

## **Myths, Mysteries, and Understanding of the Tarot.**

Deflate the myths surrounding tarot, clarify what tarot is, and how it can be used

**Debunking Myths, from The TarotL History Information Sheet by members of the TarotL discussion group (<http://www.yahogroups.com/group/TarotL>) (Mary K. Greer, Tom Tadfor Little, Nina Lee Braden, Linda Dunn, Mark Filipas, Robert V. O'Neil, Christine Payne-Towler, Robert Place, James Revak, and others)**

**Myth 1.** The gypsies brought the tarot from Europe and spread its use.

**Current Understanding.** There is no evidence to support this. It is recorded that Romani people (gypsies) began using the Tarot sometime in the early 20th Century. They read palms and later used ordinary playing cards.

**Myth 2.** The tarot originated in Egypt, India, China, and the Jewish Kabbalists, or no one has any idea.

**Current Understanding.** Tarot has its origins in northern Italy in the early 15th century (1420-1440). The first cards were commissioned for nobility and were quite lavish.

**Myth 3.** The word "tarot" is Egyptian, Hebrew, or Latin.

**Current Understanding.** The earliest names are all Italian and the cards were called *carte da trionfi* (cards of the triumphs). In about 1530 the word *tarocchi* began to be used to distinguish them from a new game of triumphs which was played with regular playing cards. The German form is *tarock*, the French form is *tarot*.

**Myth 4.** The tarot was first used for divination, magic, and teaching secret doctrines.

**Current Understanding.** There is written documentation that the tarot was used to play card games similar to Bridge. Poets also used it to create flattering verses called *tarocchi appropriati*, describing women of the court. There is no other evidence depicting the tarot being used for anything of a divinatory nature. In 1589, Venice, are some records suggesting it was tied with witchcraft. There is nothing further until the 18th century.

**Myth 5.** The Waite-Smith (Rider-Waite) Tarot is the original, standard, and most authentic tarot.

**Current Understanding.** The Waite-Smith deck was created in 1909. Since, we know that the tarot has been around for over 600 years, this makes it a fairly new deck. A. E. Waite was a prominent member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. The deck owes much of its symbolism to that group and represents a departure from the earlier French tradition. The artist, Pamela Coleman Smith, contributed her own vision, especially in the innovative creation of the fully illustrated scenes for the minor arcana.

for many years, the Waite-Smith deck was the only one readily available in the US, so it became familiar to whole generations of tarot readers. There is actually no “definitive” version of the tarot.

### **Myth 6. Tarot censored by the Church**

**Myth:** The Catholic and Protestant churches outlawed Tarot as the work of the Devil and also to stamp out heretical teachings.

**Current Viewpoint:** The Inquisition documented in considerable detail what the church regarded as evidence of heresy. Tarot cards are not mentioned.

Many printers made their living printing both religious and playing cards.

Playing cards were sometimes restricted or outlawed because of their use in gambling, but Tarot cards were in fact sometimes explicitly exempted from bans on ordinary playing cards, perhaps because of their association with the aristocracy and courts of Europe.

In 1423, playing cards (Tarot cards were not mentioned) were among many things thrown on the fires in Bologna by followers of Bernadino of Sienna during an attack against all studies and pastimes not focused on religion. After the Reformation however, the church did object to the cards depicting the Pope and Papess, and cardmakers substituted less controversial images.

## **Part 2, Debunking Myths of Use and Care of Your Tarot Deck**

**MYTH 1: You must be psychic to be a Tarot reader.**

**False.** I happen to be a psychic reader but I know plenty who are not who are fine readers.

**MYTH 2: You are doomed by what the Tarot cards say.**

**False.** Remember you do have free will. The cards are a tool and help you prepare for what may be coming. It can show you choices. But, nothing is set in stone. Everyday we make decisions that alter our course of daily living thus changing our paths.

**MYTH 3: Only you can touch your cards.**

**False,** but some consultants prefer to be the only ones to handle their cards. This is due to the energies a person has. I let others handle my cards. I also cleanse and clear my cards on a regular basis. It is up to you and what you are comfortable with.

**MYTH 4: You must wrap your cards in black silk and keep them hidden away.**

This myth probably comes from a practical teaching from the Dark Ages when

you could be burned at the stake for being a heretic and a witch. There is no basis in fact for this.

**MYTH 5: You must receive the cards as a gift.**

This one makes me laugh. I'd be a sad Tarot consultant if this were true. I have bought the majority of my decks (although I am always open to receiving gifts hint hint wink wink). The great thing about buying your own deck, is making sure you resonate with it.

**MYTH 6: You should not read your own cards.** This has basis in truth but not because it is bad luck. Truthfully, reading for yourself is difficult because it is hard to be objective. However I can and do read for myself! I have personal decks specifically designed for that use.

**MYTH 7: The Tarot is always right.**

Wouldn't this be fabulous if it were true! Sadly, it is not true. As I said before, the Tarot predicts possibilities and points out tendencies. Free will comes into play as does informed choice. The minute you lay the cards out, you are changing your future because you are looking ahead. Go back to that driving analogy. When you look at a map, you are changing your path because you are making informed decisions about which way to go.

**MYTH 8: You must have set rituals to read properly.**

I actually do have a few set rituals but that is for my own benefit not the cards. I have a set way I shuffle and cut as well as a set way I read. I find this helps me get become calm and open for the needs of my client. Ritual helps set the mood and clears out all that daily life clutter that can get in the way. I do suggest finding a ritual of your own to enhance the experience, but it is not mandatory!

**MYTH 9: There is only one way to interpret the cards.** And it would be so nice if this were true! However, Tarot cards are tools that help you access your intuition or, perhaps, the collective unconscious. Each card's meaning comes into play with the card next to it which can alter the interpretation. I can read the same card for six different people and depending on what is around that card, the meaning will change.

**MYTH 10: Tarot is evil.** Also described as the "Devil's Picture Book". It is human nature to be afraid of something that is not fully understood or what is viewed as

threatening. True, some of the images may be a bit scary in some decks but so are some great works of art – they aren't thought of as evil.

**MYTH 10: The Death card means someone is going to die!**

Absolutely not. It \*can\* mean physical death, but in my twenty plus years of reading, Death usually means painful change in the querent's life.

Sources and suggested reading:

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