

Have you paused to appreciate how many Rider Waite Tarot cards show water?

At this point I am talking about water the element, rather than cups.

This PDF is reflective, and designed to create questions, rather than define water in the Tarot..

Water is represented as:

- Ocean/estuary
- River/stream
- Lake/pool
- Ice/snow
- Rain clouds

In my Norse tradition we have 5 elements; earth, fire, air, water and ice.

So lets start with looking at the snow/ice cards. I'm not including the blue mountains- but I would argue they could be perceived as representing ice/snow mountains as well. So, leave that open as a fluid association (could I be more in my water right now?)

Hermit, Fool, 5 pentacles (though possibly any blue mountain card)

In Norse mythology ice and snow belong to the Norse deity Skadi, and the rune "is". Skadi is all about the long journey to personal understanding, and the sometimes, dangerous, potential of ice.

Ice and snow change a landscape, we can get lost in our everyday places.

Her rune poem talks about the dangers of "ice bridges" when in Scandinavia the ice would create bridges across rivers with no clear starting point, and no clear ending point- so much **potential**, yet so easy to get lost.

IN my Norse position the surface tension of water represents the power of the present moment. Ice creates a stronger surface tension- expands the potential of the present moment- but that all too easily leads to being caught in procrastination, rather than taking action.

How many times have you been keen to do something (lets say watch a movie) but been overwhelmed by too much choice- and ended up scrolling instead of relaxing into a movie?

I see that potential in all of these cards;

The 0 in the Fool is full potential.

The 9 in the Hermit is the birthing of a new cycle.

The 6th pentacle being birthed in the 5 of pentacles- which can literally represent the labour of a pregnant woman.

Ice and snow, “The power, and danger, of potential.”

Rivers

(5 cups, death, 10 cups, emperor, empress, knight cups, ace wands, chariot, 8 wands.

Now there is some personal licence as to when an estuary is a river, and when it is the ocean. I have taken river to mean I clearly see 2 banks, and a movement of water- but some cards may not be clear (oh the fluidity of water!).

I associate rivers with the movement of life, with love, creativity, and living a life with joy and love. “Our soul is moved”.

The water in Tarot represents our soul, and our connection with the divine- so this is about living a soulful life.

This can feel scary- as it involves opening your heart to both love and loss equally.

Estuaries and oceans (or large bodies of water!)

(10 swords, 5 swords, judgement, 8 cups, queen cups, king cups, 3 wands, 2 wands, 6 swords, high priestess, 2 swords, ace cups)

We really start to get a feel of the expansiveness of water when we see it represented in the High Priestess. Its hard to tell if that is a landscape in the far distance because (like 6 swords/judgement) because it is shaded in blues.

For me the water behind the High Priestess represents the collective unconscious, the divine, that unexplainable divinity that we all have. The part of us that existed before we were born, and will last after we have died.

I have read several times the idea that the divine soul is water, and we all contain a drop of this water, and like the cycle of water in our own natural landscape- in time we will return to the soul ocean that is “divinity”.

What does the body of water mean in these cards?

Estuary is the mouth of the ocean- and we can use this to journey to the ocean, or along the river. So, on one level these cards can represent journey and movement.

Ocean represents the collective unconscious, and the divine- so they can represent that deeper connection- through intuition, spiritual practices or creativity.

Rain

(3 swords)

We only have a clear image of rain in one card- and the link between Swords & Cups is really heightened by this card.

For me the rain is a release of emotion, a clearing.

Clouds

(all aces, 4 cups, 5 swords, 10 swords, lovers, tower, wheel of fortune, 7 of cups, all swords court cards, world)

There is clearly a spiritual significance to clouds- with its links to the divine hand in the four aces, the angel in The Lovers, and the “framing” in the Wheel of Fortune & World.

There is also clearly a link between swords & cups with clouds being in all four swords court cards- but then a cloud is the water element in the air!

Like many of the water images in Tarot some of the clouds are clearly differentiated by how they are drawn.

Storm clouds in the 5 swords – divine clouds in The Lovers. So, paying note to how the clouds are drawn is clearly important.

Both Arthur Waite and Pamela Coleman-Smith come from a Christian background, so it is worth looking at the meaning of clouds in the bible. Here the clouds represent God's "engagement" with humanity, illustrating God's presence.

So- allow yourself to note the clouds in a reading, remember they are representing water- and all that water can represent.

Pools & lakes

(Moon, Temperance, Star)

Now in the fluid world of water these could be lakes, estuaries, or the ocean- but they seem (to me) to be framed differently to other cards. And with her experience in set design, I believe Pamela Coleman-Smith framed cards with a focused purpose.

A lake is the divine feminine – the feminine element of water gently held by the feminine element of earth.

Linking us to the womb, waters of the womb, and the source of all creativity.

And the odd ones (!)

Page of cups & 2 of cups- Despite how it may seem, I don't have all the answers, and its important that you understand no one does!

So, I am just noting the similarity between these cards!

8 swords- this feels to me tidal, and the added element of water is what brings movement and the promise of release to both the 8 & 10 of swords.

Swords NEEDS to express, feel, and connect with emotions. We can see what happens when we are locked in our own head with no connection to heart or soul, in the 9 of swords. The darkest of cards. No light. No water.

Blue Mountains

I read blue mountains as “highest potential” which definitely resonates with my understanding of the element of ice, and the connections with the Fool, 0, pure potential.

So, although I haven't listed the blue mountains- look out for them, I believe they represent snow capped/icy mountains and are a link to the element of water.

I'm keen with this course to spark questions, and to be clear that I do not have all the answers.

So next time you are reading pay attention;

- Just how much water is in your reading?
- And what is it telling you?

