

Arcanum: 13

Zodiac Affinity: Scorpio

Element: Water

As a “Yes” or “No” Card: No



Overview

Death is the 13th of the Major Arcana cards; also one of the more well-known cards. Many people already know that it literally doesn't mean 'you are going to die,' but is open to a more figurative interpretation. Death is a natural part of life, the end of one state and the beginning of another. Death is all around us, and not in a grim way. Everything is temporary... not just those things that are alive with breath and brains.

This card shows the Messenger of Death – a skeleton in black armor, riding a white horse. The skeleton represents the part of the body which survives long after life has left it; the armor symbolizes invincibility and that death will come no matter what. Its dark color is that of mourning and the mysterious, while the horse is the color of purity and acts as a symbol of strength and power. Death carries a black flag decorated with a white, five-petal rose, reflecting beauty, purification and immortality; the number five represents change. Together these symbols reveal that death isn't just about life ending. Death is about endings and beginnings, birth and rebirth, change and transformation. There is beauty in death, and it is an inherent part of being alive.

A royal figure also appears to be dead on the ground; while a young woman, child and bishop plead with the skeletal figure to spare them. But as we all know, death spares no one.

In the background, a boat floats down the river, a kin to the mythological boats escorting the dead to the afterlife. On the horizon, the sun sets between two towers (which also appear in the Moon card), in a sense of dying each night and being reborn every morning.

Keywords

Change - New Beginnings - Endings - Transformations - Transitioning - End of an Era - Turning Over a New Leaf

"An ending that will bring grief and a sense of loss - it will also contain the seeds of a new life and make transformation possible." - *Tarot of Pagan Cats, Lo Scarabeo.*



Key Phrases

- I. The end of an old cycle and the beginning of a new one
- II. Let go of the past, don't fear being true to yourself
- III. One door closes, another door opens
- IV. A parting of the ways
- V. Accepting the inevitable
- VI. Getting down to the nitty-gritty
- VII. Accepting the cycles of change

General

As the name, Death would imply, it represents the end of a cycle and also implies the start of a new one with change and transformation. The Death card is probably the most feared and misunderstood of all the cards in the Tarot deck. Just mention the card's name and most people freak out, worried they will suddenly keel over and die as soon as this card appears. RELAX! The Death card can be one of the most positive cards in the entire deck.

After a period of pause and reflection with the Hanged Man, the Death card symbolized the end of a major phase or aspect of your life that you realize is no longer serving you, opening up the possibility of something far more valuable and essential. You must close one door to open another. You need to put the past behind you and part ways, ready to embrace new opportunities and possibilities. It may be difficult to let go of the past, but you will soon see its importance and the promise of renewal and transformation. If you resist these necessary endings, you may experience pain, both emotionally and physically; but if you exercise your imagination and visualize a new possibility, you allow more constructive patterns to emerge.

Similarly, Death shows a time of significant transformation, change and transition. You need to transform yourself and clear away the old to bring in the new. Any change should be welcomed as a positive, cleansing, transformational force in your life. The death and clearing away of limiting factor can open the door to a broader, more satisfying experience of life.

There are elements of a sudden and unexpected change. Death happens to everyone, though, no matter who you are, how much money you have, where you live, or what color your skin is;

it is the same with a significant change. So, the Death card can be a sign you may feel as though you are caught in the path of seeking change and cannot escape its effects (especially if accompanied by the Tower or the Hanged Man in the spread). Although, the upheaval may seem unwanted and painful, this massive change could bring with it a series of unexpected surprises that create new opportunities and advantages for you.

Finally, just freaking let go of any unhealthy attachments in your life (do we really need to go over this again, I feel like we went over this already) to pave the way to a fuller, more fulfilled life of deeper meaning and significance. Death teaches you to let go of outworn and outgrown ways of life and to move forward from them. This is a perfect card to break a bad habit or a pattern of behavior. See this as a time to cut out excess and let go of what is unnecessary for your life. Purge the old belongings, memories and baggage that get in your way.

Relationships

In regards to education or work relationships, this means that it's likely that your current employment is going to be coming to an end. This could be a good thing if you're in education, you could be graduating or finishing up school. If you're working, however, it could mean that your current job is going to come to an end, and you may not expect it. It might just be worth considering, if this is the field you want to work in for a while longer, or if you'd like something new.

On the flipside, be careful with your spending, especially if you feel that you have enough money right now. Are you buying things, and being frivolous with your money simply because you feel like you have disposable income? The wealth of money is in its potential; it could be working for you and others much more than it already is. If you could get rid of something you never use to help yourself out in the short term, then, by all means, do it now.

