



RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX

We're making great progress on our journey. Referring back to our handy [map](#), we are now at the boundary of Tarot Land. In order to pass through the gate, we must answer the riddle of the Sphinx.

In this section of the book, we will put familiar faces to the names of the Tarot Court.

HOW TO MATCH THE COURT CARDS TO THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE

So I'm standing in the hallway, and this tall, dark-haired guy approaches me and says, "It's great the success Bobby has had." I look at him thinking, *who is this guy? And who is Bobby?*

He continues, and I soon catch on; it turns out this is someone I was acquainted with 20 years ago. We had mutual friends. Up until that realization, though, the whole experience was pretty disorienting.

Welcome to the Court Cards. When Court Cards show up in a reading, it can feel the same way.

When I started reading Tarot, Court Cards plagued me for years. It was so hard to determine who the heck these cards represented. Was it the querent, someone they knew, someone they didn't know?

At one point I bought a tarot deck created from photographs just to get to know the Court Cards. While it was helpful, what helped me the most was going through the Court Cards myself and assigning people I knew or famous people to each of the Court Cards.

You can do the same using the [Court Card grid worksheet](#). This is the pop culture approach that I promised at the beginning of the book.

Below are some guidelines to help with the various court personalities.

KINGS - NAME THE KINGDOM AND FIND THE KING

Kings, at their best, are benevolent keepers of the kingdom. They are wise, fair, and generous. Kings will sacrifice themselves for the good of the kingdom if necessary; they will go into a battle that they may not return from. Think of King Solomon and the dilemma of one baby and two women who claimed to be the mother.

At their worst, kings are tyrannical despots. Only concerned with themselves and how they appear to others, they sacrifice their subjects' well-being to feed their hungry egos and need for power. Look to the world stage for plenty of examples of bad kings and leadership gone awry.

KNIGHTS - WHAT IS THE QUEST?

Knights are initiators. They are associated with the Ace cards. Knights start things, go after things, and stir things up. Wherever a Knight shows up in a spread, that's where the action is! That's where the desire and drive is. In that sense, for those of you familiar with astrology, Knights are very similar to Mars.

At their best, Knights have the "get up and go to get up and go"! They may be on a quest for the holy grail or they may be chasing windmills like Don Quixote. They may be looking for a job, writing a play, or just out for a good time.

At their worst, Knights are rude and impatient and will run roughshod over anyone or anything that gets in their way without thought of the consequences. Think of the angry young man who goes into a bar, just itching for a fight. Or the person who you have to be very careful about what you say around, because they will "go off" and verbally attack you.

QUEENS - KEEPERS OF THE FLAME

Queens are the incubators and the protectors. After all, it is women who gestate life and give birth. It is the constancy - and the consistency - of the Queens that give them their power. A question is often posed: is it nature or nurture? Genetics or upbringing? For

Queens, they will work with the nature of the suit to nurture it into something beautiful.

Have you ever seen the woman in the store with three or four stairstep children, all under 7 years old? She glides through the aisles, two kids in the basket, one in her arms, and one walking. Somehow, she gets through the store without a lot of fuss, the kids seem to know how to behave, any discomfort is immediately soothed, mission accomplished. This is the Queen at her best.

For a less stereotypical example, think of the woman at your job who is friends with everyone. She talks with everyone but is not a gossip. She asks how they are and really listens. Everyone feels good around her. This is also the Queen at her best.

At their worst, Queens withhold connection and nurturing. They are bitter and vindictive. They are women like Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction*.

PAGES- OH SO CURIOUS!

Pages are the young people of the court. Like the god Mercury, not only are they youthful, but they are also androgynous. Pages are messengers; they bring information and communication.

At their best, Pages bring you the phone call you are waiting for or the piece of information you need to make the next step.

At their worst, Pages bring miscommunications, misunderstandings, and messages that are lost in translation. Just think Mercury retrograde.

All in all, Pages are curious and have their hands in a whole mess of things related to their suit. They represent the beginning stages of a process, so take any information given with a grain of salt.

Court Card Keywords



wands – spirited, enthusiastic, charismatic,
hot headed, fast moving FIRE



cups – sensitive, psychic, emotional, relationship
oriented WATER



swords – intelligent, thinker, in their head,
intellectual, teacher, judging, discerning AIR



pentacles – hands on, doer, planner, show me,
realistic, practical EARTH



King – mastery, master, CEO, wise generous
leadership SUN CARDINAL



Queen – protector nurturer, feminine mastery,
control through loving persistence, MOON FIXED



Knight – outward expansion, aggressive efforts,
conqueror, journeyman, MARS



Page – androgynous, young, beginner, scout,
seeker, apprentice, messenger, MERCURY MUTABLE

EXERCISE - THE PEOPLE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

One approach to getting comfortable with the Court Cards is to combine the role described in the previous section with the suit. One of the easiest ways to do this is with professions or jobs.

