

“What’s my

Fortune?”

Shamail Zahir

Thesis Statement

Growing up Middle Eastern/ Central Asian there was plenty of times that I was told not to do something solely because of the superstitious background to it. These daily conversations with my parents and relatives planted a seed in my head that there is a possibility that the future can be predicted and prevented in some way.

As I become a true adult, I have been thinking and worrying about what exactly my future will look like. Of course I've done what my best to set up a road for myself, but what exactly is going to happen? I

understand that the future can't be told but there must be a basis to what these fortune tellers are saying because it's an industry that has been around for so much longer than we know.

My thesis explores the idea of traditional means of fortune telling and how it applies to my own personal life and future. This idea started with focusing mainly on middle eastern/central asian fortune telling due to the fact that it was what inspired me to originally start this idea and it is what I personally grew up with and know the best,

but has grown to just focus on all means of fortune telling and how they apply to me. I have come to find out that every medium of fortune telling focuses on a different outlook and time frame, which causes me to have the ability to compare and contrast the different readings I receive.

I have realized that there is a strange amount of trust and blind fate that goes into getting my fortune read, which causes me to want to give these mediums a platform in which I could explore each one and have the ability to

learn what the origins of each one is and how to do said fortune telling. I want to avoid undermining the craft of fortune telling as much as I can because I am aware that there isn't any scientific evidence or concrete proof that someone can tell me what my future is, but people spend their whole lives perfecting their craft and it would be rude of me to ignore that history and their abilities. I simply wish to give these mediums a spotlight while simultaneously exploring and documenting my personal future.

Bone

Reading

Origins

Scapulimancy (speal bone reading) is the practice of divination by use of scapulae or speal bones. In the context of the oracle bones of ancient China, which chiefly utilized both scapulae and the plastrons of turtle, scapulimancy is sometimes used in a very broad sense to jointly refer to both scapulimancy and plastronomy. However, the term osteomancy might be more

appropriate, referring to divination using bones. Many archaeological sites along the south coast and offlying islands of the Korean peninsula show that deer and pig scapulae were used in divination during the Korean Protohistoric Period, c. 300 BC - AD 300/400. Historically, scapulimancy has taken two major forms. In the first, “apyromantic”, the scapula of an

animal was simply examined after its slaughter. This form was widespread in Europe, Northern Africa and the Near East. However, the second form, “pyromantic” scapulimancy, involving the heating or burning of the bone and interpretation of the results, was practiced in East Asia and North America. Scapulimancy was also mentioned in Chapter 5 of the Kojiki, the

Japanese Record of Ancient Matters, in which the heavenly deities used this process of divination during a consultation by lesser gods. It is also a method of divination among Greek and Serb farmers, even today. It is probably of extremely ancient origin. More recently, references are found in the memoirs of several warriors who fought during the Greek War of Independence.

Whenever they had a feast, they used to roast lambs or kids, and after the meal, anyone who knew how to “read” the scapula would clean it of any remaining flesh and, lifting it up to the light, would interpret the various shadowy bits showing on the transparent part of the bone. A clear scapula was a good omen. Shadowy bits had their interpretation and by this they used

to predict the outcome of a battle on the morrow, death or survival. In Renaissance magic, scapulimancy (known as “spatulamancy”) was classified as one of the seven “forbidden arts,” along with necromancy, geomancy, aeromancy, pyromancy, chiromancy (palmistry), and hydromancy.

How To

walks, harvest them respectfully from road kill, or save the bones of animals that they have consumed. Such folks feel that the process of finding, drying, and ritually preparing their bones imbues the bones with their energies and makes them a much more personal tool. Suffice it to say that animals are NEVER killed for the express purpose of taking their bones to be used in a bone reading set. Items such as dice, beads, charms, etc. can be obtained easily from dime stores but sometimes certain curios can be added to your bone set from old jewelry,

unused keys, and other things you already have around the house. In my possession,I have three bone-reading sets. The first was a starter set purchased online which eventually grew to include new bones I added over time as well as having removed or lost other bones. The second bone-reading set I have was also purchased online and it was advertised as a “traveling set”. It is characterized by small pieces that easily fit into a little tin. The third bone reading set in my possession is of my own design (see below). I did not create this set

without a lot of study and practice with bone-reading as well as other forms of divination such as Tarot, Lenormand, and Astrology. Also, my bone set was inspired by the spirits of my Ancestors who communicated with me through dreams, signs, and while working with other bone-sets. This also varies a lot depending. Typically sets will involve a calling of the spirits ancestors to speak through the set, a throwing of the bones onto a specified surface, and then an interpretation of those items and where they fall in relation to other items.

