



Mary K. Greer's 21 Ways to Read a Tarot Card

By Mary K. Greer

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Drawing on nearly forty years of tarot experience, Mary K. Greer has developed a new energizing approach-made up of twenty-one stimulating techniques to interpret or deepen your understanding of each card. Just as the twenty-six letters of the alphabet can be combined to form billions of words, Greer's twenty-one methods can be used in any combination for gaining amazing new insights and perspectives.

Emphasizing both traditional and personal methods of interpretation, Greer's techniques involve storytelling, sketching, symbols, metaphors, dialogues, acting, and other imaginative exercises. Designed to bring about interaction, transformation, and empowerment, this twenty-one-pronged approach to tarot can help readers expand standard interpretations and evolve new ways of connecting to the cards.

Winner of the Coalition of Visionary Resources Award for Best Divination Book

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Mary Greer is an author and teacher specializing in methods of self-exploration and transformation. A Grandmaster of the American Tarot Association, she is a member of numerous Tarot organizations, and is featured at Tarot conferences and symposia in the United States and abroad.

Mary also has a wide following in the women's and pagan communities for her work in women's spirituality and magic. A Priestess-Hierophant in the Fellowship of Isis, she is the founder of the Iseum of Isis Aurea.

Mary has studied and practiced Tarot and astrology for over 34 years. Her teaching experience includes eleven years at New College of California, as well as at many workshops, conferences, and classes. She is the founder and director of the learning center T.A.R.O.T. (Tools and Rites of Transformation).

Her books include Tarot for Your Self: A Workbook for Personal Transformation (1984); Tarot Constellations: Patterns of Personal Destiny (1987); Tarot Mirrors: Reflections of Personal Meaning (1988); The Essence of Magic: Tarot, Ritual, and Aromatherapy (1993); Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses (1995); and Aromatherapy: Healing for the Body and Soul (1998), with Kathi Keville.

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Step 1

Name

Action without a name, a "who" attached to it, is meaningless.
-hannah arendt, the human condition

The Way of the Apprentice

Preliminaries: Choosing Your Card

Now's the time to select the card that you'll use through each of the twenty-one ways to read a tarot card. That's right; you might as well jump right in. Choose a deck that has storytelling images on all the cards, and shuffle it thoroughly as you ask, "What do I most need to look at in my life right now?"

Draw three cards and turn them to their faceup and upright positions (see Glossary). Which card is most intriguing? Which one is most unsettling? Which card has the most detail? Which card has the least detail? Decide which one of the three will be your "chosen card." It should have enough symbolism for you to explore in depth and, perhaps, be more interesting than pleasing. Aces are not your best bet or the Eight of Wands, as they usually have few details. It helps if one or more people are actively doing something in the image. If in doubt, pick a Major Arcana card.

You'll be working with your chosen card throughout the book. Do not look up its meaning until you get to Step 10. If you feel truly drawn to do so, you can change your card at any time, but remember: the greater the challenge, the greater the potential growth. If you change your card, go back through the previous steps to get an overview of the new card before continuing where you left off.

Activity

1:1

Say the name of the card you have chosen aloud:

"I've drawn 10, the Wheel of Fortune."

"You received the Four of Pentacles."

"This card is the King of Cups."

"I got 13, Transformation, which is usually called Death."

That's all there is to this first step. Say the name of the card! It seems obvious but don't overlook doing it. Time after time, I see students look at a card in desperate silence, with no idea of what to say or where to begin.

Saying the name of the card opens your mouth and starts it moving-what I call "priming the pump" or getting the ideas flowing. You'll then find it's easier to say the next thing and the next. Naming something helps you own it and thus connects you to what you know about it. It's like a key that unlocks a gate-sometimes a floodgate-of information.

Activity

1:2

If you are new to tarot or have just purchased an unusual deck, shuffle it and then examine the cards, one by one, saying their names as you do so. This simple exercise will help familiarize you with this particular pack.

The Way of the Adept

You can continue exploring this step now or come back later, after trying out the other ways to read a tarot card.

Before beginning a reading, you should have psychically grounded yourself, paid attention to your breath, and shuffled the cards. Step 1 establishes an essential quality in a reading: a focused state. Now you bring your focus to bear on a single card and what it has to offer. Naming the card is a formal introduction to the energies before you, an acknowledgment of the players in the game.

The tone and emphasis you use when naming the card will convey a tremendous amount of information in itself. You might surprise yourself with a feeling you didn't know you had. For instance, you might greet the Empress with a sense of letdown-"Oh, the Empress"-only realizing later that you were hoping for a little more dynamic and assertive card. If reading for a querent, you can disarm their assumptions about a card by your manner of naming it. For example, you might greet a disturbing card by cheerfully exclaiming, "How exciting, you've drawn the Tower!" The task then becomes to convey what makes this card so exciting. Don't overdo it and definitely don't fake a response. In general, you are best served by being open and curious about why this particular card appears at this place and time. Always pay close attention to first impressions, both when reading for yourself and with a querent.

When reading for another, empathize with their first response to a card. Acknowledge and support their response before continuing.

Activity

1:3

Shuffle your deck. Ask the question, "Who am I?" Then turn over a card and say its name. Notice any

physical response in your body as you first see the card and name it. Did you hold your breath or did you inhale, as if to take in the card? Did you move subtly back or forward? Was there any tenseness or relaxation? What was your very first sensory impression—a flush, a chill, an increased heartbeat, surprise, disappointment, satisfaction, nostalgia? Try this with two or three more cards.

Activity

1:4

Have another person draw a card for the same question. Say the name of the card. Simultaneously note the person's initial physical response. Tell the person what you observed and then ask what her first impression was. For example, Amy draws a card and I tell her, "It's the Ten of Coins." Then I say, "You moved forward slightly when you saw it and seemed to smile. What's going on?" Amy responds, "I'd like having that many coins and my own family." Was the response what you expected?

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Sharon Grace:

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