

Majors- the Middle triad

If the first triad shows what shaped us into young adults, then this triad is us making peace with ourselves (or trying to!)

Strength; Can you be kind to yourself, yes even the parts you don't like?

Hermit; Can you be you in a crowded room, or all alone, and still be comfortably you?

Wheel of Fortune; Can you find the stillness in life even through the best of times, and the worst?

Justice; Do you take accountability for the consequences of your thoughts and actions?

Hanged man; Can you pause and connect in different ways to your normal?

Death; Do you know when to let go and move on? Have you made peace with the impermanence of our physical world?

Temperance; Can you find, and maintain, balance in your life?

So- ask yourself, which of these do you find easy?

And which do you struggle with the most? *For me its Temperance all the way. I still struggle with balance.*

Which ever one you struggle with the most- look to the one before, is there a lesson there for you to learn? (If its Strength- then perhaps the answer remains in Strength, or you could look to the Chariot).

Strength

Sometimes when we are used to a card, we overlook the obvious. Let's re-look at Strength as if we had never seen the card before, but with a Tarot reader's eye.

A young woman wearing a white dress "pets" a male lion who is in a submissive pose.

The blue mountains (highest potential) are a strong symbol and there is an infinity symbol above her head.

The first question I want to ask is why a lion?

The masculinity of the lion creates the duality with the femininity of the young woman.

If this is meant only to represent a “beast” or our base desires, those parts of ourselves we don’t like- then why choose a “Noble” beast, connected both with royalty and even Christ?

I think the lion was chosen to remind us of both the power, and the strength of what ever is being tamed by the woman. This is both dangerous and also noble. It has the potential to overpower and dominate her – yet is also a force for good if gently tamed.

And this is exactly how I perceive my shadow self, that dark part of my psyche where all that is not accepted by me resides.

We all have this shadow self, the mess of things we have suppressed - and if we do not handle this part of ourself carefully it holds the potential to destroy our life- leading to addiction, mental health dilemmas, and self-destructive patterns.

I remember reading for a young man once, and expressing that he had anger issues (knight of wands/king cups). He looked at me and calmly explained he didn’t have an anger issue- he never lost his temper. I repeated my statement calmly and firmly, he stood up, leaned across the table, and shouted in my face “I do not have an anger issue” then promptly burst into tears.

If we do not make friends with our rage, our jealousy, our self-confidence, our boundaries, then this part of us will likely boil up out of control just when we don’t want it to.

Used in balance our anger is the growling dog- warning others to give us a break, we aren’t coping right now. Without that growl we go from seeming calm to full attack mode- which often leads to more shame and guilt, and a firmer attempt to hide our wounded self.

The lion; the unruly beast of our wounded self.

The woman; our wiser self.

Both a part of us, both important. Together- very, very powerful.

When we work with our wounded self, when we harness that self-destructive power and use it to power our life- that is where real strength is. That is when we become truly formidable.

Which leads me to a business concept that I feel really works with this card.

The strongest path to growth is to work on your biggest weakness.

So the Strength card shows your wiser self-accepting, loving, connecting with the part of you that you most dislike about yourself. The power contained in that simple statement!

Of course it's not easy, and it is a lifetime's journey to learn. But true personal power is (I think) based on being kind to yourself, even the parts you don't like.

I'm not overly interested in the Hebrew connections with the cards (it's not an area of personal study for me)- but the Hebrew link for Strength has always stuck with me. Serpent.

When we use a Jewish reference for something we have to link to the Old Testament- and it was a serpent that tempted Eve.

If we have hidden wounds, if we repress parts of ourselves, then we can be tempted, controlled, manipulated by them.

They only become our strengths when we sit with them, bring them into the light, bring them into our sovereignty. Then they can be our super power!

So pay attention to this card, it is a deceptively powerful one. But the strength it speaks of is often an inner strength. To sit with yourself, to be kind to yourself, and integrate something important.

It can suggest that you will need to face something you'd rather not- but the message is clear, that you can do this.

And you may need to make the choice that scares you- to speak to your boss, confront a loved one, speak to the bank manager.

Make the brave choice, know you are stronger than you believe. But be kind too!

The Hermit

Ok let's be honest- there is not a lot of symbolism to go on in this card!

