



MAJOR ARCANA - TAROT'S SECRET SAUCE

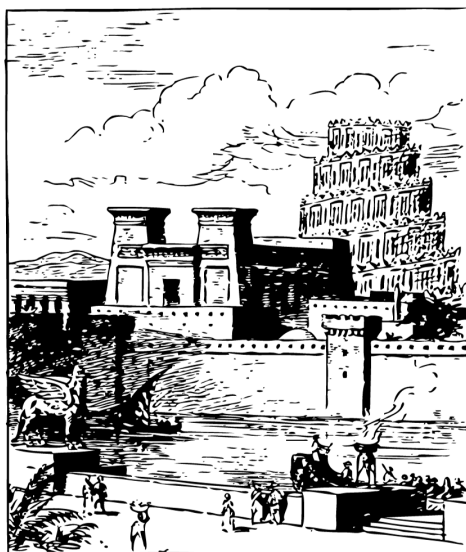
You made it!

You answered the riddle of the Sphinx and passed through into the [Garden of the Ancients](#).

You are surrounded by larger than life temples built of stone and intricately carved. Incense fills the air. People scurry about like ants and seem to know exactly where they are going.

Every temple, every statue, every reflecting pond seems important. Where do you start?

In this section, we will get our bearings and start to navigate the Major Arcana.



The Major Arcana cards are what makes tarot cards unique, and what attracts many people to Tarot.

It's possible to go really deep with the Majors. I'll give you the lowdown on how to build a working knowledge of the Majors that will serve you well on your journey.

MAN PLANS, GOD LAUGHS

The Major Arcana spawned from the trumps of the Tarocchi game. They are the big guns, the life lessons, the archetypal situations we find ourselves in. For example, the hot-shot lawyer who suddenly finds that representing businesses in hostile takeovers has no fulfillment for him anymore and travels to Africa to help drill water wells in small villages. This is the Judgement card: hearing the call.

Perhaps he was unexpectedly let go from the law firm for a minor infraction. This is the Tower card: sudden disruptive changes.

The Major Arcana is where we run into the heavy esotericism contained within the Tarot. Since several magical and/or esoteric traditions have intersected with the Tarot, it can be extremely difficult to tease out the different symbolic systems the Major Arcana present. I personally think it's challenging to even say what symbols are *within* the Tarot versus what symbols have been laid *upon* the Tarot. You could spend lifetimes studying such things.

So what are we to do?

What we will do is what we have done consistently up to this point. We will use our intuition to "make sense" of the Major Arcana.

First, I'll point out some ways to group the Major Arcana cards, and then I will provide some exercises for you to do on your own.

A QUICK SURVEY OF THE MAJOR ARCANA

So, let's take a quick look at who (or what) is here in the Major Arcana. Think of it as the "cast of characters" approach.

We have female figures and male figures. In some cases, we can "pair up the male and female figures.

For example, the High Priestess and the Hierophant (or priest).

We also have an Empress and an Emperor.

Who matches up with the Magician? I vote for Strength, but you may have a different opinion.

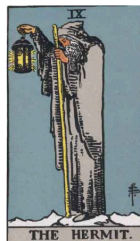
Remember: no right or wrong. No Tarot Police!



Female Figures note: Justice in the Rider -Waite is a man, but is a woman in many decks. Also there is a strong association with "Lady Justice", so I am including the Justice card here .

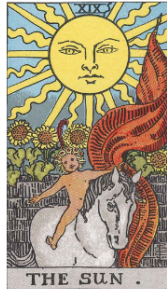


Male Figures

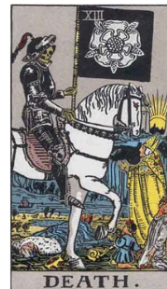


We have the natural elements of the Sun, Moon, Stars and the World itself.

The natural elements of
our existence



And we have supernatural forces, if you will. The angels of Temperance and Judgement, the personification or angel of Death, and the Devil himself.



Supernatural Forces

There are many more ways we could group the Major Arcana, and I encourage you to play around with various options yourself.

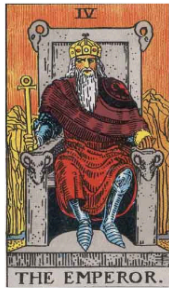
All you need to do at this stage, though, is to take note of the images on the cards. What jumps out at you? What intrigues you? How can you group the cards? Which cards don't fit into a group? Why?

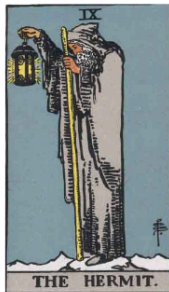
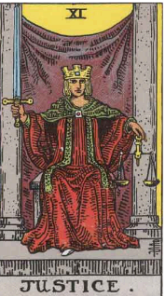
Draw a line and match the male card on the left with its "pair" on the right and write a few words about why you chose to match the 2 cards up.











