

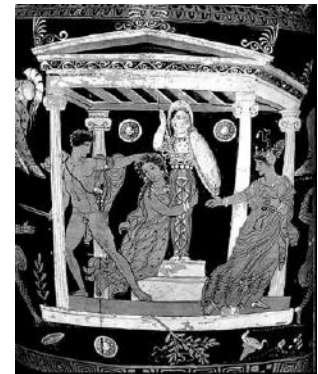
Myth, Stories and Tarot

CARL JUNG, FATHER OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY, COINED THE TERM THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS. IT has long been accepted that this is where myths and fairy tales reside: deep in our psyche. This, he believed, is true of all of races and explains why stories that carry a similar theme or metaphor exist across many different countries and cultures. Myths are stories that connect us with what it is to be human. As part of our cultural DNA, they reside in our imagination and are built on by later cultures. Naturally, this results in stories changing over time.

The word myth comes from the Greek “mythos” meaning developed or changed over time. In modern language, myth is sometimes used to describe an untrue concept or lie, but classical scholars define myths as traditional tales told by someone for some reason, with a secondary partial reference to something of collective importance. The ancients initially believed that the stars in the sky were themselves the gods, but later this morphed into the stars having the energy of the gods, as associated with stories about them. Some of the earliest written stories come from the Greek philosophers Hesiod and Homer, believed to have lived between 650 to 750 BCE. Hesiod’s *Theogony* told the creation story of the world and explained the history and hierarchy – or the cosmology – of the gods and goddesses. Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* told the story of the Trojan War and the epic journey home of the Greek hero Odysseus.

The first book I can remember owning from my childhood was stories from Greek and Roman mythology. It was one of those cloth bound old books illustrated with beautiful glossy coloured prints of paintings that were stuck onto pages. So my interest in myth and the gods and goddesses began at a very early age. I can remember visiting Apollo’s temple at Delphi in my early thirties. It was way before I got into my spiritual studies, but I can remember feeling something special there along with the famous *Know Thyself*. It was snowing at the time and our family almost had the place to ourselves, so it was a truly memorable experience, interesting to reflect back on, now that I have become involved with so many “oracular” arts and practices. I have found through working with astrology clients that the asteroids named for certain mythological deities or characters carry a metaphor or underlying theme associated with that myth into an area of their life where it has significance. This can often be strengthened by an incidental thread in the story, which relates in a practical way to their life. I have found that Cassandra is often important in the charts of those associated with tarot. She was a princess of Troy, given the gift of prophecy by Apollo; then when she rejected him, cursed so no one would believe her! She saw the fall of Troy and herself torn from the statue of Athena, raped, enslaved and finally murdered, but could do nothing to prevent it.

When we begin to use tarot, we often doubt ourselves and wonder whether we will be believed. Apollo gifted Cassandra with prophecy by making her sleep in his temple and having the temple snakes lick her ears to cleanse them, so she heard everything. When I related this part of the story to a client who had experienced difficulty being listened to all her life, she said “OMG, I have terrible issues with blocked ears. I have to have them syringed at the doctor’s all the time!” The tarot is so full of symbols that we can relate stories to. If we engage with our unconscious, we will most probably connect the correct story or myth which will bring meaning to our client. Maybe the Queen of Swords, with her knowledge, but difficulty in connecting at an emotional level, might bring to mind the story of poor Cassandra. Of course we can always use a specialised deck such as the *Mythic Oracle*¹, to also bring added meaning to our readings!



Sara Gilbert

Explore this theme, and much more, in Sara Gilbert’s Conference presentation *The Impact of Star Myth on Tarot and its Practitioner* – on Friday at 2.00 pm.

¹ *Mythic Oracle of the Ancient Greek Oracle*, artwork Michelle-lee Phelan, companion guidebook by Carisa Mellado Blue Angel Publishing, 2008; cards from this deck have been used extensively in this *Magician* to illustrate many of our articles on gods and goddesses.