

SILENUS TAROT



In Greek Mythology, Silenus was a learned satyr who was skilled in the art of prophesy. Many, including the famous King Midas, would try to capture him and force him to impart his wisdom. He is also said to have been the tutor of Dionysus, god of wine, and even to have aided the gods themselves in their battle against the giants.

Each card in this deck is decorated with a scene from Greek Myth. In designing the deck, I tried to find typical scenes that not only matched the meaning of each particular card, but would also allow for a similar composition to the well-known Rider-Waite deck. I wanted the cards to be easily recognizable to anyone familiar with the Tarot, but also to those who may be interested in learning about it (since most books on the subject employ the Rider-Waite designs).

The following is a list of the cards – including a description of the myth depicted and a brief summary of the card's meaning. I would strongly suggest, though, that anyone interested in doing a reading go buy a more detailed book. My meanings are included merely as an introduction. The symbolism of each card is very complex, and authors vary widely on their descriptions.

THE MAJOR ARCANA

0. The Fool: Silenus, the wise satyr, drinks from a spring tainted with wine by King Midas. Meaning: Think before you act.
1. The Magician: Odysseus resists the spell of Circe. Meaning: Seek creative solutions.
2. The High Priestess: Oedipus consults the Oracle of Delphi. Meaning: Trust your feelings.
3. The Empress: Heracles meets Hippolyte, Queen of the Amazons. Meaning: Initiative and progress. It's time to start something new.
4. The Emperor: Agamemnon gathers a fleet of 1000 ships to attack Troy. Meaning: Leadership and stability. Don't let your head rule your heart.
5. The Hierophant: Teiresias, the blind seer, instructs King Creon. Meaning: Spiritual leadership and kindness. Avoid dogma.
6. The Lovers: Psyche discovers her husband (who until now had kept himself in total darkness) to be Eros, god of love. Meaning: Harmony. Emotional freedom lets you enjoy life.
7. The Chariot: Achilles drags the body of the Trojan hero, Hector, behind his chariot. Meaning: Use physical and mental abilities to avoid adversity.
8. The Chariot: Heracles battles the Nemean Lion. Meaning: Gain confidence by understanding your own physical and mental abilities.
9. The Hermit: Cheiron, the wise centaur, takes charge of the infant Jason. Meaning: Spend time in quiet reflection.
10. Wheel of Fortune: Oedipus solves the riddle of the Sphinx. Meaning: A new beginning, opportunity, or change in luck.
11. Justice: Athena oversees the trial of Orestes. Meaning: Justice and fairness. Things will balance out.
12. The Hanged Man: Odysseus is tied to the mast of his ship and encounters the Sirens. Meaning: A time of transition. Be patient.
13. Death: Orpheus is killed by the Maenads, wild female followers of Dionysus. Meaning: Change. The old must make way for the new.
14. Temperance: The faithful Penelope awaits the return of her husband, Odysseus. Meaning: Moderation and patience. Balance your physical and intellectual options.
15. The Devil: Theseus enters the Labyrinth of the Minotaur. Meaning: Beware of being trapped by your earthly desires.
16. The Tower: Pandora opens the box and unleashes countless evils upon mankind. Meaning: Massive changes may cause you to reexamine your life.
17. The Star: Prometheus gives the gift of fire to mankind. Meaning: Hope. Your prospects are promising.
18. The Moon: The Trojan Horse stands before Troy. Meaning: Take care to avoid deception and dishonesty.
19. The Sun: Zeus appears to Danae as a shower of gold. Meaning: Contentment and illumination. Your path will become clear.
20. Judgement: Perseus faces Medusa, the gorgon. Meaning: Renewal. Time to reflect on the past and heal old wounds.
21. The World: Hephestus forges the shield of Achilles. Meaning: Completion. You have reached the end of a cycle, and will soon start a new path.

CUPS

1. Orpheus plays his lyre. Meaning: Abundance. Strong potential for happiness.
2. The Twins, Calais and Zetes, battle the harpies. Meaning: Friendship. Harmony between two people.
3. Silenus and the satyrs celebrate the birth of Dionysus, god of wine and revelry. Meaning: Happiness and fulfillment lie ahead.
4. Ariadne, abandoned by Theseus, is greeted by Dionysus. Meaning: A feeling of isolation may cloud reasons for optimism.
5. Odysseus, held captive by Calypso, pines away for his wife, Penelope. Meaning: Depression. Try to learn from your disappointment and regret.
6. Theseus is reunited with his father, Aegeus. Meaning: Fond memories. Look to the past to help build your future.
7. Paris judges the three goddesses, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, in a beauty contest –

with a golden apple as the prize. Meaning: You will be presented with a choice. Be sure to choose wisely

8. Daedalus and Icarus escape from the island of Crete using artificial wings.

Meaning: You may need to walk away from a situation -- or take a new path at risk of disappointment and loss.

9. King Midas is granted the golden touch. Meaning: Abundance and happiness will abound.

10. After being lost at sea for 10 years, Odysseus is reunited with his wife and son.

Meaning: Completion. You have achieved peace and harmony.

Page: Narcissus views his reflection in a pond. Meaning: Help from friends and loved ones.

Knight: Bellerophon rides on Pegasus and battles the Chimera. Meaning: A message or proposal.