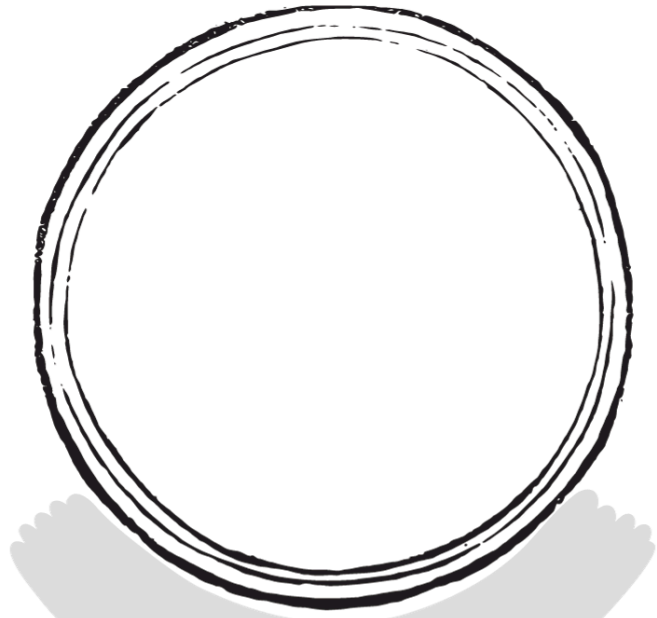
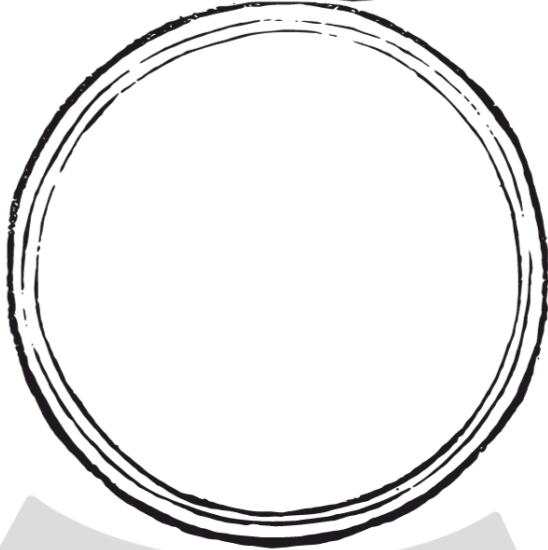
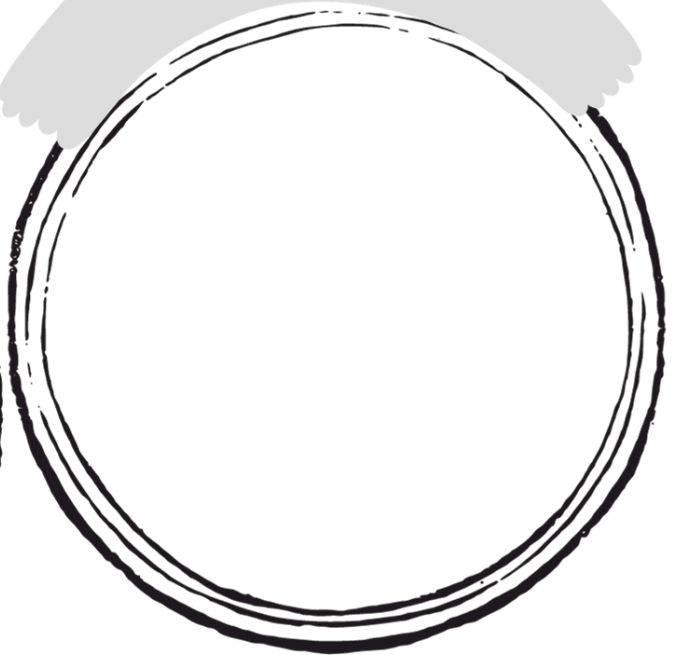
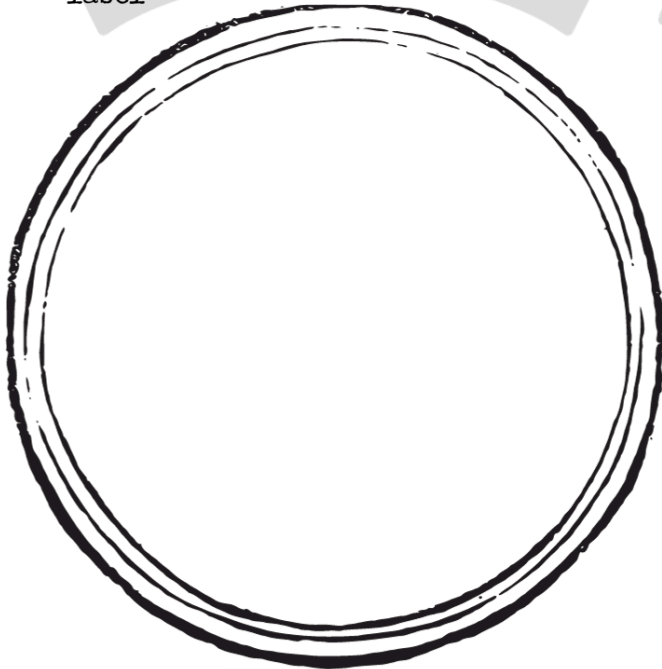


Tarot Matchmaker

Odd man out

See if you can make 3 or 4 groupings of the Major Arcana using any criteria you like. Don't worry if you can't include all the cards. Which cards are the odd man out?

