



Power of the hour

Horary astrology, an ancient form of divining answers by constructing a horoscope for the time a question has been received by an astrologer, provides insight and answers for queries both great and small. By Kelly Surtees

In the modern world, astrology is commonly used to predict life directions, personality traits and future cycles — but did you know astrology was historically used as an oracle as well?

A modern revival of horary techniques is underway, bringing back the forgotten oracle of astrology. Horary astrology, literally meaning “of the hour”, is a divinatory tool that uses a birth chart created for the moment a client’s question is asked. As the astrologer hears the question for the first time, they mark the moment of the question’s “birth” and set a chart reflecting the astrological picture of the sky at that time. Following a set of simple, clear rules, an answer or “judgment” is then arrived upon. Key steps for an accurate horary chart include using the *time* and *place* of the

moment and location the *astrologer* first hears and understands the question.

Astrologer Rob Hand defines horary astrology as “the art of answering questions by means of astrology”. Horary astrology is a practical form of astrology that gives clear answers that are quickly proven either right or wrong. Using techniques not often used in modern natal astrology, like receptions and dignity, a specially trained astrologer is able to accurately analyse any given situation using a horary chart.

The *Oxford Concise Dictionary* defines divination as “insight into or discovery of the unknown”. Horary is the tool astrologers use to reveal the truth of any given situation. It allows you to see what is currently hidden, or out of reach, or what is really going on in a

situation. Sometimes what you discover may surprise or shock you, but then the truth of a matter often does. Horary can show what will happen in the future or has happened in the past, but what it does best is paint a clear picture of what is happening right now on all levels (physical, emotional, energetic) for all key players in the given situation.

Birth-chart astrology is complex. It has to be — a whole lifetime of potential is described in the one set of symbols. Teasing out simple answers to real-time events from a natal chart, rather than qualifying overall life themes, can be time consuming. Reading a horary chart usually involves just one or two planets, as indicated by whatever is asked about in the question itself. This makes horary much simpler, faster and inherently more precise

for specific question-and-answer situations than an entire birth chart consultation. Often, when you reach out to astrology, you want to know about a key issue that's relevant for you at that time.

Why not use a tool that can bring clarity and insight there and then? Be prepared, though: if you ask a horary question you will get an honest, insightful answer. Sometimes this in itself is confronting. Horary was a popular tool in older cultures where many people simply did not know the precise day, let alone time, of their birth. While birth-chart astrology might be the most personal form of astrology, in its absence, or if wanting clear answers about a key issue, horary is a competent tool.

Horary in history

Horary astrology owes much to William Lilly, an English astrologer who lived and practised through the 1600s. His work *Christian Astrology* (published in 1647) sets out a set of rules for horary practice, many of which are still used today.

Students of astrology through the 1500s to the 1700s would begin their astrological studies learning horary, only graduating to birth-chart astrology (the most common form of astrology in use today) once they had a solid understanding of the basic principles of how charts work, through their use of and studies in horary. As befits its place as the first level of astrology learned, horary is quick, simple and mostly fast. Answers given are succinct and accurate.

Horary consultations were historically quite brief. You'd arrive for a session at the astrologer's place of business and they'd move the chart forward a relevant amount, from the time of the previous client's question. You'd ask your question, get your answer, pay your fee and be on your way in less than 30 minutes.

Horary astrology is not about discussion or determining what the possibilities are in a given situation; it provides clear information about what's happening and what is set to happen, if nothing is changed or altered. Any room to move indicated in your situation will be communicated to you along with techniques appropriate to help you maximise the opportunities or minimise the damages, if applicable.

Why horary?

Horary can provide information about work, love, money, missing objects, family, friendships — just about anything you can imagine. Because horary charts deal with a specific (or a couple of related) issue(s), the astrological symbolism can be read with greater precision and clarity. Your birth chart contains the entire working of your life and rewards detailed study over time. Personal natal chart readings work best when you build an ongoing relationship with an astrologer

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who is able to construct a profile of your chart at work over an ongoing period. For any immediate questions or issues you want specific and timely information about, horary astrology is a better tool.

