

The “Parsifal's Gambit” Life-Reading Spread

The Way of Contemplation

The Way of Balance

The Way of Action

The View Within (17 - 22)

The View Ahead (11-16)

18
Intuition
⌘

19
Transformation
⌚

20
Culmination
⌚

21
Reappraisal
⌚

Subjective Value Outlook (9, 10, 22)

17
Inspiration
⌚

3
Realization
⌚

5
Rectification
♂

8
Insight
♀

22
Illumination
≈

1
Initiation
⌘

23
Uncertainty
⌚

6
Self-
Assertion
⌚ / ⌚

9
Integration
⌚ / ⌚

10
Outcome
⌚

11
Imagination
⌚

2
Idealization
⌚

4
Validation
⌚

7
Aspiration
♀

16
Self-
Mastery
⌚

Conceptual Outlook (1, 2, 3, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23)

Practical Outlook (4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 19, 20)

Personal Outlook (6-9, 15, 21)

⌚/⌚ Domain: Social Integration

12
Formulation
⌚

13
Substantiation
⌚

14
Maturation
⌚

15
Commitment
⌚

Objective Success Outlook (9, 10, 16)

The “Parsifal's Gambit” Life-Reading Spread

For those who like very large, very complex spreads based loosely on the Qabalistic Tree of Life model (in this case the alternative proposed by Eden Gray in her 1970 book, *A Complete Guide to the Tarot*), here's one for doing long-range forecasts that often involve important life changes. It uses a series of 23 cards in three interlocking “story-lines” and a variety of “clarifying” combinations. Read this spread by following the Tree of Life “lightning flash” from position 1 to position 10; this is the developmental path for the situation being explored. The series can also be read as triplets, with the stand-alone “Outcome” and “Uncertainty” cards handled separately. In this case, the cards in the outer oval that are a lighter shade of the same color can be used as qualifiers, making three 7-card min-spreads for “beginning,” “middle” and “end” analysis. The two outer series, 11 - 16 and 17 - 22, can also be read as parallel story-lines to the main reading, showing ways in which the “introvert” and “extrovert” sides of the individual play into the evolving outcome. The three vertical arrangements (Contemplation, Action and Balance) are intended to show inner, outer and blended approaches to dealing with the matter. The attached diagram shows the model on which the layout is based. In the spread, the Moon is assigned to the 9th position rather than the High Priestess, but the Moon's astrological correspondence, Pisces, has been relocated to position 18 for zodiacal symmetry as described below; the astrological Moon symbol remains in position 9.

If you look carefully, you will see a linked network of astrological correspondences built into the spread. Looking horizontally across the layout, note that opposite signs appear on each end of the axes where possible. This is workable for positions 13/19 and 14/20, which link the fixed and cardinal Water and Earth signs, and the facing pair 16/22, which joins fixed Fire to fixed Air. Positions 12/18 and 15/21 are connected by common rulers, traditional Jupiter and modern Mercury respectively.

Positions 8 and 21 are both “analytical” in nature and are associated with Mercury, while positions 7 and 15 are both fundamentally “appreciative” in the conceptual model (7 = Venus and 15 = the Lovers as 1+5=6). The “analytical outlook” is supported by Aquarius, position 22, and the “appreciative outlook” is supported by Leo, position 16, while the Moon in position 9 is shared by both.

Vertically, note that position 17 at the top is Elemental Water, while the echoing bottom position, 22, is Aquarius, the “Water-bearer;” position 11 at the top is free-flowing Elemental Fire while the corresponding bottom position, 16, is fixed Fire as shown by Leo. The four mutable signs stand at the four corners of the outer rectangle, with opposite signs in positions 18/21 and 12/15.

Uranus and Neptune are brought into play (but not Pluto), since esoteric Uranus is considered the planet of astrology and serves as a reasonable stand-in for the “Zodiac” or “Fixed Stars” in position 2 (sephirah Chokmah on the Tree of Life), and mysterious Neptune occupies position 11, (hidden sephirah “Daath”), where its nebulous nature is a perfect fit.

The opposite signs Aries and Libra are placed in position 6 (sephirah Tiphareth, the Sun) and position 9 (sephirah Yesod, the Moon), respectively, and treated as a polarity involving egocentric self-assertion on one end and emotional integration on the other end, the idea being to show the interplay between self-interest and social responsibility. Aries is “self” oriented and Libra is “other” focused.

In practice, look for key cards and significant triplets in the first ten positions to determine the relative ease or difficulty with which the life circumstances will unfold. Elemental dignities are one way to determine the importance of individual cards. For the outer series, a surplus or shortfall of emphasis by card type, quality, number or element can show how the different approaches (contemplative or active) will assist or impair the expression of that component of the individual's nature. For example, several Trump cards could show a range of external factors that are outside the querent's control; numerous Court cards could mean a group of people or relevant human qualities at work in the matter; a large number of one element could reveal a preferred mode of response (e.g. Wands showing impulsiveness and creative drive); many cards of the same numerical value could express the level of energy available to the querent – Aces are full of potential, Tens are nearing the end of their potency.

Outline for Interpreting the Spread

Development of the Overall Situation:

- Card 1: Initiation – the beginning of the matter
- Card 2: Idealization – the most optimistic outlook
- Card 3: Realization – the most realistic outlook
- Card 4: Validation – checking the assumptions against the facts
- Card 5: Rectification – adjusting actions to suit the goal
- Card 6: Stimulation – emergence of enlightened self-interest
- Card 7: Aspiration – pursuing the vision of fulfillment (the best that can be expected)
- Card 8: Insight – confirming the truth of the situation (modulation of expectations)
- Card 9: Integration – aligning self-interest with cooperative needs
- Card 10: Outcome – the end of the matter

Card 23: Uncertainty (Hidden Factors) – factors that may complicate development of the matter

Read the first 10 cards (plus Card #23) as a story from beginning to end, showing the unfolding of the situation to its likely conclusion. Consider Card #23 as uncertainty affecting the early stages of the matter up to Card #3, where the reality of practical limits is embraced.

