

Sightsee the Tarot

SIGHTSEE THE TAROT is a YouTube video series that takes you on a tour of the tarot, from discovering new books and tarot thought leaders to workshoping classic tarot spreads and tinkering with particular tarot decks.

Series Page: tinyurl.com/sightseethetarot

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Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot

Meanings of the Cards

From *The Tarot* (Samuel Liddell MacGregor Mathers, 1888)

In this episode, we're working with the Tarot de Marseille system and adopting a reading approach instructed by Mathers. A few of the card meaning entries include supplemental notes that Mathers added as having been taken from Etteilla's card attributions. The additional text is noted as "*Etteilla's Notes.*" Since Mathers instructs on reading with reversals, for this workshop, we will also be reading with reversals.

Key 0 - The Foolish Man

Folly, expiation [to atone or make amends], wavering [to exhibit doubt or hesitation].

Reversed Meaning: Hesitation, instability, trouble arising therefrom.

Key 1 - The Juggler

Will, will-power, dexterity [cleverness; agility].

Reversed Meaning: Will applied to evil ends, weakness of will, cunning, knavishness.

Key 2 - The High Priestess

Science, wisdom, knowledge, education.

Reversed Meaning: Conceit, ignorance, unskillfulness, superficial knowledge.

Key 3 - The Empress

Action, plan, undertaking movement in a matter; initiative.

Reversed Meaning: Inaction, frittering away of power, want of concentration vacillation.

Key 4 - The Emperor

Realization, effect, development.

Reversed Meaning: Stoppage, check, immature, unripe.

Key 5 - The Hierophant

Mercy, beneficence kindness, goodness.

Reversed Meaning: Over-kindness, weakness, foolish exercise of generosity.

Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot
Meanings of the Cards

Key 6 – The Lovers	Wise dispositions, proof, trials surmounted. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Unwise plans; failure when put to the test.
Key 7 – The Chariot	Triumph, victory; overcoming obstacles. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Overthrown, conquered by obstacles at the last moment.
Key 8 – Themis (or Justice)	Equilibrium, balance, justice. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Bigotry, want of balance, abuse of justice, over-severity, inequality, bias.
Key 9 – The Hermit	Prudence, caution, deliberation. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Over-prudence, timorousness, fear.
Key 10 – Wheel of Fortune	Good fortune, success, unexpected luck. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Ill-fortune, failure, unexpected ill-luck.
Key 11 – Strength (or Fortitude)	Power, might, force, strength, fortitude. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Abuse of power, overbearingness, want of fortitude.
Key 12 – The Hanged Man	Self-sacrifice, sacrifice, devotion, bound. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Selfishness, unbound, partial sacrifice.
Key 13 – Death	Death, change, transformation, alteration for the worse. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Death just escaped, partial change, alteration for the better.
Key 14 – Temperance	Combination, conformation, uniting. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Ill-advised combinations, disunion, clashing interests, etc.
Key 15 – The Devil	Fatality for good [predestined difficult times, but the end result is auspicious and beneficial to you]. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Fatality for evil [predestined difficult times, but the end result is misfortune].

Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot
Meanings of the Cards

Key 16 – The Lightning-Struck Tower	Ruin, disruption, over-throw, loss, bankruptcy. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> These in a more or less partial degree.
Key 17 – The Star	Hope, expectation, bright promises. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Hopes not fulfilled, expectations disappointed or fulfilled in a minor degree.
Key 18 – The Moon	Twilight [state of uncertainty, obscurity], deception, error. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Fluctuation, slight deceptions, trifling mistakes.
Key 19 – The Sun	Happiness, content, joy. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> These in a minor degree.
Key 20 – The Last Judgment	Renewal, result, determination of a matter. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Postponement of result, delay, matter re-opened later.
Key 21 – The Universe	Completion, good reward. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Evil reward, or recompense.
Ace of Wands	Birth, commencement, beginning, origin, source. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Persecution, pursuits violence, vexation, cruelty, tyranny.
Two of Wands	Riches, fortune, opulence, magnificence, grandeur. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Surprise, astonishment, event, extraordinary occurrence. <i>Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning:</i> Paired with Ace of Cups reversed or Two of Wands reversed, a surprise change to come. Paired with Three of Cups, Ace of Cups reversed, or Two of Wands reversed, happiness; but with Ten of Swords, Ace of Cups reversed, or Two of Wands reversed, grief, disappointment.
Three of Wands	Enterprise, undertaking, commerce, trade, negotiation. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Hope, desire, attempt, wish.

Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot

Meanings of the Cards

Four of Wands	Society, union, association, concord, harmony. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Prosperity, success, happiness, advantage.
Five of Wands	Gold, opulence, gain, heritage, riches, fortune, money. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Legal proceedings, judgment, law, lawyer, tribunal.
Six of Wands	Attempt, hope, desire, wish, expectation. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Infidelity, treachery, disloyalty, perfidy.
Seven of Wands	Success, gain, advantage, profit, victory. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Indecision, doubt, hesitation, embarrassment, anxiety.
Eight of Wands	Understanding, observation, direction. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Quarrels, intestine disputes [civil or domestic conflicts], discord.
Nine of Wands	Order, discipline, good arrangement, disposition [gift]. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Obstacles, crosses, delay, displeasure.
Ten of Wands	Confidence, security, honor, good faith. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Treachery, subterfuge, duplicity, bar.
Page of Wands	A good stranger, good news, pleasure, satisfaction. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Ill news, displeasure, chagrin, worry. <i>Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning:</i> Notice between what cards the News falls, which will show whence it comes, and of what nature it is.
Knight of Wands	Departure, separation, disunion. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Rupture, discord, quarrel. <i>Etteilla's Notes:</i> This card is not to be read singly; it means the Departure of the card which follows it. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Again, notice the card which follows it; if a woman, quarrel with a woman; if money, then loss of money, etc.

Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot

Meanings of the Cards

Queen of Wands	Woman living in the country, lady of the manor, love of money, avarice [greed; miser], usury [debts]. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> A good a virtuous woman, but strict and economical, obstacles, resistance, opposition.
King of Wands	Man living in the country, country gentleman [high status in a small town], knowledge, education. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> A naturally good but severe man, counsel, advice, deliberation.
Ace of Cups	Feasting, banquet, good cheer. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Change, novelty, metamorphosis, inconstancy.
Two of Cups	Love, attachment, friendship, sincerity, affection. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Crossed desires, obstacles, opposition, hindrance.
Three of Cups	Success, triumph, victory, favorable issue. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Expedition of business, quickness, celerity, vigilance.
Four of Cups	Ennui, displeasure, discontent, dissatisfaction. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> New acquaintance, conjecture, sign, presentiment. <i>Etteilla's Notes:</i> The following cards might show what the displeasure or anxiety was about; the preceding cards, whence it originated.
Five of Cups	Union, junction, marriage, inheritance. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Arrival, return, news, surprise, false projects.
Six of Cups	The past, passed by, faded, vanished, disappeared. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> The future, that which is to come, shortly, soon. <i>Etteilla's Notes:</i> Shows either that what precedes it is past, has occurred already; if reversed, what is going to happen.

Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot

Meanings of the Cards

Seven of Cups	Idea, sentiment, reflection, project. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Plan, design, resolution, decision. <i>Etteilla's Notes:</i> Explains the card which follows. The idea of attempting some undertaking. This will again be modified by the following cards.
Eight of Cups	A fair girl, friendship, attachment, tenderness. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Gaiety, feasting, joy, pleasure.
Nine of Cups	Victory, advantage, success, triumph; difficulties surmounted. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Faults, errors, mistakes, imperfections.
Ten of Cups	The town wherein one resides, honor, consideration, esteem, virtue, glory, reputation. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Combat, strife, opposition, differences, dispute.
Page of Cups	A fair youth, confidence, probity, discretion, integrity. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> A flatterer, deception, artifice.
Knight of Cups	Arrival, approach, advance. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Duplicity, abuse of confidence, fraud, cunning. <i>Etteilla's Notes:</i> This shows the arrival of the card which follows it, so example, if Knight is followed by Ten of Swords, then arrival of grief; if Knight is followed by Page of Cups, then a visit from a fair young man.
Queen of Cups	A fair woman, success, happiness, advantage, pleasure. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> A woman in good position, but intermeddling, and to be distrusted; success, but with some attendant trouble.
King of Cups	A fair man, goodness, kindness, liberality, generosity. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> A man of good position, but shifty in his dealings, distrust, doubt, suspicion.

Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot
Meanings of the Cards

Ace of Swords	Triumph, fecundity, fertility, prosperity. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Embarrassment, foolish and hopeless love, obstacle, hindrance.
Two of Swords	Friendship, valor, firmness, courage. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> False friends, treachery, lies. <i>Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning:</i> If confirmed by the other cards may simply mean that the friends are not <i>of much use</i> to the inquirer in the matter under consideration.
Three of Swords	A nun, separation, removal, rupture, quarrel. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Error, confusion, misrule, disorder <i>Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning:</i> May show simply that something is lost, or mislaid for a time.
Four of Swords	Solitude, retreat, abandonment, solitary, hermit. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Economy, precaution; regulation of expenditure. <i>Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning:</i> The cards near will show whether it is health or money that requires care.
Five of Swords	Mourning, sadness, affliction. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Losses trouble (same signification, whether reversed or not.)
Six of Swords	Envoy, messenger, voyage, travel. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Declaration, love proposed, revelation, surprise.
Seven of Swords	Hope, confidence, desire, attempt, wish. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Wise advice, good counsel, wisdom, prudence, circumspection. <i>Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning:</i> The cards which come next will show whether it will be good to follow the advice given or not. Also, the preceding cards will show from whom, and why, the advice comes.

Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot
Meanings of the Cards

Eight of Swords

Sickness, calumny, criticism, blame.

Reversed Meaning: Treachery in the past, event, accident, remarkable incident.

Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning: Shows Treachery or Deceit in the past, and will be explained by the neighboring cards.

Nine of Swords

An ecclesiastic, a priest, conscience. Probity [being upright and honest], good faith, integrity.

Reversed Meaning: Wise distrust, suspicion, fear, doubt, shady character.

Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning: The card following the Nine of Swords will show whom or what to distrust

Ten of Swords

Tears, affliction, grief, sorrow.

Reversed Meaning: Passing success, momentary advantage.

Page of Swords

A spy, overlooking, authority.

Reversed Meaning: That which is unforeseen, vigilance, support.

Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning: An unexpected present; could also be unexpected grief.

Knight of Swords

A soldier, a man whose profession is arms, skillfulness, capacity, address, promptitude.

Reversed Meaning: A conceited fool, ingenuousness, simplicity.

Queen of Swords

Widowhood, loss, privation, absence, separation.

Reversed Meaning: A bad woman, ill-tempered and bigoted, riches and discord, abundance together with worry, joy with grief.

Etteilla's Notes: This is not necessarily to be taken by itself; it may signify that the person symbolized by the cards near it has just lost, or is likely soon to lose, wife or husband. In some instances, it may merely signify that if two people are married, the one will die some time before the other, but not necessarily that the event will occur immediately.

Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot
Meanings of the Cards

King of Swords	A lawyer, a man of law, power, command, superiority, authority. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> A wicked man, chagrin, worry, grief, fear, disturbance.
Ace of Pentacles	Perfect contentment, felicity, prosperity, triumph. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Purse of gold [Jewish folktale: integrity rewarded with financial gains], money, gain, help, profit, riches.
Two of Pentacles	Embarrassment, worry, difficulties. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Letter, missive, epistle, message.
Three of Pentacles	Nobility, elevation, dignity, rank, power. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Children, sons, daughters, youths, commencement.
Four of Pentacles	Pleasure, gaiety, enjoyment, satisfaction. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Obstacles, hindrances.
Five of Pentacles	Lover or mistress, love, sweetness, affection, pure and chaste love. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Disgraceful love, imprudence, license, profligacy [reckless extravagance; materialistic excess]. <i>Etteilla's Notes:</i> Shows simply that there is someone whom the person loves
Six of Pentacles	Presents, gifts, gratification. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Ambition, desire, passion, aim, longing.
Seven of Pentacles	Money, finance, treasure, gain, profit. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Disturbance, worry, anxiety, melancholy. <i>Etteilla's Notes:</i> <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> The next card will show the reason of the anxiety

Episode: "Ancient" Mode of Reading the Tarot

Meanings of the Cards

Eight of Pentacles	A dark girl, beauty, candor, chastity, innocence, modesty. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Flattery, usury, hypocrisy, shifty.
Nine of Pentacles	Discretion, circumspection, prudence, discernment. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Deceit, bad faith, artifices, deception.
Ten of Pentacles	House, dwelling, habitation, family. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Gambling, dissipation, robbery, loss.
Page of Pentacles	A dark youth, economy, order, rule, management. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Prodigality, profusion, waste, dissipation. <i>Etteilla's Notes: Reversed Meaning:</i> The cards close by will reveal in what way the person is prodigal [wasteful, reckless]. Can also mean person is too fond of giving advice; meddles too much with other people's business.
Knight of Pentacles	A useful man, trustworthy, wisdom, economy, order, regulation. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> A brave man, but out of employment, idle, unemployed, negligent.
Queen of Pentacles	A dark woman, a generous woman, liberality, greatness of soul, generosity. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Certain evil, a suspicious woman, a woman justly regarded with suspicion, doubt, mistrust. <i>Etteilla's Notes:</i> If paired with Five of Wands, pyrrhic victory; <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> Legal issues pending or stalemate.
King of Pentacles	A dark man, victory, bravery, courage, success. <i>Reversed Meaning:</i> An old and vicious man, a dangerous man, doubt, fear, peril, danger.