Bone reading offers a lot of flexibility in interpretation a lot of readers love this, but for some it is too open ended. It can be a difficult system to learn as it requires a lot of inner dialogue and psychic intuition. Spend time with the pieces and build relationships with the spirits that you are calling on. Bone reading takes a long practice of spirit work and knowing how to communicate in order to be effective. It is for this reason that I seldom read the bones for myself. The spirits I am working with and the pieces are too personal to me.

There is too much room in the reading for me to impose my own feelings into it. For personal readings I will typically turn to something a little more cut and dry; like the tarot. When learning how to read the bones I highly suggest the following: Communicate with the spirits you are working with often. Whether these be your ancestors, personal spirit system, genius loci or faery. It is important to have an established relationship with them in order to know that they will want to come through and work with you when doing a reading.

The fastest and easiest way to acquire bones for the purpose of divination is by purchasing a set online from a reputable company. Such bone sets are generally believed to be ready to go as they are, however, they are also largely regarded as a “starter set” and many folks will often add new items to their set as well as take them away. In this way, no two bone-reading sets are alike. Some folks prefer to gather their own pieces and assemble their bone sets over time. These people often find bones while on nature

Journey with the individual pieces in your set. I feel that you need to connect with and ask the permission of each piece before including them in your set. Learn their origin and the stories that they have to tell. This will only enrich your readings as you will feel more like you are communicating with the pieces rather than simply seeing them as objects.

This is important to do while learning. As I said above, reading for yourself is tough as it allows too much personal bias into the reading. Find friends that are willing to have you practice on them. This is the only way in which you will learn what pieces work with each other and how they interact.

Overall, I see my bone set as being alive. Bone sets are constantly

changing and growing. Pieces will come into your life, some will move on. Your relationship to the spirits that you're collaborating with may change. You need to be open to this and know that your relationship with your set is a working one and it will be a fully unique experience for each reader.

This life is
your journey
and you
need to do
what makes
you happy

Personal Experience

"I tossed this for you and I needed to rethink everything I was thinking before. There's people that you lean on to make you happy but their kinda keeping you from doing what actually makes you happy. You're happy on the surface but deep down you're just not. You're afraid of what people would say if you did the things that truly made you happy, if you love the people that you truly love more openly, if you took the opportunities you want to take. You're afraid that these people would hurt you and say hurtful things to you. It's like they kind of control your life a little bit and they talk about you anyways!! You need to understand that this life, this is your journey, this is your life. You need to do what makes you happy, regardless of what they say."

It started very negative and I got extremely scared so some reason. She kept mentioning the fact that the energy around me was actually happy, which is so depressing, it'll get better though!

You're afraid that these people would hurt you and say hurtful things about you.

I was told some things that were a bit intense but also seemingly true. She focused on the idea that the collection of bones showed that the people that I lean on and the people that are supposed to make me happy are keeping me from doing what would make me happy in most, if not all, aspects of my current life. There is a surface level happiness that is focused on and told that it is not the true depiction of what is actually being felt. The fear of what these people will say adds a toll to my life which is what is causing the apprehensive nature of not wanting to do anything I wish to do. There is

She kept telling me to focus on myself, which wasn't something I ever did. I was never the most selfless person but I have come to realize that I would always put others needs before mine which is never a good thing.

a fear of getting hurt, whether that be through emotion or thought spoken word.