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A MODERN LOOK AT THE MAJORS

The next lens we will use to survey the Major Arcana is through the lens of themes or motifs in modern-day movies. You can bring books and comic books into the mix if you like.

If I ask you what the movie Star Wars is about, you might say the following: It's a story about a young guy living on a remote planet out on the edges of space. He accidentally gets involved with the war between the Empire, or the Nazis of the Galaxy, and the Rebels, who are being overrun by the Empire.

If I asked you what the theme of Star Wars is, you might say good vs. evil or the struggle between absolute power and humanity.

So now the question is, what Major Arcana card, or cards, might represent the theme in Star Wars? Perhaps a particular card jumps out at you. Or maybe you start seeing some of the characters in the cards and maybe even some of the scenes or events from the movie.

The Chariot: Luke in his X-wing going to destroy the death star

The Devil: Darth Vader as he tries to trick Luke to go over to the dark side

Strength: Princess Leia

The Hermit: Yoda

If you are having trouble with this, head over to Pinterest again and search for specific Major Arcana cards. What movies or characters can you glean from what you see?

Search "Star Wars Tarot." What do you find? Look at all the cards that represent Princess Leia. What's your take?

I hope that with these few exercises you are able to play around with the Major Arcana and not let them intimidate you.

Yes, there is much symbolism layered into the Majors. But, a lot of it you have immediate access to by just opening your eyes and using your intuition.

As you gain experience with the cards, you can start adding in some of the more esoteric aspects of the cards to deepen your understanding.

For now, my advice is to play around and see what comes of it.

Major Arcana & Cinema

Go through the list of Major Arcana cards. What movies or movie characters do they remind you of?

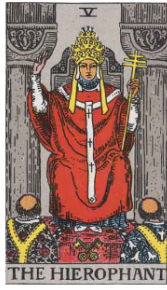


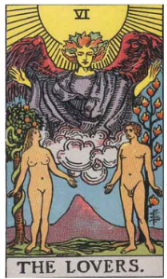






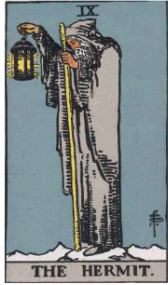








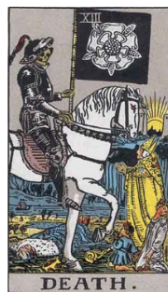




























A ROUGH GUIDE TO THE MAJOR ARCANA

I've included this last section because sometimes we just get stuck. What follows is a very much non-comprehensive list of correspondences for the Major Arcana by name and by number.

Use it to simply loosen things up, not to define the cards!

SEASONS OF LIFE OR CHAPTERS OF LIFE

- 0- The Fool - the beginning and ending of life
- 1- Magician - a man's active years
- 2- High Priestess - a woman's post child bearing years
- 3- Empress - a woman's child bearing years
- 4- Emperor - the working years
- 5- Hierophant - schooling years
- 6- The Lovers - 20s and 30s or the dating years
- 7- Chariot - actively working and attaining goals years
- 9- Hermit - an old man

SHIT HAPPENS

- 6- Lovers - falling in love
- 10- Wheel of Fortune - stroke of good luck or bad luck
- 11- Justice - going to court
- 13- Death - an ending, a death
- 16- Tower - natural disasters, something falls apart, getting fired

PERSONAL STATES - TO BE IN THE STATE OF

- 0- starting a brand new chapter in life
- 1- creative action, performing magic
- 2- receptivity and knowing
- 3- abundance and blessings
- 4- stability or creating stability
- 5- teaching and learning, working the system, or navigating the system
- 6- making choices, choosing a fork in the road to follow
- 7- setting and achieving goals
- 8- drawing on inner strength
- 9- withdrawing and seeking inner truth
- 10- taking a chance, gambling
- 11- deliberating, moral choices
- 12- being stuck, overwhelmed, perhaps depressed
- 13- recovering from a loss or letting something major go
- 14- being inspired to make creative changes and create new things
- 15- up against self-imposed limitations such as "I can't because..." or projecting power onto others
- 16- an emotional or physical breakdown
- 17- divine or inner guidance, being able to read the signs
- 18- fearful, scared of your own shadow, haunted by the past
- 19- confident, success, joyous, charismatic
- 20- hearing the call, coming out of the closet, revealing a hidden part of yourself, liberated
- 21- all is one, tying it all together, everything comes together