difficult Cards

Five of Swords

Who is the main character in this card? A fight or contest has obviously been engaged, but is the meaning of this card to do with victory, or defeat?

Most of the cards from the suit of Swords represent the negative aspects of situations, so the meaning of this card is signified by the men who have lost this challenge, rather than being about the winner.

When this card turns up in a reading it can indicate humiliation, an unpleasant experience, or thoughts of failure. This card can also be a warning to avoid being unrealistic, or over-confident in matters requiring an objective outlook. The image shows the need to use good judgment and to be fully focused when evaluating circumstances and other people, especially when in a situation of conflict.

The Little White Dog

Is he yapping playfully at the heels of The Fool, or is he warning The Fool of dangers ahead?

Some think of the little white dog (seen in the Rider-Waite version of The Tarot) as a faithful companion that follows The Fool as he journeys through the inner and outer realms of existence. Others see the dog as The Fool's instinct, the essence of practicality, or the inner voice to which he must listen.

Could the dog be another symbol for The Fool himself? Perhaps they are both creatures who are living in the moment, sniffing out adventures and roaming the world for the fun of it.

What do you think the little white dog represents?

“The application to Tarot is clear. It offers us a great gift, a way to understand the wonders of life, a form of guidance when events or our own souls trouble us. To receive that gift, we must open ourselves - not just emotionally, but also conceptually.” - R Pollack

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