Using horary helps you simplify your astrology. Horary relies on key basic principles but the greatest skill the practice of horary teaches you is the ability to throw out most of the information in front of you.

Not everything in an astrological chart is relevant all the time and in horary, being concerned with a specific subject (the topic of the question), it is necessary to focus only on the one or two planets or places in the chart that directly relate to the subject in question. Common horary enquiries include: where is the dog/money/ring? Will my husband leave/stay/get the job? Am I pregnant/will I have children?

Not every astrologer is trained in the art of horary. In modern astrological practice it's considered a specialist subject and astrologers need to undergo extra training in this field before becoming proficient. There are many online and in-person courses available should you wish to explore this branch of astrology further.

Techniques used in horary that aren't commonly used in natal work include receptions and dignities. These techniques are concerned with planetary strength and interaction. You might want to know whether you should buy a particular house or not. If the planet that represents the house itself has great strength, it shows the house of a solid investment and worth buying. The horary chart would also show how easily or not the deal itself will come together.

Tools and techniques

Horary astrology shows what is happening now, what has just happened and what lies ahead, so it can be used for matters where timing is important, too. In horary, great importance is placed on the Moon and its movements. The Moon is the fastest-moving heavenly body. Planets it has either recently interacted with or is about to connect with show a lot about the true nature of the situation. Similar to the Moon in your birth chart showing your feelings or your heart, the Moon in the horary chart shows what's going on inside you.

In horary, the first house and its ruling planet represent the person asking the question (the querent). The strength, quality and location

of that planet in the horary chart provide information about the situation from the querent's perspective.

The relevant house area relating to the topic of the question, the person (ie, partner, boss, sibling, child) or thing (pet, lost object) being asked about is known as the quesited. The relevant house and ruling planet of the quesited shows information about its strength, quality and location. Any form of communication between these two signifying energies will outline any previous, in progress or upcoming dialogue or events relating to the situation.

Connections (through reception or aspect) between the two signifying planets tell the astrologer what kind of communication is occurring between the relevant parties. The attitude of each signifying planet to the other (judged through reception) is incredibly important and indicative of the attitude of each person or thing to the other.

One of my first horary questions involved a student who'd lost her engagement ring. She asked, "Where is my ring?" I created a horary chart for the time and place at which I received her question. The ring was both a symbol of Venus (an object of beauty) and also a possession of hers, so signified by the ruling planet of the second house (the second house represents possessions).

There were then two planets that could symbolise her ring in the chart. Venus was in the seventh house, in a water sign. Since horary is about keeping things simple, my first suggestion was to look in a space that was her husband's (the seventh house is about significant others) that was wet (water sign = wet). The student mentioned she and her husband had separate bathrooms and she would check his. And so the ring was found hidden in an exfoliating glove she had worn while showering in her husband's bathroom a few days earlier. Simple and successful. If Venus hadn't led the way, the ruling planet of the second would have then been considered. One or possibly both of the signifying energies always tells the story.

What belongs where?

Everything in life is reflected in the mandala of the horoscope. The basic principle of astrology — "as above, so below" — reflects the belief that the cosmos is a mirror of the microcosm of earthly life. If it exists, it must fall into one of the 12 houses in the horoscope. Each house represents different people, places and things.

Outline of the houses

- 1 You, your physical appearance and your space
- 2 Your money and possessions
- 3 Your siblings, daily travels
- 4 Family, father, home, history
- 5 Your children, pleasure, play
- 6 Daily routines, small animals, illness
- 7 Other people, partners, spouse, legal affairs
- 8 Other people's money, tax, death
- 9 Faith, long/special trips, knowledge
- 10 Career, the "king" (boss/prime minister), mother
- 11 Friends, groups, money from the 10th (ie, your salary)
- 12 Desire that becomes your undoing; hidden, shadowy, large animals.

The technique of "turned houses" is also used in horary. This involves locating other people in the chart, like your sibling's wife. Your sibling is the third house. Spouses fall seven houses around from the relevant house (ie, you are the first and your spouse is the seventh, so if your sibling is the third then their spouse is the ninth, which is seven around from the third, counting the third as "one"). This way, any person connected to you by any means can be given a house/space in the horary. The ruling planet of their house becomes the symbol of them in the horary. Your mother is the 10th, but your spouse's mother is the fourth, which is 10 houses from the seventh.

