

Silent Night

The words of Silent Night were written by a Priest called Fr. Joseph Mohr in Mariapfarr, Austria, in 1816 and the music was added in 1818, by his school teacher friend Franz Xaver Gruber, for the Christmas service at St. Nicholas church in Oberndorf, Austria.

A Christmas house in the snow

Fr. Mohr asked Franz Gruber to compose the melody with a guitar arrangement. It was several years later that Franz Gruber wrote an arrangement for the organ. Historians who have conducted research in recent years believe that Fr. Mohr wanted a new carol that he could play on his guitar.

There is a legend associated with the carol that says, Fr. Mohr wanted the carol to be sung by the children of the village at the midnight Christmas Eve service, as a surprise for their parents. But in the middle of practicing, the organ broke and not a note would come from it! So the children had to learn the carol only accompanied by a guitar. They learnt the carol so well that they could sing it on its own without accompaniment.

However, there are no records to indicate that a children's choir was involved or that the organ was broken!

At Midnight Mass in 1818, Fr. Mohr and Franz Gruber sang each of the six verses with the church choir repeating the last two lines of each verse. Mohr set down the guitar arrangement on paper around 1820 and that is the earliest manuscript that still exists. It is displayed in the Carolino Augusteum Museum in Salzburg. There are a number of manuscripts of various 'Stille Nacht' arrangements that were written by Franz Gruber in later years.

The original words of the song were in German (and it was called 'Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht') and the first translation into English went:

Silent night, holy night,
Bethlehem sleeps, yet what light,
Floats around the heavenly pair;
Songs of angels fills the air.
Strains of heavenly peace.

Now the first verse is normally translated as:

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

It's thought that the song might have traveled around the area with an organ repairman, Karl Mauracher, who could have taken an early arrangement with him in about 1820. Then two singing families (like the 'Von Trappes' in The Sound of Music) seem to have discovered the song and performed it as part of their concerts. In December 1832, the Strasser family performed it at a concert in Leipzig. It was first performed in the USA in 1839 by the Rainer family, who sang 'Stille Nacht' at the Alexander Hamilton Monument outside Trinity Church in New York City. During this time the tune changed to the one we know and sing today!

It was translated into English in 1863 by John Freeman Young. The carol was sung during the Christmas Truce in the First World War in December 1914 as it was a song that soldiers on both sides knew!

By the time that the carol was famous, Fr Mohr had died. Franz Gruber wrote to music authorities in Berlin saying that he had composed the tune, but no one believed him and it was thought that Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven had

written it! But then the 1820 manuscript was found and in the top right corner Fr Mohr had written: 'Melodie von Fr. Xav. Gruber.'

It's now one of the most, if the the most, recorded songs in the world! I've got over 100 versions of it in my collection of Christmas music (which is over 250 Christmas albums)!

Silent Night, Holy Night

The United Methodist Hymnal Number 239

Text: *Joseph Mohr, 1792-1848; trans. by John F. Young, 1820-1885 (sts 1, 2, 3) and anon. (st*

Music: *Franz Gruber, 1787-1863*

Tune: *STILLE NACHT, Meter: Irr.*

1. Silent night, holy night,
all is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin
mother and child.
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.

2. Silent night, holy night,
shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar,
heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born,
Christ the Savior is born!

3. Silent night, holy night,
Son of God, love's pure light;
radiant beams from thy holy face
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

IT'S TWELVE DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS—

THE HIDDEN MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

(Submitted by a “Daily Inspiration” subscriber)

People often think of The Twelve Days of Christmas as the days preceding the festival. Actually, Christmas is a season of the Christian Year that lasts for days beginning December 25 and lasting until January 6 -the Day of Epiphany - when the church celebrates the revelation of Christ as the light of the world and recalls the journey of the Magi.

From 1558 until 1829 people in England were not allowed to practice their faith openly. During this era someone wrote ‘The Twelve Days of Christmas’

as a kind of secret catechism that could be sung in public without risk of persecution. The song has two levels of interpretation: the surface meaning plus a hidden meaning known only to members of the church. Each element in the carol is a code word for a religious reality.

