

A Practical Guide to  
Tea Leaf Reading  
&  
Making Magic With  
Pokeberry Dragon Ink

by Friday Gladheart

# Tea Leaf Reading

The art of divination by tea leaves is known as tasseomancy. Tea leaf reading rooms were popular in the Southern United States in the 1920s and 1930s. You'll still find them tucked into the nooks and crannies of larger cities, and there are tea leaf readers all across the country.

Reading tea leaves for yourself and others can be fun and entertaining as well as insightful. It allows you to explore and develop your psychic skills and your conversation skills. Sharing a cup of tea and conversation can be a delight that is only enhanced by a little wisdom about reading tea leaves.

## What type of tea to use:

It is best to use a medium to long loose tea. The tea that comes in tea bags has a lot of dust and fine particles. Although you can read with this tea and with coffee grounds, it is often easier to discern shapes and symbols with longer leaves.

The tea provided is a medium length twisted leaf black tea from China with small vanilla bean peaces. I make this tea for use in my own "Tea & Tarot" readings in a small shop called *The Parlour* in Hot Springs, Arkansas. It will not become overly tannic from the extended brew time that often accompanies readings. Vanilla is calming, encourages peace, and opens the heart. It also helps to focus the mind and aids in concentrations. You can also use green tea such as "gunpowder" or "jasmine pearls." Both of these are long leaves which are tightly rolled into small balls that unfurl in your cup. A good "English Breakfast" found in tins at your grocer will also work well.

Flavored teas can open up interesting possibilities. You can pair your tea with flavors that suit your purpose. Jasmine is great for readings about relationships and love. Earl gray help with contemplation for any situation. Mint is excellent for matters of money and business. For other flavors, a quick online search will provide you with the magical and metaphysical properties of different fruits and herbs.

## How to prepare the cup:

Prepare a cup for everyone present. It is important to share in the tea drinking even if you are reading the leaves for

someone else. This gives you the full experience and helps connect you with the other person. Set up your area with comfortable seating, napkins, cookies or biscuits, and perhaps a candle.

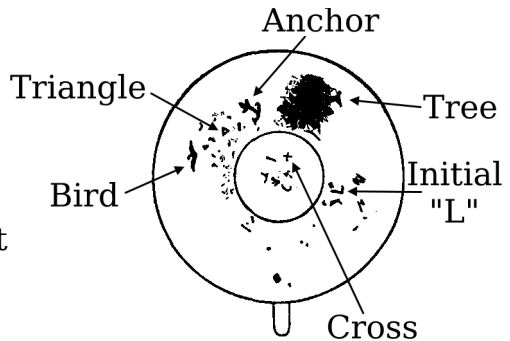
- ☞ Place ½ to 1 teaspoon of tea into the bottom of each teacup.
- ☞ Pour freshly boiled water over the tea in the cup.
- ☞ Sit comfortably and chat. If you are alone, clear your mind and relax. You might pull a few tarot or oracle cards while you wait for your tea to steep. You may stir your tea after a minute to help any floating leaves submerge.
- ☞ As soon as the tea is cool enough to drink, begin sipping. When there is less than a tablespoon of liquid left in the cup, gently swirl the cup, allow it to settle a bit, and tip it upside down on top of the saucer. You don't have to do this for your own cup if you are reading for someone else.
- ☞ Gently turn the cup over and hold it front of you with the handle pointing toward your body. It is normal for some leaves to spill out onto the saucer. If no leaves remain in the cup, try again and sip more of the liquid before tipping your cup over.



## How to read tea leaves:

Gaze into the cup and allow your mind to form images from the patterns of the leaves. Use the traditional interpretations I've included in this booklet, but also allow your intuition to guide you. If an axe has bad associations for you, it might not mean 'victory' as is traditionally thought.

I've made notations on this image of a cup from the 1919 book, *Tea-Cup Reading, and the Art of Fortune-Telling by Tea Leaves*, by 'A Highland Seer'.<sup>1</sup> One might interpret this cup as follows: the bird and triangle indicate good news. If that news is



1 The entire 1919 book by 'A Highland Seer' can be found online at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/18241/18241-h/18241-h.htm>

from a lover, the anchor indicates that this relationship is stable. The large tree indicates money and happiness. A message will be received by someone with the initial "L", and the cross indicates a need for protection. If you look closely you may see a tiny axe and the initial "C". Perhaps there is a need to protect oneself from a person with the initial "C" and that victory will prevail in this situation.