Queen: Helen is "rescued" by her husband, Menelaus. Meaning: Intuition and sensitivity.

King: Odysseus gives the Cyclops a bowl of wine. Meaning: Devotion and introspection.

PENTACLES

1. The Golden Fleece. Meaning: Riches. Strong potential for a financial venture.

2. Psyche enters the Underworld carrying two cakes which are to be used to distract Cerberus, the guard dog, upon entering and exiting. Meaning: Balance and tight control are needed to get by.

3. Pygmalion sculpts a statue of Aphrodite. Meaning: Develop skills and creativity to insure success.

4. The Cyclops proves to be an inhospitable host when he devours two of Odysseus' men. Meaning: Save your resources for a later time.

5. Orestes is pursued by the Furies. Meaning: Material troubles lie ahead.

6. Aesculapius heals the sick. Meaning: Charity. Use your resources to help others.

7. Heracles completes his 11th labor -- winning the golden apples of the Hesperides. Meaning: You have done much hard work, but don't stop now or your efforts could be wasted.

8. Daedalus makes a pair of artificial wings. Meaning: Skill. Learn from mistakes in order to achieve expertise.

9. Perseus is instructed by Athena as to the location of certain magical weapons with which to battle Medusa. Meaning: Foresight. Offer advice to others so they may learn from your accomplishments.

10. Tantalus is invited to dine with the gods on Mount Olympus. Meaning: Security. Your material prospects are good.

Page: Marsyas, a satyr, challenges Apollo to a music contest. Meaning: Study and development.

Knight: The faithful hounds of Actaeon are tricked by Artemis into attacking their master. Meaning: Reliability.

Queen: Io, transformed into a cow, is guarded by Argus. Meaning: Prosperity. Share your wealth with others.

King: Cadmus sows the dragon's teeth -- causing armed warriors to spring from the earth. Meaning: Experience and leadership.

SWORDS

1. The infant Achilles is made invulnerable by being dipped in the River Styx. Meaning: Victory through strength and determination.

2. Odysseus must choose to sail closer to either Scylla, a 6-headed monster, or Charybdis, a deadly whirlpool. Meaning: Stalemate. Forces are balanced.

3. Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter, Iphigenia. Meaning: Sorrow. Growth may require cutting something out of your life.

4. Achilles withdraws from the Greek forces at Troy. Meaning: Meditation. Wait for further guidance before you act.

5. Pentheus arrests a disobedient stranger who is actually Dionysus in disguise.

Meaning: Struggle. You have the upper hand in an unpleasant situation. It may be best to give in.

6. Charon, the boatman of the Underworld, takes Orpheus across the River Styx.

Meaning: You may need to travel in order to overcome your problems.

7. Odysseus escapes from the Cyclops by hiding under a ram. Meaning: Opposition and deceit. Carry on with prudence and you will overcome your problems.
8. Andromeda is sacrificed to a sea monster. Meaning: Crisis. You feel trapped by a situation.
9. Cassandra foresees the fall of Troy. Meaning: Anxiety and worry. Seek a different perspective on the situation.
10. Agamemnon is murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus, her lover. Meaning: Betrayal. You have reached a low point, but there's still hope.
- Page: Antigone defies King Creon and performs the burial ritual for her brother, Polyneices. Meaning: Vigilance and discretion.
- Knight: Perseus is armed with magical weapons in order to face Medusa. Meaning: Courage and strength.
- Queen: Atalanta loses a footrace to Hippomenes, who drops golden apples in order to distract her. Meaning: Perception.
- King: Prometheus is freed from his bondage by Heracles. Meaning: Authority and innovative ideas.

WANDS

1. Philoctetes is given the bow and poisoned arrows of Heracles. Meaning: Creativity and intuition will bring success.
2. King Aegeus awaits the return of Theseus. Meaning: You have done much, now you must wait for results.
3. Jason and his Argonauts prepare to set sail. Meaning: Partnership. You will be offered help in your endeavors.
4. Odysseus is greeted by his dog, Argus, upon his return to Ithaca. Meaning: Reunion. A joyous celebration will occur.
5. Theseus battles the centaurs. Meaning: Struggle. You are in a difficult situation. Seek to clarify what is really going on.
6. Agamemnon returns home after his victory at Troy. Meaning: You will receive recognition for your accomplishments.
7. Heracles battles the 9-headed Hydra. Meaning: Stiff competition. Stand your ground and you will overcome opposition.
8. Europa is carried off by Zeus, who has taken the form of a bull. Meaning: Swift movement. Your goals are within reach.
9. Orpheus encounters Cerberus, who guards the gates of the Underworld. Meaning: Vigilance. Be prepared to ward off adversity.
10. Sisyphus pushes a boulder up a hill. Meaning: You have taken on a huge burden. It's time to reprioritize.
- Page: Paris abducts Helen. Meaning: Someone or something will come into the picture and stir things up.
- Knight: Jason sails the Argo through the clashing rocks. Meaning: You will have the strength to venture forth.
- Queen: Medea, the sorceress, helps Jason on his return home. Meaning: Ambition and determination.
- King: Menelaus captures the sea god, Proteus, in order to receive his wise advice. Meaning: Wisdom, enthusiasm, and growth.



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