The irony of it is that at the end of the day they still do the hurtful actions and they still talk about me in a sense that causes me more harm than good. There was a fixation on the idea that this is my life and my journey, not anyone else's. The anxieties that are felt from the ideals put on me by others are not my problem and should not be my main focus. I should simply do what makes me happy and focus on that. I think the thing I liked about

this reading was that it seemed so matter of fact. I think at this point in my life when I'm transitioning from a child to an adult the idea to be more fixated on myself is very good advice. The content of the reading wasn't based in positivity, which I think I enjoyed. The idea of having someone simply say, with a matter-of-fact tone, "hey these things are terrible and they suck but focus on yourself" was reassuring.

There were parts of it that I felt like I agreed with fully and that there was a reason I needed to hear them. Whether it came from a divine being or it was vague information that hit

She never said that anything was going to happen. It wasn't the time of reading that was like "do this, this, and this." It was simply saying "hey try to change this because this is going to happen" which I don't know if I like more or less. It's more preventative than it is future telling.

Transitioning from a child to an adult

you should be more fixated on yourself.

the mark, it was what I needed to hear. When I got the reading a lot of stuff was on my mind and a lot was going on, so it was a point that I did need to focus on myself and solely on myself.

It's very important to maintain ethical practices when reading someone's palm: Unless you're a trained practitioner with specific expertise and your querent's consent, it is never appropriate to predict mortality. Not only does it induce fear and anxiety, it's actually inaccurate as far as the life line goes. This crease is used to gauge your journey, not your death.

Palm

Reading

Origins

Palmistry, also called chiromancy or chirosophy, reading of character and divination of the future by interpretation of lines and undulations on the palm of the hand. The origins of palmistry are uncertain. It may have begun in ancient India and spread from there. It was probably from their original Indian home that the traditional fortune-telling of the Roma (Gypsies)

was derived. The chiromantic art has been known in China, Tibet, Persia, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, and it underwent significant development in ancient Greece. Medieval palmistry was pressed into service by the witch-hunters, who interpreted pigmentation spots as signs of a pact with the Devil. After a period of disrepute, palmistry flourished again in the Renaissance. In the 17th

century, attempts were made to develop empirical and rational foundations for its basic principles. After a second ebb, during the Enlightenment, it underwent a popular revival in the 19th century with the work of Casimir d'Arpentigny, Louis Hamon (byname Cheiro), and William Benham. In the 20th century, palmistry received renewed attention and interpretation by,

among others, followers of Carl Jung. Although there is no scientific support for the contention that the physical features observed in palmistry have psychic or occult predictive meaning, the human hand does show evidence of the person's health, cleanliness, and occupational and nervous habits. Hands are routinely examined in medical diagnosis and provide clues with the palmist may often astound the unsophisticated.

When beginning your analysis, it's best to start with larger observations, working your way into more nuanced detail. Though opinions vary, many modern readers believe it's important to analyze both the left and right hands: The non-dominant hand reveals natural personality and character, while the dominant hand shows how these traits have been actualized in practice. Together, they reveal how a person is utilizing their potential in this lifetime.

To get started, take your time to make a few silent observations with the querent's hand cupped in your own. What is the texture? Is the front smooth while the palm is rough? Are the fingers manicured or dirty? Remember, cosmic warriors, nothing should be overlooked in divination practices. Everything has

meaning, and when you infuse your practice with intuition, you'll seamlessly extract the meaning of the smallest details.

Next, familiarize yourself with the hand shapes that correspond with the four elements: fire, earth, air, and water. After mastering hand shapes and their associated elements, you can get to know the mounts and plains of the hand, regions that correspond with major areas of life, as well as the lines and creases that tell a story about the future. Let's take a look at each of these.

When you think of palmistry, the image of an eccentric mystic tracing the creases of your hand in a dimly lit room probably comes to mind. While this “smoke and mirrors” stereotype may be a bit dated, it’s not totally off-base. The folds and creases of the palms, referred to as lines, are indeed used to form narratives and predict future happenings.

The meanings of different lines are determined by analyzing their length, depth, and curvature. No two palms are unique, so remember that context is everything: Note where each line begins and ends, which mounts it crosses, and where the creases intersect. Your intuition will fuel your analysis, so get creative. When in doubt, don’t be afraid to ask your querent questions of your own.