## Cup and time formats

The location of the symbols in the cup will indicate a sense of time or meaning. There are special tea leaf reading cups that are divided into time periods or astrological houses. These are not necessary as the easiest method is to use top-down timing.



Symbols near the top are in the present, those in the middle are the near future such as within a month. Symbols at the bottom of the cup are the outcome or distant future. There are many variations on dividing cups for different meanings and time periods. As you come across new methods try them out to see if they resonate with you. Whatever method you choose, decide which one you will use before you begin each reading.

## Final Tips

Relax and let your intuition flow. Allow your imagination to bloom and shift the focus of your eyes. If you ever tried to discern shapes in clouds, tea leaf reading is similar. Your intuition will guide your imagination to see the shapes that mean the most to your subconscious. Use the traditional meanings as a guide, but use your intuition as the final say.

# Tasseography Symbols

- ♣ ACORN, health, affection, strength
- ♣ AIRCRAFT, unsuccessful or failed projects. Aircraft can be balloons, planes, or anything related
- ♣ ANCHOR, luck, success in business, stable relationship
- ♣ ANGEL, good news
- ♣ APES, secret enemies
- ♣ APPLE-TREE, change for the better
- ♣ APPLES, long life, success
- ♣ ARCH, a journey abroad
- ♣ ARROW, disappointing news from the direction the arrow points
- ♣ AXE, victory
- ♣ BADGER, long life and prosperity as a single (un-married)
- ♣ BASKET, an addition to the family
- ♣ BAT, fruitless journeys or tasks
- ♣ BEAR, a long period of travel
- ♣ BIRDS, a lucky sign; good travel
- ♣ BOAT, company coming
- ♣ BOUQUET, luck with friends, love life, and money
- ♣ BRIDGE, a good journey
- ♣ BUILDING, stability, new property
- ♣ BULL, slander by an enemy
- ♣ BUTTERFLY, success and pleasure
- ♣ CAMEL, patience and endurance
- ♣ CANDLE, enlightenment, study, illumination, strength in dark times
- ♣ CANNON, good fortune
- ♣ CAR or TRUCK, wealth approaching
- ♣ CART, fluctuations of fortune, labor pays off
- ♣ CASTLE, unexpected fortune, inheritance, or a legacy
- ♣ CAT, good luck, trust intuition and gut instincts, comfort, sensuality
- ♣ CHURCH or CATHEDRAL, great prosperity, spiritual connection
- ♣ CATTLE, prosperity
- ♣ CHAIN, an early marriage; if broken, trouble lies ahead
- ♣ CHAIR, an addition to the family
- ♣ CIRCLES, money or gifts
- ♣ CLOUDS, trouble brewing on the horizon, fertile field
- ♣ CLOVER, luck, happiness, prosperity
- ♣ COCK, prosperity
- ♣ COFFIN, long sickness or sign of death of a near
- ♣ COMET, misfortune and trouble
- ♣ COMPASSES, travel, business travel, finding your path, finding home
- ♣ CROSS, trouble, delay, need for protection
- ♣ CROW or RAVEN, a message to pay attention, be aware
- ♣ CROWN, success, honor, prestige
- ♣ DEER, disputes, failure in trade
- ♣ DOG, luck, faithful friends, money
- ♣ DONKEY, a legacy long awaited
- ♣ DOVE, luck, prosperity
- ♣ DRAGON, big and sudden changes
- ♣ DUCK, business success
- ♣ EAGLE, relocation brings success
- ♣ ELEPHANT, luck, health
- ♣ FALCON, a persistent enemy
- ♣ FERRET, active enemies
- ♣ FISH, good news from abroad
- ♣ FLAG, danger from wounds inflicted by an enemy
- ♣ FOX, backstabbing, gossip, treachery by a trusted friend
- ♣ FROG or TOAD, success in love and business, new beginnings
- ♣ GALLOWS, good luck
- ♣ GOAT, enemies around
- ♣ GOOSE, happiness, successful venture.
- ♣ GRASSHOPPER, good fortune, a great friend will become a soldier
- ♣ GUN, discord, disaster, slander