The Right-Hand Path of Action:

- Card 11: Imagination – envisioning the future
- Card 12: Formulation – planning the road to success
- Card 13: Substantiation – putting effort and resources into the plan
- Card 14: Maturation – reaching steady-state momentum
- Card 15: Commitment – fully engaging with the program
- Card 16: Self-Mastery – acting with total control of all faculties

Read Cards #11 through #16 as a storyline showing the most constructively active stance to take in the matter. Negative cards in any position would diminish the effectiveness of that particular mode of expression.

The Left-Hand Path of Contemplation:

- Card 17: Inspiration – gaining momentum from feelings of eagerness
- Card 18: Intuition – bringing subconscious perceptions or “hunches” to the surface
- Card 19: Transformation – undergoing an epiphany or transcendent awareness
- Card 20: Culmination – augmenting the solidity of the emotional foundation
- Card 21: Reappraisal – scrutinizing the state of intellectual empowerment
- Card 22: Illumination – fully grasping the ultimate psychological impact

Read Cards #17 through #22 as a storyline showing the most supportive emotional stance to take in the matter. Negative cards in any position would diminish the effectiveness of that mode of expression.

Conceptual Outlook:

Cards 1, 2 and 3 in combination with Cards 11, 12, 17, 19 and 23, and collaborating with Cards 13 and 19
Read Cards #1 through #3 as a series showing early stages of development in the matter, where nothing has been carved in stone. At this point, ideas are the sole medium of expression. As part of this interpretation, read Card #1 as collaborating with Cards #11 and #17 in nurturing the imaginative and inspirational bases of the “action” and “contemplation” story-lines, respectively, Cards #11 and #12 as coloring the nature of Card #2, and Cards #17 and #18 as influencing the output of card #3. For all three

primary cards, read Card #23 as introducing uncertainty into the articulation of the cards' meaning. To carry this outlook forward into practical expression, read Card #2 as collaborating with Card #13 in establishing the ideal as a substantive truth, and Card #3 as collaborating with Card #19 in turning the awareness of restrictions and limits into a force for change.

Practical Outlook:

Cards 4 and 5 in combination with Cards 13 and 19, and collaborating with Cards 14 and 20

Read Cards #4 through #6 as a series showing the emergence of the matter into practical reality. Here, checking and adjusting the usefulness of each step in advancement of the situation takes place. As part of this interpretation, read Card #13 as altering the testimony of Card #4 and Card #19 as informing the action of Card #5. To carry this outlook forward into the realm of personal expression, Read Card #4 as collaborating with Card #14 in stabilizing growth of the matter as it advances toward material completion, and Card #5 as collaborating with Card #20 in paring away unhealthy reactions to the situation as it approaches emotional culmination.

Personal Outlook:

Cards 6, 7, 8 and 9, in combination with Cards 15 and 21, and collaborating with Cards 16 and 22

Read Cards #6 through #9 as a series showing how enlightened self-interest, value consciousness, intellectual coherence and emotional equilibrium will affect handling of the situation. As part of this interpretation, read Card #15 as clarifying the result from Card #7, and Card #21 as invoking subtle changes in the assertions of Card #8. To carry this outlook forward into the objective and subjective areas of the outcome, read Card #7 as collaborating with Card #16 in providing impetus for the fullest possible mastery of circumstances, and Card #8 as collaborating with Card #22 in providing the most well-reasoned intellectual awareness of the situation.

Social Integration (Aries/Libra Domain):

Cards 6 and 9

Read these cards as two sides of the personality that are brought together in their experience of the matter: the Ego and the Emotions. Their combination reveals which side of the personality takes the lead in addressing the circumstances confronting the individual. These cards will be further strengthened or weakened by the testimony of the “action” and “contemplation story-lines. A strong expression of action in the reading will favor Card #6, while a strong emphasis on “contemplation” will support Card #9.

Objective Success Outlook:

Cards 9 collaborating with card #16, and Card #10 in combination with card #16

Read Card #9 as collaborating with Card #16 in modulating the potential harshness of self-mastery with an overlay of mercy, and Card #16 in combination with Card #10 as reinforcing the material success of the outcome.

Subjective Value Outlook:

Cards 9 collaborating with Card #22, and Card #10, in combination with card 22

Read Card #9 as collaborating with Card #22 in producing a more sympathetic philosophical perspective, and Card #22 in combination with Card #10 as eliciting the most cogent self-expression from the outcome.

Systematic Overview of the Layout

Note: There are 44 interactions in this spread: some in series, some single and some dual.

Main Reading Sequence:

Main Storyline: 1 through 10

“Action” Storyline 11 through 16

“Contemplation” Storyline 17 through 22

Modifiers and Collaborators:

23 modifying 1, 2 and 3

1 collaborating with 11 and 17

11 and 12 modifying 2

17 and 18 modifying 3

2 collaborating with 13

3 collaborating with 19

13 modifying 4

19 modifying 5

4 collaborating with 14

5 collaborating with 20

15 modifying 7

21 modifying 8

6 interacting with 9

9 collaborating with 16 and 22

16 modifying 10

22 modifying 10

The Way of Learning

The Middle Way

The Way of Doing