After all, you’re a palm reader, not a mind reader. When you understand your querent’s history, you’ll be able to offer richer insight by applying your observations to real-life situations.

The mind plays a pivotal role in shaping our destiny, and the head line shines light on our intellectual curiosities and pursuits. Located in the center of the palm, it also

reveals the lessons we need to learn in this lifetime. The complexity of an individual’s mental pursuits corresponds with the line’s depth, while the line’s length reveals the breadth of the topics they explore. A wavy line signifies progressive thinking, while a straight line reveals more a traditional approach. Breaks in the line can signify mental strife, or more optimistically, monumental break throughs or epiphanies. Located above the head line, the highest horizontal line on the palm is the heart line. Also known as the love line, this crease governs all

matters of the heart, including romance, friendship, sexuality, and commitment. After identifying it, note whether it begins below the index or middle finger: If the heart line begins below the index finger, it reveals contentedness in relationships; if it begins below the middle finger, it reveals the potential for restlessness. The depth of the line signifies the significance of interpersonal relationships in an individual’s life, while the length corresponds with time spent coupled (longer lines represent lengthier partnerships).

Breaks or forks in the heart line can suggest multiple lovers, transformative bonds, or even infidelity. (Remember, cosmic warriors, a fractured heart line isn’t an excuse for bad behavior). When I was in elementary school, a classmate who was reading a book on palmistry looked at my hand, spotted my “short” life line, and foretold my early death. Naturally, I was absolutely horrified, and I vowed never to have my palm read again. As an astrologer and occult practitioner, I’m no longer afraid of palmistry, but it’s

Lines

encounters like these that turn people away from divination practices forever.

It's very important to maintain ethical practices when reading someone's palm: Unless you're a trained practitioner with specific expertise and your querent's consent, it is never appropriate to predict mortality. Not only does it induce fear and anxiety, it's actually inaccurate as far as the life line goes. This crease is used to gauge your journey, not your death. Located underneath the head line, it reveals your experiences, vitality, and zest. The depth of the line suggests the richness of your experience, while the length reveals others' influence on your individual path. That's right, cosmic warriors: A short life line signifies independence and autonomy.

Also known as the line of destiny, the fate line is a vertical crease in the center of the palm that reveals the degree to which an individual's life will be influenced by external circumstances beyond their control. Our palms naturally evolve over the course of our lives, but the fate line transforms the most frequently. Whenever you're experiencing a massive shift, whether personal or professional, take a quick peek at the fate line. Has it changed? Palmists believe that itchy hands are a sign of upcoming changes, so stay attuned to this physiological clue, as well.

Sometimes
it's better
not to hear...

This was one of the ones that probably hurt the most. Most of the information was not negative but it surely wasn't positive. I think compared to some of the other methods of telling the future it was telling the future in a different way. Its a bit more focused on the physical. Physically, according to palmistry, I'm not okay. Considering the fact that I got this idea out of the fact that I may or may not have a life threatening disease, being told that my health isn't going to be good is terrifying. But there was the most of the information that was on

Being told that I was born to help others reach their potential is the worst thing anyone can tell me.

Listen, things get tough and
that doesn't mean it's the
end of the world. Just ac-
knowledge it and move on.
Who cares? Just move on

par with other reading I got. The idea that I'm going to do something. Something big. Whether or not that's true it makes me feel better because I'm going to be alive, doing things, and being perceived. There's too many things that have been told to me that were seemingly negative but the palm reader was trying to ease my heart as much as possible and I

I think I had a negative perception of her because of what she said but she told me I was going to get extremely sick soon and that's scary! I don't want to hear that!

did appreciate it. They were good at what they did. I just wish to not be the person my palms say I am. I'm too young.

