

The A-Z of Tarot

M - MANIFESTING TAROT DECK PERSONALITIES

By Ian Stevens

It is generally accepted that every Tarot deck has its own particular feel or energy. Most people can agree whether an image is humorous, happy, sad or horrific and this is as true of a comic strip as it is of a Tarot deck. However, does a tarot deck have some additional quality that can reach out and affect the person looking at it on a more profound level?

The biggest influence on a tarot deck, as with any piece of artwork, is the person who created it. What you are seeing on the card is what they saw in their mind's eye; to that extent you are getting a window into their mind and their psyche. So it is possible by looking at a tarot deck to gain insight about the person who designed it.

Take two people, both male. They knew each other, moved in the same circles and belonged to the same organisations, eventually dying within a few days of each other. They had much in common to the extent that they both designed their own tarot deck and were both sufficiently artistically challenged to have to employ someone else to do the artwork.

However, even if the only thing that you knew about them was that one was enthusiastic about freemasonry and remained close to Christianity while the other was an occult wild child who blew his father's fortune and died a penniless drug addict, you would not need to be a psychiatrist to work out which deck belonged to whom, even if you had never heard of A E Waite or Aleister Crowley.

So we can accept that when someone creates a tarot deck it embodies some of his or her emotional and psychological baggage. How much though, must depend largely on their motives for producing the deck. Some people produce several decks over a period and this can reflect different moods or stages in their life journey, or simply the need to earn a crust. It is doubtful if the Gummy Bears or the Alcohol Tarot say much about their designers' psyches other than they have a sense of humour.

Maybe then, when we are attracted to a deck or choose one for a particular reading it is because we have an empathy with the person who created it, either a general like-mindedness or because it matches the emotional feeling of the moment or the client. Likewise when we find a deck that gives us a bad feeling or doesn't provide a good reading it is because we are psychologically at odds with the designer.

Is there more to it than that? Is there another quality that some decks have that gives them a power or personality of their own?

A lot of decks, the ones that become popular with readers and not just as artistic curiosities, are crammed full with symbolism, much of which is classical and crosses cultures and generations. Can these symbols in themselves radiate an energy and generate emotions in anyone viewing them?

It is possible for an abstract symbol to affect the person looking at it in a certain way regardless of the intent or state of mind of the person who drew it. The Christian cross and the pentagram will instantly conjure up associations and emotions in the viewer because over millennia they have acquired an iconic status that transcends everything else. Sometimes the sheer power of the events surrounding a symbol can have the same affect in a short space of time, the Nazi swastika for example.

This works in a straightforward way if the viewer is conscious of the origins and the meaning of the symbol, but what if they have never seen the symbol before? Is it possible that there are symbols and archetypes that are part of our individual and collective unconscious; that we react to instinctively despite never having encountered them before?

Jungian psychology supports this idea with the concept of universal archetypes and symbols. These represent emotions and modes of behaviour; primal forces that can be visualised in any number of ways having no single symbolic form.

Jung reckoned there were twenty-two basic archetypes and this corresponds rather neatly with the Major Arcana. Here the archetypes are shown as scenes illustrating the card's meaning, not abstract symbols, but this would explain a common instinctive or intuitive reaction to the Majors, regardless of who drew them.

Regarding whether we are pre-programmed to respond to abstract symbols or geometric patterns in a certain way, it is true that the same symbols crop up within different unconnected cultures, however, there is little to show that their meaning is the same. The only common response is to their relation to the real world: a jagged shape will generate a different feeling to a smooth and flowing one.

If it is then, possible for different tarot decks to generate different feelings and emotions and this is largely a rapport between the creator of the deck and the person looking at it, can two identical decks have a different feeling about them?

If they are hot off the press then the answer is almost certainly no, but once a deck has been unpacked, used and got around a bit, can it pick up or be charged with some sort of energy that gives it a personality of its own?

There is no shortage of stories of people who have come across decks that have given off 'bad vibes', but this is very subjective. That said, the notion that the life force and emotion generates an energy that can attach itself to objects and places is so common throughout history that it can't be discounted altogether even if it hasn't been experienced personally.

So the answer to the question is that tarot decks do have personalities of their own, mainly derived from the people who have in one way or another been associated with them, but also because they contain some archetypal imagery. But does this differ from any other object that reflects the vision of its designer/creator and the influence of those it comes into contact with; a mobile phone for example?