- ♣ HAMMER, victory
- ♣ HAND, to be read in conjunction with nearby symbols; grasping, receiving
- ♣ HARP, marriage, success in love
- ♣ HAT, success in life
- ♣ HAWK, an enemy
- ♣ HEART, pleasures to come; \$ if surrounded by dots, marriage if surrounded by a circle/ring
- ♣ HEN, money, new family member
- ♣ HORSE, desires fulfilled
- ♣ HORSESHOE, a lucky trip, good partner, good luck
- ♣ HOUR-GLASS, imminent peril
- ♣ HOUSE, success in business
- ♣ IVY, honor and happiness through faithful friends
- ♣ JACKAL, a sly person who need not be feared
- ♣ JOCKEY, successful speculation, good odds
- ♣ JUG, good health
- ♣ KEY, money, increasing trade, and a good partner, unlocking mysteries, Hecate, talents emerging
- ♣ KITE, a long trip leading to success
- ♣ KNIFE, need to maintain friendships
- ♣ LADDER, travel
- ♣ LETTERS, news, initials
- ♣ LINES indicate travel and direction of travel; wavy=hard, straight=easy
- ♣ LION, aid of powerful friends
- ♣ MERMAID, mysteries revealed, misfortune for the seafaring
- ♣ MONEY or \$, fortune coming
- ♣ MONKEY, deception in love
- ♣ MOON, happiness, prosperity, money
- ♣ MOUNTAIN, powerful friends; many mountains=many enemies
- ♣ MOUSE, danger of poverty through theft or overspending
- ♣ MUSHROOM, sudden separation of lovers after a fight
- ♣ OAK, very lucky, long life, good health, money, strength
- ♣ OWL, wisdom, insight, a need to watch and protect health and wealth, warning against starting a new business, deceit in love
- ♣ PALM-TREE, good luck, success
- ♣ PEACOCK, success, money, fame
- ♣ PEACOCK FEATHER, conceit, vanity, overrated
- ♣ PEAR, money, improved social status, good partnership or business
- ♣ PIG, faithful lover but envious friends
- ♣ PIGEONS, important messages
- ♣ PINE-TREE, happiness
- ♣ PISTOL, disaster.
- ♣ RABBIT, fair success in a city or large town, prosperity, fertility
- ♣ RAT, loss due to enemies or employees
- ♣ RAZOR, lovers' quarrels and separation
- ♣ RIFLE, discord, destruction
- ♣ RING, marriage; nearby letters may indicate spouse's initial
- ♣ ROSE, luck, good fortune, secrets
- ♣ SAW, strangers bring trouble
- ♣ SCALES, legal battles
- ♣ SCISSORS, fights, separation, illness
- ♣ SERPENT or SNAKES, be cautious, spiteful enemies, bad luck, illness
- ♣ SHARK, danger
- ♣ SHEEP, success, prosperity
- ♣ SHIP, a successful journey
- ♣ SPIDER, money coming
- ♣ SQUARES, comfort, stability, peace
- ♣ STAR, luck; if surrounded by dots foretells wealth and prestige
- ♣ SWALLOW, a good journey
- ♣ SWAN, happy relationships, luck
- ♣ SWORD, dispute, lovers' quarrels; a broken sword=victory
- ♣ TREES, luck, prosperity, happiness
- ♣ TRIANGLES, luck, inheritance
- ♣ TRIDENT, success
- ♣ UMBRELLA, trouble, need protection
- ♣ UNICORN, scandal, magic
- ♣ VULTURE, bitter enemies
- ♣ WHEEL, inheritance, change
- ♣ WINDMILL, business success
- ♣ WOLF, jealousy around
- ♣ ZEBRA, travel

# Poke

Pokeweed is common in the South and is surrounded by a great deal of folklore. It is associated with the planet Mars and magically corresponds to courage, hex-removal, and banishing.



The semi-toxic plant is used to make 'poke salad' but this requires boiling and several water changes to make it safe for consumption. The berries (pokeberries) are used to make dyes and inks. Pokeberry ink was used frequently in the United States during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Making Pokeberry Ink

To make pokeberry ink, harvest very ripe berries. Wearing gloves, smash the berries thoroughly and strain through several layers of cheesecloth or a flour sack towel.

Put the juice in a wide-mouth jar and cover with a cloth secured with a rubber band. Allow this jar to remain undisturbed for a week or two in a dark place.



Sunlight will turn your ink brown. As your juice sits it will ferment and some of the liquid will evaporate, leaving you with a more saturate color.