- 1. The partridge in a pear tree is Jesus Christ.**
- 2. The two turtledoves are the Old and New Testaments.**
- 3. Three French hens stand for faith, hope and love.**
- 4. The four calling birds are the four Gospels.**
- 5. The five gold rings recall the torah (Law) the first five books of the Old Testament.**
- 6. The six geese a-laying stand for the six days of creation.**
- 7. Seven swans a-swimming represent the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit.**
- 8. The eight maids a-milking are the eight beatitudes**
- 9. Nine ladies dancing are the nine fruits of the Spirit (Gal.5).**
- 10. The ten lords a-leaping are the Ten Commandments.**
- 11. Eleven pipers piping stand for the eleven faithful disciples.**
- 12. Twelve drummers drumming symbolize the 12 points of belief in the Apostles’ Creed**

There you have it, the HIDDEN meaning of The Twelve Days of Christmas and the secret behind the song.

Playing Card Facts & Trivia

Some interesting facts (or possibly fiction) about playing cards.

It is said that each of the suits on a deck of cards in a card game represents the four major pillars of the economy in the Middle Ages: Hearts represented the Church, Spades represented the military, Clubs represented agriculture, and Diamonds represented the merchant class.

Each face card in a deck of playing cards is said to represent a great person from history:

King of Spades – David

King of Hearts – Charles (possibly Charlemagne, or Charles VII, where Rachel would then be the pseudonym of his mistress, Agnès Sorel)

King of Diamonds – Julius Caesar

King of Clubs – Alexander the Great

Queen of Spades – Pallas

Queen of Hearts – Judith

Queen of Diamonds – Rachel (either biblical, historical (see Charles above), or mythical as a corruption of the Celtic Ragnel, relating to Lancelot below)

Queen of Clubs – Argine (possibly an anagram of regina, which is Latin for queen, or perhaps Argea, wife of Polybus and mother of Argus)

Knave (Jack) of Spades – Ogier the Dane/Holger Danske (a knight of Charlemagne)

Knave (Jack) of Hearts – La Hire (comrade-in-arms to Joan of Arc, and member of Charles VII's court)

Knave (Jack) of Diamonds – Hector

Knave (Jack) of Clubs – Judas Maccabeus, or Lancelot

The King of Hearts is the only king without a mustache and is the only king with a sword through his head, otherwise known as the "Suicide King".

The Face Cards (King, Queen & Jack) are referred to as the "Court".

52 cards represents the 52 weeks in a year

4 suits represents the 4 seasons

13 cards in each suit represents the 13 weeks in each season

12 Royals represent the 12 months

2 red and 2 black suits represent the 4 different solstices

The 4 suits also represent the four natural elements

Hearts = Water

Clubs = Fire

Diamonds = Earth

Spades = Air

An interesting fact about playing cards is that specially-constructed decks were sent to American soldiers who were being held in German camps during World War II. The United States Playing Card Company collaborated with the government in the production of these cards. What made these cards so unique was, once they became wet, they peeled apart. Inside, the prisoners found parts of maps that would lead them to freedom.

The Secret's in the Cards : Unknown Playing Card Facts

By [Vanessa Quinn](#) on December 6, 2017

Playing cards are everywhere. They are one of the most universal game tools around. They are used for everything from your grandma's cribbage party to dorm room drinking games. Then, of course, there is their strong gambling presence.

There's no doubt about their prevalence in today's society, but few know their history. I have played poker with cards for many, many years. I never once thought about how cards came to be what they are. I never noticed the differences in illustrations on the face cards. I never contemplated if the cards had any historical significance.

It turns out that a simple deck of cards has a rich history. There are meanings behind just about every aspect of them. Some of these are more of a historical fact, while others are speculation.

One thing that is certain is that playing cards are still incredibly popular today. The U.S. Playing Card Company remains the biggest manufacturer of playing cards in the entire world and sells more than 100 million decks of cards every year.