For example, wands correspond to the suit of fire. You can connect this with people who work with fire in their jobs such as firemen, glass blowers, or iron workers.

Knights take action with regard to their suit. So a fireman, glass blower, or iron worker could be described by the Knight of Wands. It's absolutely okay if any of the examples seem more like a King or Queen to you. You need to work out the distinctions among the court for yourself.

Following this same thread, what kind of job or profession might be described by the Page of Wands? In this example, we are still using wands as literal fire.

How about the person that went around and lit the gas street lamps back in the 1800s? Or an acolyte in a church? Acolytes are usually young people.

We can stretch this association further. We don't really have people today that go around and deliver or spread fire and light. But, we do have people that quickly move from house to house reading the electric meter. Electricity is what lights up your house, and gathering information is most certainly a page duty.

My goal here is to show you the seemingly endless possibilities and creative combinations you can identify. If that last example was too much of a stretch for you, don't worry about it. Just stick to the most obvious associations for now. Believe me, there are plenty!

Court Card Grid



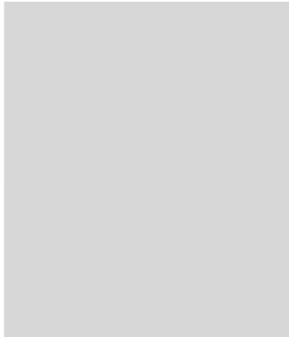
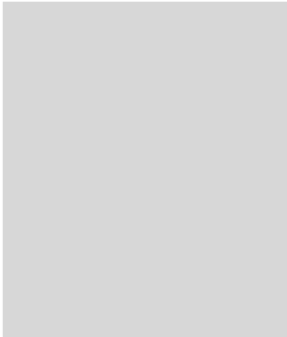
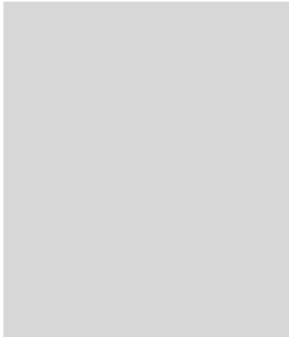
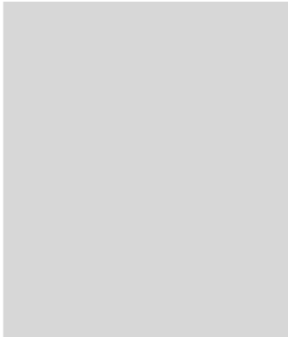
wands

cups

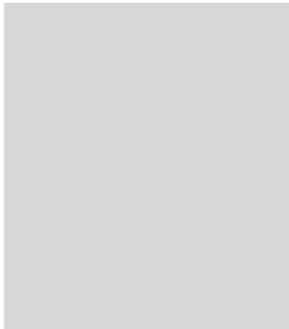
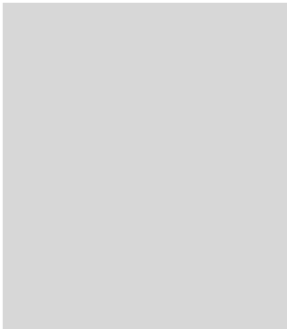
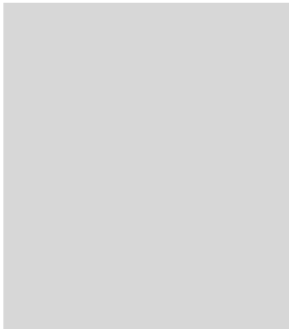
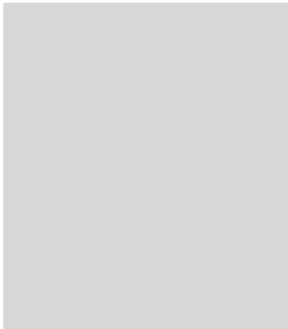
swords