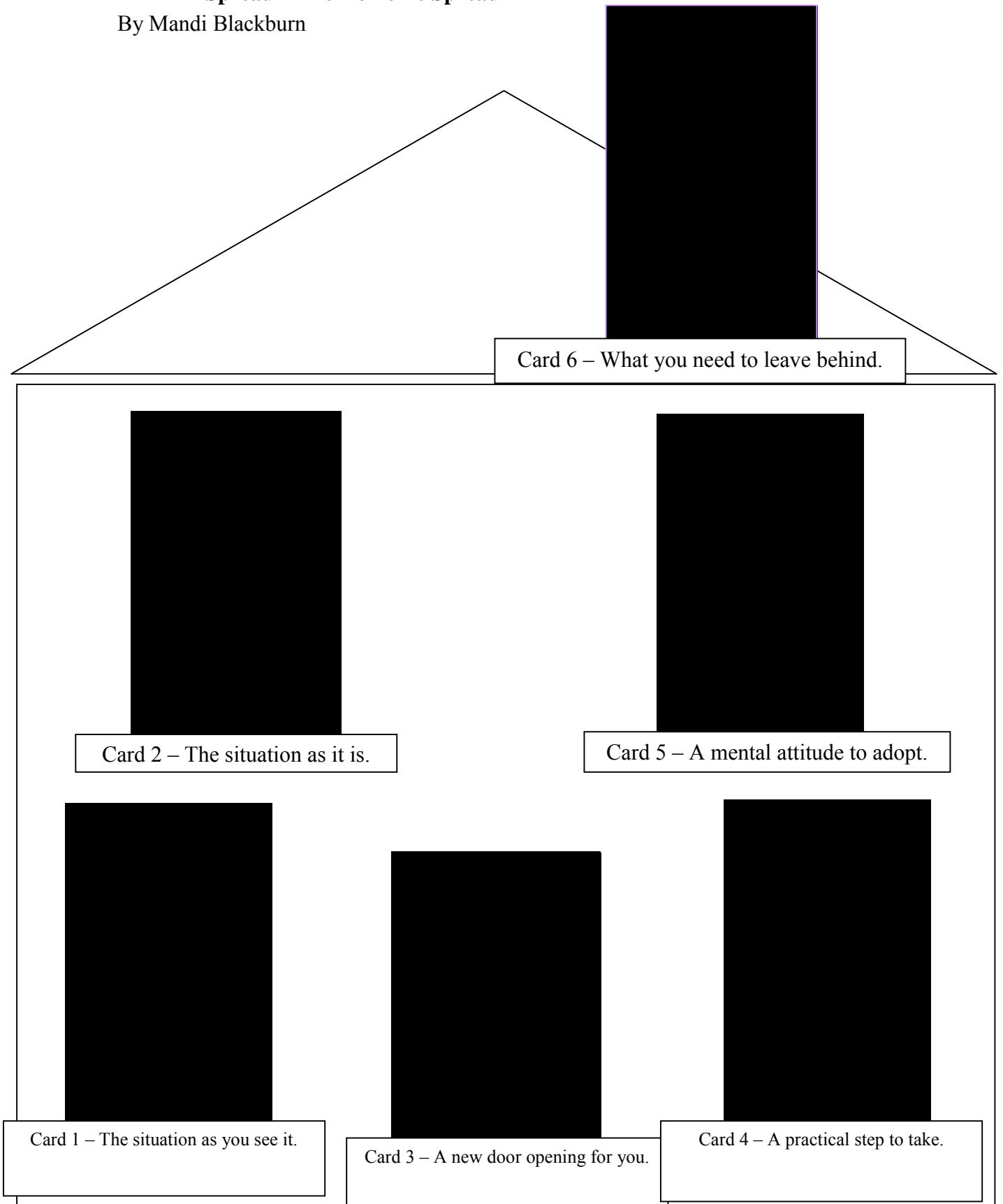
I think the answer is yes. A tarot deck is like a book that does not only tell one story but holds within it the memory of many stories and an infinite number of stories yet to

be told. The mobile phone analogy could claim the same thing but the phone is a transparent tool whereas the tarot deck plays an active part, the effect it has on the reader and the querent will affect the outcome of the story.

A tarot deck can affect people's lives and futures, and each deck will affect them in a different way, and that is pretty profound.

Spread – The Homelife Spread

By Mandi Blackburn



DECK AND BOOK SET REVIEW - The Fairytale Tarot

Designed by Karen Mahoney and Illustrated by Alex Ukolov.
Artwork by Irena Třísková

Review by Galadriel



Karen Mahoney and Alex Ukolov have designed two previous tarot decks, The Tarot of Prague and The Baroque Bohemian Cats tarot, both of which I adore. So I was eagerly awaiting the release of their new project, The Fairytale Tarot.