Tarot

Cards

Origins

Tarot cards are one of the most famous methods of reading the future. They are enshrined alongside crystal ball reading and palmistry, or palm reading, as one of the most iconic methods of fortune telling in the West. Modern tarot cards have 78 cards divided into two major groups called arcana, meaning “secret.” There are 22 major arcana or trump cards and 56 minor arcana cards. These are then divided further into four suits. The four suits of tarot cards are cups, pentacles or coins, wands or staves and swords. Each suit has four court cards: page,

knight, queen and king. Each suit also contains one ace card and nine pip cards numbered two through 10. To anyone who plays modern card games, this set up sounds rather familiar. A deck of cards divided into four distinct suits, each of which has an ace, nine numbered cards and several face cards. While Pages do not exist in modern playing cards, the king and queen remain, and the modern jack card could be the substitute for the tarot knight. The similarity between the mystical tarot deck and the modern deck of playing cards is unsurprising. This is

because tarot cards were originally used as playing cards. In the mid-15th century, tarot cards were called trionfi, tarocchi and tarock cards. The designs of the cards varied across Europe as did the suits. Each deck, however, had four suits comprised of 14 cards. Each suit contained ten pip cards numbered 10 through one or 10 through two with an ace acting as one. Each of the four suits also contained four face cards: a king, a queen, a knight and a jack, knave or page. In fact, modern tarot cards are still used as playing cards in parts of

Europe to play games such as Italian tarocchini and French tarot. In English speaking countries, however, tarot cards are used almost exclusively for divination. Some modern users of tarot cards insist that the cards originated in ancient Egypt or with the Kabbalah, an ancient, esoteric Jewish school of thought aimed at explaining the relationship between an unchanging, eternal and mysterious Ein Sof, or Infinity, and the mortal and finite universe of God’s creation. Despite the interest of the modern occult and New Age

practitioners in an ancient root for tarot cards, there is no real evidence that tarot cards originated earlier than the final years of the Middle Ages. The earliest known set of tarot cards was created in the 14th century. The popularity of card games had soared after Mamluk game cards were brought to Western Europe from Turkey. The first tarot cards were likely used in a game that became popular in Italy, tarocchi appropriati. In Italian tarocchi appropriati, players were dealt random cards. The players then

wrote poems about the cards based on the thematic associations of the cards.

Another possible origin for tarot cards was to play a game rather similar to modern day bridge. Wealthy Italian families would commission artists to create hand-painted decks called “cards of triumph,” or “carte da trionfi.” These cards were marked with suits of cups, swords, coins and polo sticks and had a court consisting of three males, one of which was a king. Later decks incorporated queens, trump or wild cards and the Fool to

make a deck of 78 total cards.

While it may surprise modern people who associate tarot cards with divination, witchcraft and the occult, tarot cards in their original time were seen as saturated with Christianity. Each card was patterned to be covered in Christian imagery. This only began to shift after the cards became increasingly associated with and used for divination and fortune telling.

The mystical and magical associations with tarot cards had put down roots by the mid-18th century and spread outside of Italy.

A French writer, Antoine Court de Gebelin, claimed that tarot cards were based on a holy book written by ancient Egyptian priests. The cards were then brought to Europe by gypsies. While this certainly gave tarot card fortunes more credibility, tarot cards predate gypsies in Europe, and ethnic gypsies were not from Africa at all.

As time passed, tarot cards became increasingly associated with the occult and the modern French-suited playing card came into major prominence in English speaking countries. The 52 card deck of

hearts, diamonds, clubs and spades is arguably the closest to the original Mamluk playing card deck that sparked off European interest in playing cards in the first place. Tarot cards, however, continued to be manufactured and used. They are still used as playing cards in parts of Europe today, and the mystical associations with tarot cards has only increased some people’s interest in them. As such, tarot cards live on in both their original and more magical forms even as modern playing cards rise to challenge them on both fronts.

How To

Major Arcana, also known as Trump cards, includes 21 numbered cards and a single unnumbered card known as the Fool. This character plays a pivotal role in the Major Arcana; he moves through each card, learning lessons along the way in what's known as the Fool's Journey. A Major Arcana card is often complex and significant, and its appearance will influence the entire reading. It's often a prompt to reflect on your life's broader lessons and overall themes.