Planetary essences

It is also necessary to have an understanding of the basic nature or quality of each planet, rather than just its common expressions. Astrological symbolism lives in everything. Venus, symbol for beauty, is part of you as a human and reflected in art, jewels, makeup and pretty things. Saturn, the symbol for things that are old, low down or buried, is part of you and shows up when discussing rocks, bones, antiques or situations where delays or limits apply. The key principles of each planet are outlined below.

- ☿ Venus has a sweet nature and her principal is of unification. It is cold and moist by nature.
- ♂ Mars is decisive and divides; he cuts. He is energy and action and is of a hot and dry nature.
- ☿ Mercury is asexual and adopts the form or qualities of the sign in which he is placed. He is mental and of a cold and dry nature.
- ☾ Moon is absorbent and reflective and has a cold and moist nature.
- ☼ Sun is heat-giving, warm, charming and alive. It is expressive and of a hot and dry nature.
- ♃ Jupiter is expansive and is of a hot and moist nature.
- ♄ Saturn is contracting and is of a cold and dry nature.

Another branch of astrology related to



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horary is electional astrology, where the astrologer works in reverse and sets out to create a chart for the event (like a marriage or business registration) you have in mind. A very simple tool many astrologers use that reflects these of-the-moment principles used in both horary and electional astrology is to cast the chart for the time at which you are set to arrive in their consulting room for a session. The quality of energy in that chart often reflects the tone of the session to be experienced in that time.

Horary at work

What is happening in my relationship? Question asked/chart created on July 18, 2006 at 9.46am Sydney, 20 degrees Virgo ASC. In this horary chart, the client or querent is represented by Mercury, ruling planet of the Virgo ascendant. Her partner is Jupiter, traditional ruling planet of Pisces, the descendant or seventh house sign.

The client or querent's position

Mercury is moving backwards (retrograde) and applying to conjunct the Sun. (The Sun is a symbol for him as pure, primal male. With her planet conjunct the Sun it [she] is combust, meaning "blinded".) This suggests the client loves him deeply — so much so that she can see no other reality. The client is literally blinded by her feelings for him and is more than likely going to ignore much of this information. She literally exalts him and their relationship and has what they share on a pedestal. Mercury is ruled by the Moon, in Aries, which suggests underneath her exalting him/their relationship she is prepared to fight for what she feels she deserves.

The partner or quesited

In the chart, her partner, represented by Jupiter, is in Scorpio. Jupiter is in Mars' sign

and therefore ruled by Mars. Mars is placed in the 12th house. This shows he is hard to judge and hazy about his real motives. Sometimes it feels like he brings out the worst in the client. She may wonder why she is with him. Then he turns on the charm and the client finds it hard to resist him (Mercury, her ruling planet, close to the Sun and the influence of Mars placed in the sign of Leo), often against her better judgment.

Jupiter is also moving to square Saturn. Saturn represents limits, boundaries, and realities, so any delusions or fantasies he has been harbouring or expressing are soon to be bought back down to earth. The reality of his situation is about to hit home.

Planetary communications

Mercury is about to turn around and start moving forwards again, giving her renewed insight and strength. This also indicates a change of mind/perception in how she views the situation and feels about him. The turnaround is likely to be such a complete one that she can hardly imagine it now. He loves getting attention, which right now the client is giving (as shown by Mercury close to the Sun), but when the attention giving drops off, so too does his interest in her. Due to the forward, backward, forward again movement of Mercury (her planet), it appears she has recently left or tried to leave the relationship but is back — for now. Next time she leaves it will be for good.

The Moon is also about to change signs and when it does, will gain strength. This indicates the upcoming change in circumstances will be very good for the client as she gets her strength/clear perspective back. ☾

Kelly Surtees is passionate about astrology and respected among her peers for her insight and knowledge. She offers readings to clients around the world.

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