

It's all in the cards ... or palms ...



Tarot cards hold special meanings

by Cary Stegall
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The 78 cards that make up the Tarot (pronounced tay-row) card deck have been a fixture in Western myths and magic for at least the last 600 years. It has entertained kings and gypsies — and perhaps a few students — during its long and eventful history.

The Tarot has four suits of cards numbered from one to ten, just like a modern deck. It also has the three court cards — king, queen and page — plus a knight. These 56 cards comprise the "Lesser Arcana," or, as the name means in Latin, "Little Secrets."

The Tarot makes a major divergence from modern decks in its other section, the "Major Arcana," or "Big Secrets." These cards depict symbolic characters such as The Hermit and The Fool, along with various human virtues, like Strength and Justice. There also are a few cards that seem even more obscure, like The Tower and The Wheel of Fortune — a symbol from Renaissance days.

Although Tarot is still used for card games in some countries of Eastern Europe, it has

been connected with divination for centuries. Each card has several direct meanings and indirect connotations that can be used to answer either specific or general questions.

The Tarot now is a conglomerate of different cultural heritages because of the many different groups that have used it in the past. In the latest version, devised by Arthur Edward Waite, there are Egyptian sphinxes mixed in with the Catholic Pope and the Christian Devil.

Waite is a story in himself. He was a member of a secret society called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, an offshoot of the Rosicrucians. Some other prominent members of the group were Bram Stoker, the creator of "Dracula," and the poet William Butler Yeats. The group used the Tarot as a tool for their research into the doctrine of magic.

Waite follows a long line of Tarot revisionists. The oldest known deck was designed and illustrated in 1393 by the painter Charles Gringonneur for the amusement of Charles VI of France. Priceless works, the cards are painted on a background of gold with a silver-

tooled border.

Today, Tarot reading still is practiced by both amateurs and experts. Tarot cards are manufactured by most game companies and can be purchased in such non-mystical places as department and toy stores.

In the September issue of "From the Other Source" — a Houston-based newsletter — Thomas-John Grieves explains the basic philosophy of Tarot.

According to Grieves, who calls himself a "white witch" and "metaphysician," when using the Tarot "you are actually reading the person's vibration using the cards to clarify and articulate the vibrations."

He recommends using the Rider-Waite Tarot Deck published by U.S. Games. Handling and interaction with the cards also is very important, he says, because each card will have a special meaning to the reader which will help pick up the client's vibrations.

Kay Gould, owner of The Unicorn and Which Witch? shop in College Station, says when reading the Tarot she makes general statements from what she perceives from the cards. Whoever she is doing the reading for takes what she says and applies the information to personal experience, she says.