Minor Arcana, The 56 Minor Arcana cards relate to the more specific daily challenges of everyday life and our current situation. They represent our thoughts, feelings, experiences, and beliefs. These cards are associated with a temporary kind of energy that's affecting your life at the moment and could be easily influenced one way or another. The Minor Arcana cards are made up of four tarot suits that focus on different parts of our lives.

Understanding the general meaning of each card is just the beginning. The real power comes in using the cards to tap into your own intuition and wisdom so you can start taking positive steps into a brighter future. Generally, a tarot card reading follows a simple format. First, you need to ask the card deck a question. It should be clear and open-ended. For example, avoid asking questions that begin with "Will I...," as they run the risk of locking you into a passive role in your own future. The idea is to use the card reading to illuminate a path forward, so ask questions that are more broad. Here are a few

frameworks to consider if you're new to tarot: "What do I need to know about...?", "How can I understand...?", "Why am I feeling anxious about...?", "Where is the hidden opportunity in...?", "What should I focus on in my relationship with...?", "How can I move past...?"

Once you have the question in your mind, it's time to shuffle—and there are multiple ways to do so. The

overhand shuffle involves holding the deck of cards in one hand and using the other to move cards from one side of the deck to the other. You can also "cut" the deck by dividing it into several piles and then combining them into one again. Or you can try spreading the cards facedown on the table and sweeping them into a big, messy pile before tapping them into place again.

There's no right or wrong way to shuffle. Give all these techniques a try, and see what feels right.

You're doing just fine.

The reassuring nature of this reading was unmatched to the others. You've been going through a lot and it shows but I think the fact that you when through a lot is going to make the joy that is to come, so much better. Every card you picked had an underlying meaning of "everything will get better." So whatever it is that you're worried about, it'll work out. Being stressed at this

*I think too much so hearing
that I think too much from another
person who doesn't know me is kind
of discouraging*

point in your life is nothing new, so I'm not shocked that it's seems like you're stressed. The beginning to middle of next year seems better for you than right now does, but from what I can tell, everything is starting to shift right now. There may be some discomfort, but don't worry about it You're doing just fine. There's nothing to be worried about. Turn off your brain and pretend you

don't exist for a bit. There's no problem with taking a break and I hope you take one soon. Things will work out in your favor even though they haven't been.

Things will work out in
your favor soon, even
though they haven't been

Astrology

Origins

A research team has discovered what may be the oldest astrologer’s board, engraved with zodiac signs and used to determine a person’s horoscope.

Dating back more than 2,000 years, the board was discovered in Croatia, in a cave overlooking the Adriatic Sea. The surviving portion of the board consists of 30 ivory fragments engraved with signs of the zodiac. Researchers spent years digging them up and putting them back together. Inscribed in a Greco-Roman style, they include images of Cancer, Gemini and Pisces.

An ancient astrologer, trying to determine a person’s horoscope, could have used the board to show the position of the planets, sun and moon at the time the person was born.

“What he would show the client would be where each planet is, where the sun is, where the moon is and what are the points on the zodiac that were rising and setting on the horizon at the moment of birth,” said Alexander Jones, a professor at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University.

Jones said. “It’s also older than any of the written-down horoscopes that we have from the Greco-Roman world,” he said, adding, “we have a lot of horoscopes that are written down as a kind of document on papyrus or on a wall but none of them as old as this.”

Jones and StašoForenbaher, a researcher with the Institute for Anthropological Research in Zagreb, reported the discovery in the most recent edition of the Journal for the History of Astronomy.

In 1999, the team was digging near the entrance of the Croatian

cave, a site well known to archaeologists and people at the nearby hamlet of Nakovana who simply called it “Spila,” which means “the cave,” Forenbaher told LiveScience.

But what nobody knew at the time was that the cave had a section that had been sealed off more than 2,000 years ago. Forenbaher’s girlfriend burrowed through the debris, discovering a wide low passageway that continued in the dark for nearly 33 feet (10 meters). Forenbaher described going through the passageway as “the unique King Tut experience, coming to a place

where nobody has been for a couple of thousand years.”