pentacles

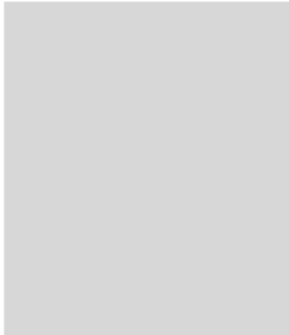
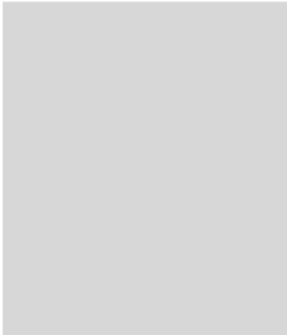
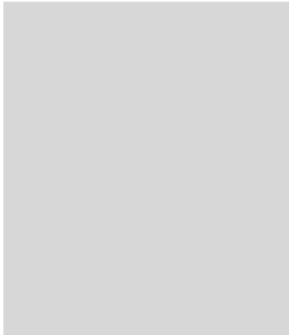
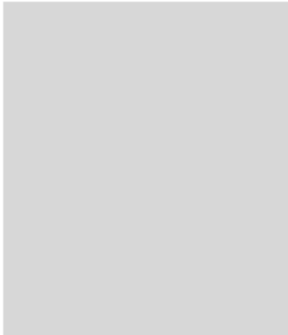
King



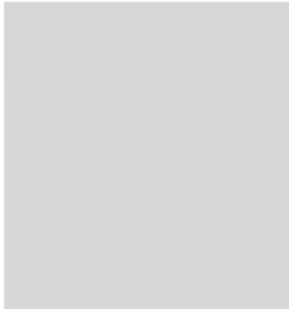
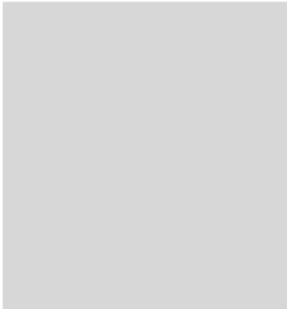
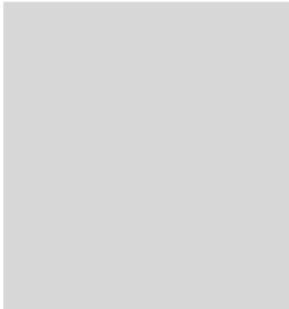
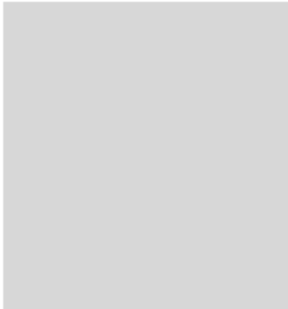
Queen



Knight



Page



EXERCISE - WHO DO YOU KNOW?

The next step is to identify the Court Cards in your life, the ones closest to you and that you interact with on a daily basis. There are a couple of different approaches you can follow.

One is to use the combined meaning method I just described along with the Court Card Grid provided on the previous page.

The other is to lay out all 16 Court Cards in front of you. Look them over. This is where having a deck using photographs or graphically manipulated images comes in handy. Intuitively assign family members, friends, co-workers or others to the Court Cards. Expand your search to famous people, living or dead.

Do any of the Court Cards:

- remind you of someone you know?
- remind you of movie stars, celebrities, living or dead?
- remind you of family members?

Court Cards are notoriously static; there isn't much action in the card except maybe for the Knights. If one of the Court Cards you are gazing at were to do something, what would they do? What would they say?

Go ahead and make something up. Your answers will vary depending on what card and what deck you are looking at.

Or, work backwards. Write down 10 people you know. They can be family members, co-workers, or even the barista from your local coffee shop. Now decide which Court Card they are.

You can choose a spot for Mr. Hooper based on what he does (store keeper), how he acts (happy and friendly), his age (older man), or any other criteria you come up with.

Don't get worked up about making the assignments. We all have different roles we play, therefore, different Court Cards represent us in different situations.

So, just because you say your mom is the Queen of Swords doesn't mean she's defined by the Queen of Swords. There's that word again - definition.

It's better to think that the Queen of Swords overlaps with many qualities of your mother in certain situations and settings. Next act and costume change, and she's somebody else.

EXERCISE - COURT CARD SCAVENGER HUNT

Pinterest is great for tarot card images. In this exercise, you will scavenge through Pinterest and match Court Cards to people you know and famous people, too.

For example, your mom. Your mom is possibly a Queen. Search Queen of Wands, Queen of Swords, Queen of Pentacles and Queen of Cups. Look for the Tarot image that best embodies your mom. I bet you'll find one!

How about your boss at work? Well, she's in a supervisory position so maybe she's a King. Or maybe she's much younger than you and the Page fits better. Search both. What images match?

See below for examples from the [deck I created](#) and released to the Creative Commons.



The Queen of Pentacles from the deck I released to the creative commons. Jane is an "earth (pentacles) mother (queen)".

She spent many years studying chimpanzees and working toward preserving their lives in the wild.



Buckminster Fuller actively (Knight) sought solutions to make the world a better place for humans. He didn't just envision solutions, he built them (pentacles). Many of his inventions were around how resources (pentacles) were used.