After a week or two, pour the juice through a filter again (cheesecloth layers or flour sack towel) and add a tablespoon of 70% to 95% isopropyl alcohol for every 4 ounces to help preserve it.

The result will be the perfect magical ink for dip pens that can be used like any of the other 'blood inks' used in magic such as bat's blood, dragon's blood, etc. Blood inks are used for writing spells, sigils, and runes. Pokeberry ink is especially known for its use in banishing.

Pokeberry ink is usually a dark fuchsia color. Over time, the dried ink will age to a dark brown. The ink included is a combination of pokeberry ink and dragon's blood ink. Dragon's blood is known for its

ability to add power and energy to any magical working, and for purification and protection. The addition of dragon's blood to your ink adds oomph to your work and a longer lasting color.

## Using Your Ink

I've included a piece of handmade paper for you to create your own bit of magic with your Pokeberry Dragon Ink. You can use the ink with a dip pen, brush, or a toothpick.

For dip pens, dispense the ink into a small dish or carefully remove the plastic dropper plug and dip directly into the bottle. Wear gloves when slowly prying off the plastic dropper as the ink will stain.

A toothpick will fit into the hole of the plastic dropper insert and can be used instead of a dip pen. If you smash the end of the toothpick a little it will hold more ink. Expect to only be able to write a short line at a time and dipping often when using a toothpick.

As a last resort, you can always just tip the bottle upside down and write with it! Tip the bottle and draw a line, then invert it to allow air in, tip again to draw the next line. This makes nice, bold designs.

## Poke & Parchment Spell

Using a regular pencil or pen write on your parchment something that you wish to

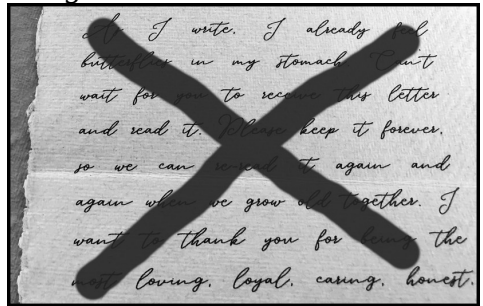
overcome or banish. For example, you might want stop old thought patterns that lead to stress. Proceed as Drew...

## Drew's Spell

Drew can't stop thinking about their ex partner. It has been months since it ended but everything seems to remind them of the relationship. Drew writes:

*"Every time I cook food or watch my favorite show I think of my ex. This brings back the hurt and pain every time."*

Drew uses her ink by tipping the bottle to draw a protection symbol over what she wrote. She rolls up the paper, ties it with a ribbon, and hangs it near her bed.



If you like Drew's spell, you can use any protection symbol that has meaning for you. A pentacle, cross, triquetra, or other symbol such as those below is appropriate, or you can simply x out the note.





## Peyton's Spell

Peyton feels like they are being psychically attacked at work. They want to banish the gossip and backstabbing that has been growing worse over the past few months. Peyton writes the word "gossip" on their paper using a dip pen.

*gossip*

Peyton goes outside to a quiet area. While focusing on their intention to banish gossip, Peyton lights the paper on fire and drops it into their barbecue grill while saying, *"Loose tongues will lie still, I banish gossip from those who spread ill."*

## Rowan's Spell

Rowan wants to create a permanent protection talisman. They visualize a large sphere around their home and using a small paintbrush, they paint a protection symbol on the paper while repeating, *"With this symbol I protect, and all bane do hereby redirect."*



Rowan visualizes negativity bouncing off the sphere and

dispersing into neutrality. They roll up the paper, tie it with a red ribbon, and hang it over their front door.

## Creating Your Spell

You can use any of the examples provided or create your own spell. Your ink is extremely versatile and can be used like watercolor, sumi ink, or regular dip ink. It will add energy and power to any purpose, and is particularly helpful for banishing and protection.



This booklet was written by Friday Gladheart as a gift for Kickstarter supporters of The Southern Botanic Oracle by Stacey Williams-Ng.

If you enjoyed this booklet, you might also like The Practical Witch's Almanac. For over 25 years this almanac has been an indispensable guide for earth-based spiritual practitioners.

Friday Gladheart founded WitchAcademy.org in 1996 and it remains the oldest and highly respected online school for witchcraft, tarot, and magical herbalism.