The number 9 is important, it is the last single digit. It marks this card as the ending of the cycle (and the start of another).

We have an older man, in a grey cloak, He holds a golden staff and a lantern.

Grey is important- it blends the dualities of black and white, as if an integration has occurred.

The yellow staff is repeated only in the 8 cups, which has a similar (totally gorgeous) sky colour of a duck egg blue. I think the 8 of cups shows a movement towards the Hermit. The action of striding on, looking for the right perspective, making an independent choice.

Why is the staff yellow? I think it shines with the Hermit's energy, he is grounded, connected, shining. He is complete within himself (the blending of black and white) and is totally Ok with that. I often think the hermit reminds us the answers come from ourselves in the end- if only we allow ourselves the peace to hear them.

The lantern is another representation of his duality (look back to module 1) it combines the upright masculine, and downward feminine triangles to create a cohesive whole.

The difference between the Hierophant (tradition, teaching, organised wisdom) and the Hermit (mentor, guide) is the Hierophant shares a little of himself to help you find your best path. He may only be half a step ahead of you- but his light will help even if your path is different to his.

Oddly the facial expression seems similar to the woman in Strength. Their eyes are either downcast or closed- they don't need recognition for what they offer. They have a rich inner life, are accessing a form of connection or reassurance than transcends the recognition that suits the Hierophant.

Pomp and ceremony has its place, it has its uses- but if you are a hermit type of character (as I am) then it just isn't important. Always look to the head

covering- could there be a bigger difference between the outward show of the Hierophant and the simple hood of the Hermit?

The Hermit asks you to step away from your life, to find a peaceful perspective.

- **Are you still you when no one is listening?**
- **Do you live the same way if no-one is watching?**
- **Do you make up your own mind, regardless of everyone else?**

There is a wonderful social experiment you can find online. An actor or two sit in a waiting room. Each time a bell rings they stand up, when it rings again, they sit down. A member of the public comes into the waiting room and automatically joins suit. In time more members of the public join, the actors leave, and now everyone is standing and sitting to the bell with no idea of why. Someone in their Hermit power would ask "why are you doing that?"

Recently I took my four kids to Denmark with me where I was going to a gathering in my role as shaman. Although the kids didn't take part in any of the spiritual elements there were plenty of gathering meals we attended together. I asked them on the way home if I had seemed different in Denmark, their answer was a resounding "no". I was pleased- I am now me where ever I am, and who ever I am with.

I know this is a card so many people aspire to, and rightly so. **He stands in the snow – as do the those who "travail" in the 5 of Pentacles.** Never forget this level of inner peace and wisdom is often a hard path. It is far easier to join the masses, distract yourself, pay for symbols of authority. It's often a long and unending journey to seek genuine inner wisdom.

Many of us dip in and out of this state, life is not linear.

Often, I sit with my wounded self (Strength) integrating, stepping into the Place of hermit, only to be distracted or pulled back into my wounded self once more.

It is easier to get to know the Hermit when we are free from the distractions of an extravert life. If you can book yourself into a lovely cottage somewhere for a week. Walk, read, leave your phone off, cook for just yourself, allow yourself to unwind into just being you. For many of us this just isn't possible- so perhaps book time to be with you. A monthly day out doing whatever you most want to

do, a morning coffee each day in gentle contemplation. However best suits you- make sure you have **quality time with yourself.**

The mentor we see in the Hermit - tune in...

Is it suggesting you reach out and connect with a mentor? Or are you being asked to step into this role?

And never forget this isolation which is a mark of wisdom can also be an avoidance of facing what needs to be faced.

The flip side of the Hermit can be the “peter pan” persona- never wanting to grow up, or it can be a reminder to step out of the isolation and back into the busy world once more.

Pay particular attention in romantic relationship spreads!

The Wheel of Fortune

The jump from the calm and serene Hermit – to the symbol overpacked Wheel of Fortune is one that makes my head hurt!

Its as if the juxtaposition between the two cards is a designed to make us appreciate the extreme of each even more.

We’ve got Egyptian mythology, Hebrew letters, Latin, Biblical references, alchemical symbols....and no actual people or landscape to help us connect on a personal level.

The central image, and the name is wheel- and a wheel is a circle that revolves or turns. This is a very important point that is so simple it can be easily overlooked – especially if you are distracted by the plethora of fascinating symbols.