Death in areas of romance is not a great sign. Like work, it could mean that your relationship will end, or get difficult. If you're in a relationship because you feel you need to be, instead of it being your own choice, stop. Take a look at what you're doing to yourself and how you're affecting your partner. It could be best for you both to split. If you're single, then this may signify the end of your single status. The Death card in a romantic sense is all about change. Is that not, after all, the simplistic romance of death's dance itself?



When it comes to matters of friendship; this might mean you will lose some of your friends. The key here is that it is beyond your control, like all interpretations of Death. Remember that it is for the greater good. You can use it as a learning experience to grow. If you don't want to lose your friends (and why would you?) then look at the things that have been causing rifts or arguments and try to patch things up as soon as possible. There is no reason to delay; "for death rides a pale horse & is coming."

Take care of your health. This card is not a good omen in positions regarding health and well-being. Are you the sort of person who avoids the doctor, or who likes to sweep things under the rug? Now is a good time for a checkup, whether it's your eyes, teeth, or a physical. Try to get some contact with others. Death is also a solitary figure which you do not want to become.

Death in the sense of spirituality or religion can represent the understanding of a concept that you may have been studying for a while. It's time to work on something new and get a new viewpoint. Nothing can beat a second opinion. The universe has many apertures, and you are one of them. Cultivate your own views through new opinions and study.

† Past

You have recently moved into a new era of your life. There may have been some sacrifice, or it might have been difficult. For example, you may have just ended a relationship, and the pain is still wearing on you. This is likely the best position to see Death in, as you know the hardest parts are behind you with him in the past.



† Present

Death being in the present position represents an upcoming event or person that will come into our lives soon. The wheels are already in motion. It will change your current paradigm of daily life. It could be on your mind daily, as something to worry about or possibly something to anticipate. You've got to remember that in one, five or ten years, you won't even think about it. It's going to affect you now, but time heals all wounds.

† Future

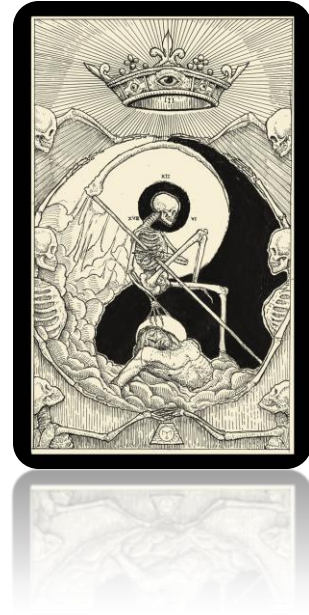
In this place... he represents an event that will happen in the near future. There is always going to be some sorrow in our lives. It's an element of life that you cannot escape. It's an element of life that you

cannot escape. Don't dwell on it or worry about it, because it will happen eventually. You likely don't spend every day worrying about dying, even though you are going to... use this same mentality for your daily worries and nothing will phase you.

In Reverse

Resistance to Change - Personal Inward Transformation - Inner Purging

In reverse, the Death card can signify that some aspect of your life should end, but hasn't yet. Be it a workplace, relationship or idea, you should look into giving it up. We hang on to things in our lives, especially when they are past their prime, in the hopes that we can repair them, but more often than not, this is not the case. Consider the aspects of your life which you are holding onto now. Is it healthy? Is it improving your life and/or the lives of others?



Past

You are on the verge of meaningful change but are resisting it. You may be reluctant to let go, or you may not know how to make the change you need to be making. You still carry harmful viewpoints with you from the *past* that may interfere with a new opportunity. But because of your refusal, life has stagnated, and you now feel stuck in limbo.

Present

Death reversed offers you the opportunity to embrace change rather than resist it. See what wonderful possibilities become available to you as you say 'yes' to change. As you learn to release the past and surrender to the present, the future will then become bright. To support the process repeat this affirmation to yourself: "I embrace change in all forms." You'll be surprised at how this subtle shift in energy allows new doors to open in ways you may never have expected.

Future

On a deeper level, this card can show us that you are going through a massive personal transformation right now. Often times this will be done in private, out of view of others. You are now releasing what no longer serves you so that you can make space for the new to emerge. Draw a follow-up card to understand better what you need to release and purge, or

examine the other cards in the reading with more depth. You may be removing fear and limiting beliefs; you may be changing your habits; or, you may undergo a physical purging and not want to share this with others just yet – wait until your personal transformation has fully been undergone, THEN share the story with others as a source of inspiration.