The new deck is available as a deck and book set, or just a deck alone, my review deck is the deck and book set. It comes presented in a slipcase type of box, that opens to reveal the book and deck nestled in a small hollow in the inner box. The book is printed on a wonderful semi-gloss paper making it feel very special. The deck is printed on a special card stock that includes a layer of carbon to help prevent bends and make them a little sturdier. They stock is very much like the previous Baroque Bohemian Cats tarot, with an approximate size of 3" x 5".

The previous two decks by the same designers were both collage-styled decks, this deck departs from that style and is drawn in pen and inks, in a very traditional style seen in many old European fairytale books. This only adds to its charm.

The book is just lovely, it includes a foreword by Rachel Pollack and an introduction by Karen herself. It gives a background to why fairytales were chosen for this project, their roots and general information about tarot history. The rest of the book has sections on the Major and Minor Arcana, where we find the card descriptions. It also has sections that include how to read with these cards and some fairytale spreads.

The card descriptions themselves are wonderfully detailed. Each card gets approximately two pages dedicated to it. The information includes the card picture in black and white, the card title, the fairytale this card is from, including a condensed version of the fairytale itself. It has keywords and phrases that reflect the general meanings of the card, and finally a paragraph or two giving us a study of how the fairytale compares to the traditional interpretations of the card in question. This is a lot of detailed information and I love the fact that they have included the fairytale, as I am not overly familiar with a lot of the tales included here. So no worries if you are not up to scratch on your fairytales, it's all here :o)

The cards themselves are fabulous, really very striking and have such a wonderfully, traditional feel to them. The artwork is lovely and the colours are strong and vibrant. The cards have a printed border and the card title is printed in a banner at the bottom, along with the name of the fairytale depicted. The cards use the Rider-Waite system for its interpretations and the cards do not always show the standard cloned image that some decks use, but in fact use a scene from the fairytale that best mirrors the general meaning of that card. The Major Arcana use the usual card titles we are used to, and the Minor arcana are Wands, Cups, Swords and Pentacles, making the decks easily accessible to anyone with RW knowledge.

Now these cards are not your typical ‘fluffy’ deck, as you may expect from a fairytale tarot, oh no ! These cards and their tales depict some very dark scenes, as you know, the traditional fairytales had some very sinister way of telling their morals and lessons. Karen and Alex and kept to this traditional route making those that hate ‘fluff’ find that this is a deck that can really get a strong message across in a very direct way.

When you first go through the deck you will find yourself impressed by the suitability of the chosen tales, they are perfectly matched for the standard interpretations of the cards. There are many great pairings of tales and meanings here, including the Devil card depicting ‘The Red Shoes’, one of my favourite tales as a child and a very dark one at that! Another favourite is Rapunzel as the 8 of Swords; that really made me smile.

As I said before, you don’t need to be familiar with all the tales, as they are included in a condensed version within the book. I would have been a bit lost myself if it weren’t for the book as they have used such a wide range of tales from across the world, some of which I have never heard of.

How easy it is to use? Well, I have to say that I personally think this deck’s strongest use is for single card readings. The tales include so much information that you can add so many layers to the traditional meanings of these cards. You could spend a very long time analysing just one card and getting a great deal from it. This is not to say you could not use them for three card spreads, or more, that too would give you great readings. However, the thought of trying to do something like a Celtic Cross with these cards gives me a headache! While it could be done, unless you just took only the RW meanings, it would take hours to uncover the layers to the tales and to get them to flow and find the connections that link them together.

So what do I think? Well, I love them. The ooze charm and make you feel very childlike as you go into nostalgia overdrive while going through the deck, spotting your favourite and familiar tales. This is a deck to be savoured, one you spend a lot of time with as you uncover it’s many layers and lessons. If you want detail, this is the deck for you. It has so much to give and it is a deck I can see many building a deep relationship with, myself included. This deck is perfect for Card a Day readings, and this way, will ease you into its many facets in a bite-size way. This is how I intend to form my relationship with this wonderful and charming deck.



Overall, I think this deck is a winner. It has the instant appeal of the fairytales and wonderful artwork, while leading to a deeper and more meaningful tarot experience. Go on, dip you toe into the world of fairytales, I’m sure you won’t regret it :o)

More information can be found at: <http://www.fairytaletarot.com>