I think one of the greatest lies told to mankind is that life is a straight line. We are born, we live, we die- and are judged by an Almighty.

All around us life lives in cycles and circles- from the moon to the trees, from our breath to the stars... and in Occult terms this is the “law of rotation”. In more modern terms we could think of this as constant change.

Here as we reach the midpoint of Tarot, we are reminded that all of our physical world is in a state of change, and yet by understanding the lore of this world (represented by the complex symbolism) we can at least understand this principle and work with it.

So, let's unpick some of the symbolism;

Four figures; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John- also represented in the World. They can represent the four elements, the four suits, and the four cardinal Astrology signs.

Sphinx with a sword; The intellectual, how life is a riddle (riddle of the sphinx) and the wit of man can not change the laws of the universe. We can understand them, work with them, but not change them.

Alchemical symbols, and Astrological symbol; (Mercury, Sulphur, Salt, Aquarius). Aquarius represents man, Mercury- super consciousness, Sulphur- self-consciousness, and Salt- unconscious. Reminding us that we exist in many forms.

For me these point to how when we understand the formula for how the universe works, we release ourselves from attachment to wheel of life, the cycles of the mortal world. (Not saying I'm there yet!)

The various layers of the wheel are all highlighting the centre point, the axis-mundi. The divine connection between earth and sky that is used as an orientation in many shamanic practices.

The Latin words can spell; rota- wheel, taro- tarot, orat- speaks, tora- lore, ator- love. Now my Latin isn't good but research suggests this can be interpreted as “the wheel of tarot speaks the lore of love.” Paul Foster Case translates “love” to be Mother Nature, or the Empress. The physical plane upon/within which we currently reside.

The Hebrew letters; represent Yod Heh Vav Heh, translating into the “lord” or the name for God, not a direct translation as the name is unpronounceable, more like a formula for creation.

Anubis & Snake; The Anubis is connected to death, the snake rebirth- once more linking to the endless cycles of life and death.

So, a packed card of complex symbolism and formulae- but in the end the wheel reminds us that all of life is formed of cycles, highlighting the still inner point – the axis mundi of the inner soul.

Perhaps that is the quintessential part of us that remains past death, and we can connect to this in life- stepping away from attachment and finding peace in the complexity of life.

Like looking up at the stars and appreciating in that moment that we are one tiny part of something so very much bigger.

Justice

The figure of Justice looks directly at us, framed by the pillars and the curtain there are clear links to the High Priestess and the Hierophant.

In the High Priestess we connect with the spiritual world.

In the Hierophant we hope to understand the spiritual world.

Now we need to apply that to our lives, and live consciously by these understandings.

The magnificent triple crown of the Hierophant, and the triple moon crown of the High priestess have morphed into a crown with three raised squares.

The sword is upright- as in the Ace of swords, and the Queen of swords- expect uncompromising truths and brutal honesty.

The square (material world) and circle (spiritual world) are worn as motifs. Make no mistake this is a card connected with the laws of the land, and the universe.

The scales are a useful symbol (seen also in the 6 of pentacles, 10 pentacles). There are consequences with this card. When you put a weight in one of the bowls the other will move an equal amount.

The easiest way to read this card- if the question is appropriate- is the legal system. If you are buying a house, going through a tribunal, divorce, then this card will represent the law, getting legal advice, possibly court. It suggests there will be a fair outcome- and be very aware that may not be in your, or your client's favour.

The simplest way to read this card is to say "you'll get what you deserve", to read this as natural consequences in life- and tune into to see if that is a blessing or a curse.

Many people read this as Karma- being "punished" for past actions, or rewarded. But the point of Tarot is to free ourselves- as much as possible- from the lores of Karma. We know from the Wheel of Fortune that there are natural cycles in life, and we should therefore become aware of the consequences of our actions before we take them. Instead of blindly reacting to life- **Tarot allows us to glimpse the consequences before they happen, giving us better understanding to act rather than react.**

Karma isn't just something we are born with, it is something we are creating with every thought, action, and moment.

Justice reflects an inner application of the lores of the universe and advises us to act with an awareness of likely consequences, and a brutal truth about the likely impact of our choices.