Stepping into the cavern “there was a very thin limestone crust on the surface that was cracking under your feet when you went in, which meant that nobody walked there in a very, very, long time,” Forenbaher said.

The team would later determine that it had been sealed off in the first century B.C.,

When the archaeologists investigated they found the phallic-shaped stalagmite, numerous drinking vessels that had been

deposited over hundreds of years, and something else. “In the course of that excavation these very tiny bits and pieces of ivory came up,” said Forenbaher, “we didn’t even realize what we had at the time.”

The team went to work. “What followed was years of putting them together, finding more bits and pieces, and figuring out what they were,” Forenbaher said. In the end they found themselves staring at the remains of the oldest-known astrologer’s board.

It was during this Ancient Greek period that the 12 star signs of the

zodiac with which many people are likely familiar today Aries (roughly March 21-April 19), Taurus (April 20-May 20), Gemini (May 21-June 20), Cancer (June 21-July 22), Leo (July 23-Aug. 22), Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22), Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22), Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21), Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21), Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19), Aquarius (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) and Pisces (Feb. 19 to March 20) – were set down. These Western, or tropical, zodiac signs were named after constellations and matched with dates based on the apparent relationship between their placement in the sky and the sun.

The Babylonians had already divided the zodiac into 12 equal signs by 1500 BC boasting similar constellation names to the ones familiar today, such as The Great Twins, The Lion, The Scales ,and these were later incorporated into Greek divination. The astronomer Ptolemy, author of the Tetrabiblos, which became a core book in the history of Western astrology, helped popularize these 12 signs.

“This whole idea that there were 12 signs along the zodiac that were 30° wide, and [that] the sun moved through these signs regularly during the year, that was codified

by Ptolemy,” says Odenwald. Even the word “zodiac” comes from the Greek, from a term for “sculpted animal figure,” according to the Oxford English Dictionary, and the order in which the signs are usually listed comes from that period too.

How To

First thing's first: you need your birth time. This is required in order to draw up an accurate birth chart, as some of the points in your chart are totally dependent on it. If you can't get your birth time, you can still get a fairly solid idea of what sign each of your planets is in — but some elements of your chart will be incomplete without a birth time.

Next, you'll need to punch your birth date, time, and location into a birth chart calculator. There are lots of free natal chart calculators online, or you can use an astrology app to pull up your chart, too. Once you pull

up your chart, you'll know, as it'll be a pie-shaped chart with lots of lines, symbols, and numbers on it, which looks confusing, but we'll go through the major elements that comprise it, so you'll have a better idea of what you're looking at.

As you research the different parts your chart, you may find some less-than-stellar interpretations of certain planetary alignments — and that's OK. A difficult cosmic situation in your chart doesn't mean you're doomed to a disastrous life. "There's no such thing as a 'bad' chart," Stardust says. "Often times, people

get stressed out if they have a crazy aspect in their chart — but most of us have this going on." Just as every zodiac sign has its strengths and weaknesses, each planetary alignment — even the tougher ones — can be used to your advantage. "We learn to work with the energy [of our chart] and work through these tense aspects in life, which can make them not bad at all," Stardust says.

Let's start with the first must-know element of your birth chart: the signs of the zodiac, which divide your chart into twelve segments. As you may recall from

geometry class, a circle is made up of 360° — and because there are twelve signs in our chart, each | sign is made up of 30° (that's what all those little tick-marks on the perimeter of your birth chart are!). You will quickly learn that don't just have one sign influencing you — all twelve signs are incorporated in your birth chart, and they all carry an influence over different parts of your life.

"Signs are used to describe how the planets perform,"The energy of the signs changes the way the planets express themselves.

Next we have another important set of 12 segments of your zodiac chart: the 12 houses, which represent "different areas of life," according to Stardust. Each house signifies a part of your life and yourself — and these realms get more complex, interactive, and even esoteric as you rise through the houses. So while the first house represents your basic sense of self and identity, the twelfth and final house represents spiritual expansion and higher consciousness.

