

CORA BONITO

DISCOVER - FEEL - CONNECT



A FREE CORA DISCOVERY GUIDE

THE SECRET HISTORY of Tarot

How Renaissance playing cards became one of the world's
most enduring mirrors of meaning



Tarot was a game before it became
a language of mystery.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT CHANGED?



ART - SYMBOLS - HISTORY - INTUITION - SELF-DISCOVERY

01 - BEFORE THE MYSTERY

Before tarot could predict anything, it had to be played.

The earliest surviving cards were Renaissance treasures, not manuals for seeing the future.

Tarot emerged in fifteenth-century Italy. Early decks were known as trionfi, or triumphs. They added a sequence of allegorical trump cards to an ordinary playing-card structure.

Some surviving examples were hand-painted, gilded, and commissioned for noble families. A celebrated set associated with Milan was made around 1458 as a wedding gift. These cards were miniature works of art that could fit in the palm of a hand.

The first secret of tarot is simple: it did not begin as a mystical system.

A game of triumphs

Players used the cards in a trick-taking game. Higher cards defeated lower cards according to an ordered sequence. The word trump is connected to the Italian trionfo, meaning triumph.

The images were not random. Renaissance players recognized figures and ideas drawn from religion, morality, classical mythology, court life, and public processions. Justice, Fortune, Death, the Devil, and the World belonged to a visual culture already surrounding them.

The cards carried meaning long before they carried predictions.

1450s	LATE 1700s	1909	TODAY
Gilded Italian game cards	Divination and occult meanings expand	Smith-Waite deck transforms visual reading	Art, reflection, ritual, and self-exploration



02 - A DECK BECOMES A UNIVERSE

Seventy-eight cards. Hundreds of possible stories.

The familiar architecture of tarot joins everyday life with a procession of larger symbols.

A standard modern tarot deck has 78 cards: 22 trump cards and 56 suit cards. The labels Major Arcana and Minor Arcana arrived much later, as nineteenth-century occultists reorganized tarot into an esoteric system.

The four traditional Italian suits are swords, cups, coins, and batons or wands. Modern readers often connect them with thought, emotion, material life, and action, but those associations developed over time.

SWORDS	CUPS	COINS	WANDS
Thought, tension, decisions	Emotion, connection, imagination	Resources, body, material life	Action, desire, creative energy

The Fool's journey

The 22 trump cards move through figures such as the Magician, the Lovers, the Wheel of Fortune, Death, the Star, the Moon, the Sun, and the World. Readers later began to understand this sequence as a symbolic journey from innocence through challenge, change, awareness, and completion.

That journey is an interpretation, not a single historical rule. Different decks, traditions, cultures, and readers tell the story differently. Tarot survives partly because its visual language can be inherited and reinvented at the same time.

A tarot deck is not one fixed story. It is a structure that keeps inviting new stories.

MAJOR SYMBOLS + ORDINARY LIFE = A MIRROR WITH MANY DOORS



03 - THE EGYPTIAN SECRET

A beautiful origin story history could not prove.

Tarot became mystical centuries after its first appearance in European courts.

By the late eighteenth century, tarot was increasingly used for fortune-telling. French writers connected the cards with ancient Egypt and hidden wisdom. Those Egyptian origins remain unproven, but the story gave tarot a new aura of age, secrecy, and revelation.

Jean-Baptiste Alliette, known as Etteilla, became one of the first influential professional cartomancers. He created systems and decks designed specifically for divination, helping turn card reading into a teachable practice.

A tradition can become culturally powerful even when its origin story is not historically established.

From cards to correspondences

Nineteenth-century occultists connected tarot with astrology, numerology, Kabbalah, ceremonial magic, and other systems. Eliphas Levi helped shape this transformation and popularized the language of Major and Minor Arcana.

This layered history explains why tarot can be approached in several ways at once: as art, a game, an occult tradition, a reflective practice, or a cultural object.

DOCUMENTED HISTORY	SPIRITUAL TRADITION	PERSONAL INTERPRETATION
Cards, dates, makers, objects, and records that can be studied.	Meanings and correspondences developed within communities and schools.	What an image awakens in a particular person and moment.

Cora does not ask you to confuse these layers. The fascination is richer when you can see them all.



04 - PAMELA COLMAN SMITH

The woman who made every card speak in scenes.