Yes, you have to reap what you sow- but if you are self-aware you get to choose the seeds (or at least influence them to a degree!)

Just as the "secret" message in the Wheel of Fortune was the still spot in the rotation, so the "secret" message in Justice is equilibrium, or balance.

Everything in the universe is in a state of flux between two polarities, Justice asks you to find the balance point, the equilibrium.

Between work and rest.

Spending and saving.

Giving and receiving.

Meeting your own needs, and serving others.

This is a unique inner balance which will change day by day, minute by minute. Its not about having one infallible formula- rather about weighing each situation and trusting your own higher guidance.

I have come to appreciate that when we do predictions with Tarot we are not usually reading “the” future, we are reading an individual’s future.

We are understanding the consequences of their thoughts and actions- within a wider context of the world around them- and expressing the natural consequences.

The more a client knows themselves the less surprised they are by a reading. This isn’t magic as such, simply understanding with a sensitive inner compass the natural lores and consequences.

If I drink a bottle of wine- I will have a hangover.

If I don’t buy any raffle tickets, I’ll never win a prize.

Time lines shift and morph as we adjust our hopes, fears and decisions- but the natural lores always find the equilibrium.

I feel drawn to write here that some consequences in life are outside of our scope to understand “why”. The death of a child, cancer randomly appearing in a fit and healthy individual, the drunk driver crashing into your car. Sometimes there are consequences that we could not have foreseen, not have avoided, and have no direct connection to our actions.

Don’t let hubris and a need to be right make you into a victim shamer. We are all only human, sometimes we just can’t understand the “why”.

I do believe there is always a pattern. I just don’t believe we can always understand it.

Hanged Man

There are some big associations with this card, but let’s start by exploring the uniqueness.

He’s upside down, suspended by one leg.

He has a halo around his head.

These are unique to this card-except perhaps we could see halos in angels.

To me this is continuing the journey to the inner landscape, the body is still yet the mind is active. The halo connects with the sun, the divine spark, and suggests this is allowing the individual to connect with “source”, divinity, or the one light. There is a deeply spiritual side to this card, a feeling of glimpsing spiritual truths that can be life changing.

Take your World card. Take your Hanged man and turn it upside down. Feel the resonance between the two cards- how the Hanged man allows us to take a glimpse into the other world, the completeness that is the World.

If the Wheel of Fortune reminds us that all of life is movement, cycles and rotations.

And Justice asks us to find the equilibrium, the balance.

Then the hanged Man asks us to find stillness in our mad, extroverted, distraction fuelled world.

The Hanged Man and the 4 of cups were the cards that highlighted that lockdown year would be different. In all my year ahead readings these were the key cards that clients were getting. I got a feeling of life slowing down, but in many cases, this not being a bad thing.

I sometimes think of the Hanged man as a pendulum- paused in motion between the polarities of life.

Many traditions talk about initiation being a lone journey to “find yourself”, from vision quests to utsetter (sitting out). In our capitalist society we often consider initiation is something bought, or bestowed to us by another. I don’t think it works like that. Initiation happens when we have the wisdom and experience to surrender our mind and body to our chosen spiritual path.

Some cards show the Hanged man between two poles (the polarity of the two pillars). The Rider Waite highlights the Axis Mundi- the direct channel between earth and sky. I feel there is a deeply shamanic nature to this card- we are literally witnessing a shamanic experience- where the body is still (though it can often be shaking or dancing) and the mind is connected to the spiritual source.

The shoes are yellow (so often they are white) its as if the inner light is pouring through the crown to the soles of the feet.

Notice how red belt-belts are important from the Magician, to the roses in Strength, they represent the strength, force, fortitude.

The body position is strange. The arms are almost the opposite to the 2 of swords, but they are “resting” (perhaps even restrained) and nothing represents physical work more than our hands.

The leg position- there could be many ways to express that, to depend on one leg takes inner balance. Honestly, I would try this position (though lying down rather than hanging!). Try standing on one leg. Experience this position and see how it affects your body and mind.

And then let's bring it right back to the simplest of meanings. Because life isn't always about the big spiritual truths.

This card can represent slowing down, either predicting something will be slower than expected- or advising that you slow down.

And it can advise you to change your approach, perspective, or attitude (especially if paired with the 8 of cups). Because at heart we must remember this chap is upside down!