When examining your houses, look at which sign the "cusp" (or

the line that designates where the house begins) falls into. This is the sign that governs said house in your chart. You can learn a lot about it by doing some internet research. For example, if your first house cusp is in Gemini, simply Google "first house in Gemini" to find out the scoop on what kind of energy influences the part of your life that the house represents.

There are four very important house cusps in your chart, and those are the four points on the X/Y axis, or the cusps of your first, fourth, seventh, and tenth houses (you can

see them marked in the chart above). The most notable are the cusp of your first house (aka your ascendant or rising sign and represents your surface-level self). And the cusp of your tenth house — which is also known as your Midheaven sign and represents your ultimate career path and life purpose. If you just want the basics, start by researching the placement in the zodiac of those four houses in your chart to get an overall idea of what you're working with.

There are 10 major planets in astrology (which includes the sun and the moon), and each one represents a different part of ourselves. "The planets are the 'vibes' in our life that describe how we go about getting, maintaining, and achieving things," Stardust says. You can read about the astrological meaning of each planet here to give yourself a better understanding.

You probably already know your sun sign (this is the sign you read your horoscope for), and you may already know your moon sign and rising sign, too. As you examine your chart, you'll want to look at two things about the planets to start with: what sign they're in, and what house they're in. The sign that a planet is in will show you the way you will express that planet's qualities. So for example, if you have Mercury (planet of communication) in Leo, you'll probably express yourself in a flamboyant, gregarious, and attention-grabbing Leonian way. Additionally, the house that the planet is in will show you the part of your life where that planet's qualities will show up most. Try

searching things like "Venus in the fourth house" or "Mars in Taurus" to read different astrologers' interpretations of your placements. Now that you know which signs and houses the planets reside in within your birth chart, it's time to take a look at how the planets' energies play out with each other, given the arrangement that they were in at your time of birth. These planetary placements and relationships are called aspects, and they tell us whether planets are getting along — or stirring up some cosmic drama. "The aspects are how the planets act when in different signs," Stardust says. "They show how one gets things or takes action in life."

Aspects are simply labels for different angles between the planets in your chart, and you can figure them out based on the planetary degrees (cue a flashback to geometry class). There are many different aspects that planets can form, but the five major aspects are conjunctions (0° apart), sextiles (60° apart), trines (120° apart), squares (90° apart), and oppositions (180° apart). You can read all about the five major aspects in astrology here. Some aspects are known to be lucky and helpful, while others are known to be more challenging and frustrating — but it all depends on the planets involved. Look at the aspects between the planets in your chart and Google to find out the scoop on your personal challenges, strengths, lucky points, and more.

Part of your journey is becoming an agent of

I felt kind of weird about this one. It seemed like the whole time it was about others relationship towards me rather than about me. It actually discouraged me a bit. It seemed to say "you're unique and special make everyone around you the same". Why am I the agent of change? Why is my future about others? I want to learn how to like for myself but the stars are not in my favor. I simply was made to house innovation for others. I am someone that can be groundbreaking. I am someone who is okay watching the success of others, but

This was the second time I got a reading that said I was born to help other people become their best selves. I'm not against that, but what about me? What happens to me?

when that comes at my expense, I can't help but to be sad. I deserve more from the stars. I understand how that sounds. The problem is that I got an hour long reading that wasn't about me really. It was simply confirming a sad ideal that I have life in and lived through. I question whether or not I have contacted the right person to do this. I was and continue to think about whether or not I should do another reading. Is it necessary for me to get a new reading? Will I be even more disappointed if the same outcome comes out of it? I thank the

change for other people.

stars for the positive comments of me being unique and an “exceptional visionary”. The part of the reading that talked about how I was bound to end up in a creative career path gave me reassurance. It made me feel like I was truly doing the right thing. It similar to the palm reading in that sense. Simply being told that what you’re doing is what you have been born to do is relieving in a way that I don’t understand.

The most concerning thing for me, as a college senior, is whether or not I picked the right thing to do with my life and being told that I made the right choice with graphic design was the best news I have ever received for a stranger. I'll say it.

Being
person
are,
choices

the
you
the
you

made
sense.
p e r f e c t
for

make
It's
you.