One artist changed how millions of people would learn to read tarot.

In 1909, artist and illustrator Pamela Colman Smith created the images for the deck commonly called Rider-Waite-Smith. Arthur Edward Waite directed the project, especially the Major Arcana, and Rider published it.

Smith's decisive contribution was the fully illustrated Minor Arcana. Instead of showing only a repeated number of suit symbols, the cards became scenes filled with posture, weather, relationships, movement, and mood.

She turned the smaller cards into moments a reader could enter.

Why that changed tarot

A picture creates an immediate narrative invitation. You can notice who looks away, who carries too much, what is hidden, what is offered, and where the light falls. Reading becomes less dependent on memorizing a list and more open to observation and intuition.

Many modern decks still borrow Smith's visual structure, even when their style, bodies, cultures, and values change completely. Naming the deck Rider-Waite-Smith recognizes the artist whose imagination made that structure visible.

BEFORE	SMITH'S SHIFT	LASTING EFFECT
Many suit cards relied mainly on repeated symbols.	The Minor Arcana became complete narrative scenes.	Readers could interpret through image, emotion, and story.

Tarot's best-known visual language carries the hand of an artist.



05 - THE MIRROR EFFECT

Why can a random image feel so personal?

The card does not need to know you in order to help you notice yourself.

Images are open enough to invite association and specific enough to focus attention. A card can remind you of a memory, conflict, desire, or possibility that was already present but difficult to name.

This does not prove that the card predicts an external event. It describes something different: symbols can help a person create a story, observe a reaction, and ask a question from a new angle.

The useful revelation may not be 'This will happen.' It may be 'I did not realize this mattered so much to me.'

Look before you interpret

1. NOTICE	2. FEEL	3. CONNECT	4. QUESTION
What detail did your eye find first?	What emotion or body response appeared?	What person, memory, or situation came to mind?	What honest question does the image invite?

Prediction is only one way people use tarot

Some readers use tarot spiritually. Others use it for journaling, creative prompts, conversation, ritual, or reflection. A responsible reading leaves room for choice. It does not turn a symbol into an unavoidable sentence about health, money, love, or the future.

The strongest question is often not 'What will happen to me?' but 'What can I understand, choose, or do from here?'

A mirror does not make the decision. It helps you see what is standing in front of it.



06 - YOUR FIRST TAROT MIRROR

Which symbol is calling you today?

Do not calculate. Do not overthink. Notice which word holds your attention first.

0 THE FOOL BEGINNING Where might I trust one honest first step?	I THE MAGICIAN AGENCY What resource am I ready to use?	VI THE LOVERS CHOICE What value should guide my decision?	XVII THE STAR RENEWAL What hope deserves my care?	XVIII THE MOON UNCERTAINTY What feeling needs attention before certainty?
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Your attraction is not a diagnosis or a prophecy. It is a place to begin looking.

Write for three minutes

1. I chose this symbol because...
2. The part of my life it seems to touch is...
3. One action or question I want to carry forward is...

When you return to these answers later, notice what changed. Tarot becomes most interesting when the card is not the end of the conversation, but the beginning of one.



07 - YOUR FIRST CORA DOOR

Your story has an archetype.

The next step is not a generic reading. It is discovering the card Cora connects with your own starting point.



COMING NEXT - US\$4.90

Your Personal Arcana

A beautifully designed 5-8 page discovery created from your name, birth date, and Cora profile - with your central archetype, its light, its shadow, and one question to carry forward.

ONE SYMBOL - TWO SIDES - ONE PERSONAL STARTING POINT

Cora does not tell you what to believe. Cora invites you to discover.

START WITH THE FREE CORA DISCOVERY QUIZ.

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Sources for the curious

Victoria and Albert Museum, A History of Tarot Cards - fifteenth-century objects, suits, divination, occult history, and Pamela Colman Smith.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Immaterial: Tarot - Renaissance trionfi, early gilded cards, tarot as art, and modern interpretation.

The British Museum, Etteilla Tarot Pack - a historical 78-card cartomancy deck and instruction booklet.

Cora Bonito offers content for reflection and entertainment. Tarot is presented as a historical, artistic, spiritual, and self-discovery tradition - not as scientifically proven prediction. This guide does not replace medical, mental health, legal, or financial advice.