So, if you are asking about a situation, problem, or area of your life and the Hanged man is there ask yourself;

Do I need to take a break?

Do I need to approach this from a different angle?

Or as Einstein expressed it *“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”* Watch out for the Hanged man with the 8/9/10 swords. It suggests you need to change your thought process (inner world work) to change your situation.

I need to add a word of caution here about enlightenment or experiencing this connection with the divine. I believe our blood chemistry is altered by mediation & breathwork leading to a deeply relaxed state that allows us to enter this euphoric state suggested by the Hanged Man and Temperance. This state can be accessed through various drugs, or “forced” with a powerful facilitator. This quick, temporary fix isn't sustainable, and can lead to the addiction of the Devil.

I firmly believe in “slow spirituality”, taking the time to practise so you can access this euphoric state when you choose to- not dependent on others.

If The Hanged Man/Temperance/king cups/7 cups are cropping up as euphoria do double check there isn't an addiction in play. Even spiritual practice can be an addiction if not well integrated.

Death

I love Pamala Coleman Smith's artwork- but I sometimes wonder whether with Death she got lost in a world of her own. It's as if there is layer, upon layer, upon layer in this card. A whole story in just one image.

We have boats, and towers, people, and then the arresting figure of death on his great white steed. Maybe she is reminding us that life after death is as rich a tapestry as life itself. I think with her rich landscape Pamela is reminding us that death is not an ending, just another turn of the wheel.

If you are reading for others when the Death card comes up address it immediately. It is extremely rare for the Death card to represent a physical death, yet clients will often worry this is its meaning. As this is an in-depth course and you have stuck this far, I will share my honest thoughts on Death in the cards. Yes. It has been represented for me- both expected, and unexpected deaths.

If you are reading and someone has a loved one who is ill, or perhaps has a terminal condition themselves then trust your intuition. Don't be afraid to talk about death, and don't be afraid to feel it isn't in your clients' best interests to discuss death.

Death for me tends to have shown up as difficulties, with a sudden change to all good cards which feels inexplicable in the situation. The Fool, Death, 6 of swords, 10 of swords have all shown up as "transition cards". Where you might have (as an example) 5 swords, 10 swords, 5 cups for present (hard, sadness, physical issues) with Sun, Fool, 10 cups for the future.

The Fool as an un-incarnated spirit often crops up when someone is near Death, but also as birth. The cycle of life!

I have counselled people with terminal illness and never been told of their upcoming death- I ask the cards to give me the information that is most helpful, and the future is not always helpful. I counselled a friend and client weekly though an 18 month cancer journey. She asked me several times would

she die from this, my heart said “yes” but the cards were never clear. I had to trust the cards and say the information wasn’t there.

She embraced her life, lived well. Then she entered hospital- and was dead within a week. In retrospect knowing the end would be so swift wouldn’t have helped her. She squeezed every moment out of life- and she needed hope to be able to do that. I trusted my cards, not my opinion.

There was a moment, three weeks before her death, where during a shamanic journey we both felt something deep and beautiful. We both felt this was her death, yet again when we asked the cards- no clear answers were given.

Lack of needing to chase answers, trust, compassion. In the end I found these were what she most needed from me.

And I have advised people to LEAVE a dangerous situation, change holiday plans (and realised both natural disasters, and a violent bombing were avoided), or check Claires law (to see if their partner had an abusive background- he did, and was arrested) all because I saw the potential of death in the cards.

In medical situations I only advise people to see their Dr, or get a second opinion. I can not diagnose, nor would I predict illness- rather encourage a proactive approach to health.

I have only been shocked once. A regular client planning to go to her Christmas work event- I saw Tower, Death, 10 of swords. With two majors it didn’t feel like something movable- but she had elderly parents and I couldn’t get a grasp on who the cards were referring too. I mentioned that I felt there would be a medical emergency that prevented her from attending the event- it turned out she died suddenly. I have reflected on whether there was more I could have said or done, but the reading felt finished. I remember my last words were “don’t over stress about the event, just relax it won’t be that important”. Perhaps that’s exactly what she needed to hear.

Trust the cards, feel free to not read, or reframe a question if needed. You are the reader, you get to call out what you are comfortable reading for.

