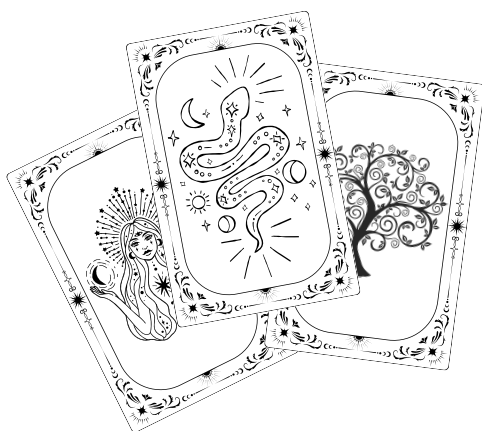




The Picture Game

Mithras Variation

a writing game by
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You are an archaeologist who has spent several years researching an ancient cultic deity that academia knows very little about. This deity is only known through art, sculpture, and reliefs found across a continent once united by a long defunct empire. No writing, explanations, or details of worship or ritual have survived. You've identified three ritual "Scenes" repeated over and over in the various regional cultures that depict the deity's story. After years of study, you're sure you understand the deity's background, story, and origin. Now it's time for you to share your hypothesis with the world.

This writing/journaling game can be played solo or with a group. It's designed to be flexible enough to use as a short writing exercise to get the juices flowing or as the foundation for creating fantastical or futuristic or ancient worlds to inhabit for longer than just the game session.

Play Materials

- Writing implements. Digital or analog, whatever your preference.
- One or more tarot decks. If you do not have one, you can use online sources (listed below).
- A timer (optional—20 minutes for each part).

Online Tarot Cards

There are several websites that will generate a three card spread you can use for this game. My favorite is facade.com/tarot as you can choose from a wide number of decks. I also love scrolling through comparativetarot.tumblr.com as they post cards from a huge number of decks every day. There's even a random card draw available on the sidebar.

Playing the Game

Shuffle your deck (or decks) of cards and draw three. These represent the deity's recurring scenes or motifs.

Decide the order of the cards. Which scene is first, second, third in the sequence? It can be the order you pulled them or one inspired by the cards themselves.

Take some time to study the art and symbols on the cards. If you need a boundary, set the timer for 5 minutes. Try to see the symbols or entities depicted on the cards separately from what you know of tarot symbolism because you're going to invent their context yourself.

Part 1

Write the story of the deity based on the three scenes. A few questions to get you started:

- What is their name?
- Are they part of a pantheon?
- What is their function in the spiritual milieu?
- Is there a ritual aspect to these scenes?
- Pick one object or symbol on each card - what is each one's significance?

Don't stop here! Write everything you "know" from these scenes and the places they're found.

Part 2

Draw a fourth card. This scene was recently discovered and scholars are debating if it's connected to this particular deity or not. You're sure it is.

How is this new scene connected to the others? Where does it fit in the sequence? What new light does it shed on the story and the mystery of the deity that you've already worked out? Does it reinforce what you (thought you) knew before it was discovered or does it force you to rethink everything?



About

This game is a variation of The Picture Game, a simple writing game for generating story seeds, getting your creative juices flowing, and (re)connecting with your muse. To play, visit picturegame.tumblr.com.

This variation was inspired by the ancient god Mithras, who is only known by the visual depictions of his story inside the places his adherents worshiped. We don't know his full story or really anything beyond the broad strokes because his worshipers left behind no writings that we know of.

Want to know what we do know about Mithras? Watch the YouTube video "Who is Mithras?" from the Religion for Breakfast channel.

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