

Dear Anam Cara Apprentices,

Welcome to Month 1 of the Celtic Myth track. We so enjoyed meeting you all at the opening webinar and we are excited about our work together this year.

First, we would like to offer you a brief overview of how the year will work.

Each month's learning will begin with the webinar and will end with the submission of your paper (if you are submitting one) approximately one week before the webinar.

The only advance work we will ask of you each month before the webinar is to listen to the audio file of the story and to jot down any questions or anything you don't understand. You will also receive a written transcript of each story for the sake of clarity. You will find these two items in the folder of the previous month, e.g. the story for month 1 is in the pre-retreat folder, the story for month 2 is in the month 1 folder and so forth. This is because the folder for the current month will only be made accessible after the webinar for that month. We would suggest you don't engage with the new story until after submitting your reflection paper for the month you have just completed.

Each month, you will find a letter from us in the folder – read this first, as it will outline any assignments and readings required, as well as the subject of discussion for your meeting with your Anam Cara partner during the month if relevant.

You will also find a video teaching from us on the story of the month in the form of a dialogue. This is designed to stimulate your own thoughts on and exploration of the story – it's not the one and only 'meaning' of the story, as there is no such thing!

Some months, there may be a second video explaining the dream teaching or practice that we will be working on that month.

We may also include other resources – articles, podcasts and videos that we find relevant. Please refer to the letter from us to see which are required and which are merely recommended.

We look forward to journeying with you this year!

Warmly,

Phil and Margaret

Month 1: Merlin and the Apple Trees

Reading Assignments:

All About Dreams Ch2 and Ch3 (pp65-101)

Awakening the Heroes Within Ch15, The Magician

Listen to the Land Speak pp1-59 (This book is less linear than the others and less directly related to the theme of the month – we are asking you to read it because of its deep intertwining of the mythic imagination and the relationship with the land.)

Dream Assignments:

1. Begin to record your dreams if you are not already doing so.
2. Try the following exercise which will help you begin to connect with the symbolic language of your dreams:

Dream Symbol Exploration

What is the single most striking image from your dream? This can be as simple as, for example, an apple.

Using paints or pencils (or clay if you prefer) do your best to recreate that image. By approaching the image in this way, we are accessing the right side of the brain, which can sometimes bring us to surprising places. Take time to consider the shapes, to choose the colours, see if you can remember the context of the image (e.g. is the apple on a tree, in a fruitbowl, lying on the road?)

What feelings come up for you as you work on this image? Do you like it? Does it hold a challenge for you? If you feel drawn to embellish or change the image, that's ok too.

Spend some time journaling and associating with this image over the course of the month – what does it remind you of? What are your associations with it? If this symbol had a message or meaning for you in your life, what would it be?

Nature Assignment

Begin to notice the ground under your feet, and the way in which you walk on the earth. Is this the same ground (or kind of ground) your ancestors would have walked? What is your relationship with the place where you live? What if every step on the earth was a contact with a living consciousness – would that change the way you go through the day? If you have time to watch the *Earthing Movie* (not required), it offers some very interesting suggestions how contact with the earth can impact us. [Disclaimer: we cannot comment on the veracity of the science in this movie, but why not try walking barefoot on the earth and see how it feels?]

Dyad Assignment

Please arrange a one-hour Zoom meeting with your Anam Cara partner during the month. Share your experience of the webinar, and the month's assignments. How does this month's story impact you? Please note any insights or questions that arise that you might wish to include in your paper. This is also a time for you to reflect on the dyad questions offered each month on the Track Outline (see the pre-retreat folder) and to practise deep listening to each other's stories. Please try to ensure that the time is divided more or less evenly, though this doesn't have to be done in a rigid way.

The reflection questions for Month One are:

- Where am I now in my inner life?
- How do I connect to ancestral wisdom?

- What is the transformation I seek (connecting to the Magician archetype)?

Journal

We suggest that you journal throughout the month on your reading and experience of this work – noting questions and difficulties as well as insights. You might also wish to reflect on the dyad questions for the month as part of your journaling.

Reflection paper

Your reflection paper should offer some insight into how you are engaging with the practices and material for the month, as well as your sense of your larger personal journey through the year. It doesn't have to be long (1-2 pages) but should include at least one insight from the month and one question that arose for you based on the readings and/or practices. If you are journaling throughout the month, this will help you when it comes to writing your papers.

Your papers are due no later than one week **PRIOR** to the next month's online Webinar for your track – but you can submit them sooner if you want to. If you are a graduate apprentice, as we've already said, you don't need to submit papers but you are welcome to do so and we are happy to read and respond. Creative engagement with the material – art, poetry etc is very welcome!

The deadline and webinar dates are on the document 'Important Dates' which you will find in the Pre-Retreat folder, along with the booklist and the track outline for the year.

Recommended additional resources:

For those who are interested, here are some additional resources to help you in exploring the themes of Month 1 further:

Print

- "From Myrddin to Merlin and Back Again" by Stephen Knight:
https://www.cymmrodorion.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2_From-Myrddin-to-Merlin-and-Back-Again.pdf

Audio

- Podcast by T.A.Barron: <https://tabarron.com/podcast/merlin-in-history-and-myth/> T.A. Barron has written a series of children's adventures about Merlin. Here he interviews an academic expert on the Merlin myths, Professor Carolyn Larrington of Oxford University.

Video

- Dr Barbara Holmes from the Centre for Action and Contemplation, on Ancestral Wisdom (May 2020): <https://youtu.be/KOKL3Hypa0s>
- As we set out on our own journeys of transformation for the year ahead, this short video from Duane Elgin provides a brief introduction or reminder to the pattern of “The Hero’s Journey”. Can you identify this pattern at work in your own life?
<https://youtu.be/HRa60PLtnEs>
- The Earthing Movie: <https://youtu.be/44ddtR0XDVU>