Some clients, often those undergoing cancer treatment, will say they don’t want to know about their long term future – I always respect this.

I have read for the end of life for loved ones many, many times. Helping a family to make the best of a difficult situation.

Usually, Death will mean the natural ending to something in life- a marriage, job, friendship. Remember it can be the ending of something you don't like (an addiction, a debt, a toxic relationship) this is a neutral card of natural endings. The key is to recognise the ending, allowing it to happen, and experience the transformation.

If all of life is cycles, created by the polarity of opposites, then there are a myriad of endings, beginnings, and transformations, that we will live through.

The sun rising between the two pillars- with what looks like a city casting a shadow. The boats moving across the water. These all remind us Death is a journey, not an ending.

The people meeting death are so important;

The emperor has lost his crown. Our intellect can not outwit the cycles of life (sphinx on the wheel of fortune) neither can power or money.

The girl from Strength swoons. She is ready to accept Death, but has not yet quite made peace with her ego. The very definition (I believe) of strength or "Fortitude" is to be brave when facing difficult times. Our Strength woman doesn't want to die- but she will accept it with courage.

The child hasn't lost their connection with spirit yet, so is not scared of death. Living only in the present moment she is not attached to her future or ego as many adults become.

The hierophant understands death, sees it for the transformation and natural stage in the cycle it is. He embraces it without fear.

To live well, is to make friends with death. To appreciate that we live a limited number of years in this physical form- and to understand the value of the time we have. Nothing is promised except death. Yet death is just another turn of the wheel.

Temperance

For me Temperance, and Star are glimpses behind the veil of the High Priestess, they are moments of pure bliss beyond the ego state.

To temper something is to get the balance right, and here we see an angel balancing fire and water, earth and water, and air and water- all in the perfect blend. Where water represents the collective unconscious, that indefinable part of ourselves that is larger than the individual.

Fire: Upright triangle, sun glyph, wings.

Water: Cup & pool.

Earth: One foot clearly on the earth. (note also Star)

Air: An interesting link of symbols.

Some cards show a rainbow, Pamela shows us beautiful Irises. Iris is a Greek goddess, associated with rainbows, a messenger between the Gods and men. A rainbow is formed when water in the air changes how we see light. The blend between air and water.

Iris is known to carry cups of water from the river of death (Styx) adding deeper meanings to the cups in the card. The waters of life and death perhaps? (In pagan terms a chalice can represent the womb).

Or a subtle warning that to become too attached to this blissful state will result in death. I believe we are in physical form for a reason, and if we spend our time chasing spiritual bliss without enjoying our life- have we really lived? Or just bypassed the emotions of living? Be wary of this card leading to addiction, chasing the highs.

This is a beautiful card of bliss, unplanned joy, those rare moments when life just hits the perfect note. The chance meeting of a dear friend, a deep conversation caught on a bus, when your plans change and you are disgruntled- but realise that actually this is exactly how it was meant to be. But we can't plan for these moments- we trust our intuition, adjust and adapt, and if we allow them, they happen.

Yet we know from previous cards that all of life is motion, and nothing is fixed. You need to feel this bliss, but not be attached to it.

This balance between bliss and non-attachment is a huge meaning of the card. The angel is traditionally associated with Michael "like unto God", and a reminder that even though we can emotionally connect with divinity through

this card, we are still human. Watch out with this card for anyone presenting in “guru” mode and making impossible promises.

When we look at the blending of the two cups I am drawn to think of compromise, and finding the “middle way”. The magic that happens when we adjust, adapt, allow ourselves to intuitively find the best way forward rather than sticking rigidly to preconceived plans.

I am editing these notes after a weekend with my kids at excel-comic-con. It’s a HUGE event we go to every year, and normally I amble around by myself totally lost in my own world. This year my daughter complained- she wanted to talk to someone as she walked around, and she wanted me to stick with her. I was annoyed- I like my self absorbed time here. But I heard her need, and agreed. The compromise was I would get to choose the order we looked around. I could have said “no”, but neither of us would really have enjoyed it. Actually I enjoyed sharing the experience with her-we both adapted our usual way of spending the day, and we both enjoyed it a little more.

Life is ever changing around us.

Let go of attachment, trust your intuition, adjust, adapt, find the balance in any given moment.