History of Playing Cards

Most experts agree that the origin of playing cards dates back over 1000 years to 9th century China. Those cards offer little resemblance to the cards we know today. Playing cards officially reached Europe in the late 14th century. This is the beginning of their evolution into the playing cards we are familiar with today. These original European playing cards were comprised of four suits; Swords, Staves, Cups, and Coins.

The original playing cards were hand-painted and very expensive. During the 15th century, printed, woodcut decks began circulating. From here, methods of efficient production made playing cards a much more widespread item.

The cards we use today are heavily based on the French adaptation of playing cards. Though there are alterations to the original French deck, current playing card decks are structured in the same way. Things like suit symbols and illustrations have changed. Pip count, card values, and the structure of the deck have all remained the same.

You might notice that the ace of spades is structured differently than the rest of the deck. After the success of playing cards, the English Government decided to place a tax on one playing card; the ace of spades. It was a normal card depicting a plain pip until 1765 when it was printed by the tax office with a design showing that tax had been paid.

This official design is the most popular of the decorative designs used by individual makers after 1862. The card maker was not allowed to make their own ace of spades. Forging an ace was a capital offense. Forged aces are found in private collections and in museums. They are a highly-sought collector's item.

Cards and the Calendar

Comparisons between playing cards and the calendar seem to be most prevalent. There are several representations of the seasons, and of measurements in time. Here are the most common ones:

- The four suits consist of 13 cards each. They represent the four quarters of the year, which have 13 weeks each.
- 13 cards per suit to represent lunar months in a year.
- 365 pips in the deck (if you don't count both jokers, since they are the same card). This is the same number of days in the year. Many say the second joker represents the leap year of 366 days.
- 52 cards in a deck is meant to represent the 52 weeks in a year.
- There are 12 court "face" cards, and also 12 months in a year.

Many people debate the representation of the days of the year and the corresponding 365 pips. Jokers were added to the playing card deck much later. Their argument is this:

Each suit consists of 13 cards and is said to represent the 13 months of the lunar year. A lunar month contains 28 days. According to the positivist calendar, the year is comprised of 13 months of 28 days ($13 \times 28 = 364$).

Along the same lines, people argue that the total value of 364 for all cards in the deck is due to the weeks comparison. The whole deck of 52 cards is said to represent the 52 weeks of the year. Because of this, the whole deck is also equal to 364 days of the year ($52 \times 7 = 364$). This theory helps to explain the reasoning behind the value of 364 in a deck of cards before the introduction of the jokers.

The Suits

Another highly-debated aspect of playing card interpretation is the meaning of the suits in the deck. There are many varying interpretations of what the four suits represent.

The original suits were coins, said to signify wealth, cups, which signified love, and swords and sticks. Though the suits have changed, the representations remain the same. Wealth has changed to diamonds, cups to hearts, swords to spades, and sticks to clubs.

Some of the common beliefs regarding the representation of suits in the deck are:

- The four suits represent the four phases of the moon, which are new, first quarter, full, and waning or last quarter.

- The four suits represent four seasons.
- The four suits represent the social structure of society
 - **Hearts**=The church
 - **Diamonds**=The sword
 - **Clubs**=Husbandry
 - **Spades**=Knights
- The four suits represent the four natural elements. This is also a reference to tarot cards, which have similar divisions.
 - **Hearts**=Water
 - **Clubs**=Fire
 - **Diamonds**=Earth
 - **Spades**=Air
- Along the same lines as the social structure theory, is the representation of the four feudal classes. The four classes are believed to be represented by the suits of the deck. These classes are the military (aristocracy), the merchants (trade), the clergy, and the peasants (agriculture).

Warfare

Cards have long been utilized by military forces. Where weight and size are important factors, playing cards make for an easily packed form of entertainment. Due to this factor, playing cards have been utilized in war efforts several times throughout history.

- Playing cards were used during the Vietnam war in 1966. The Viet Cong were known to be superstitious. At the time, the ace of spades was a symbol of death in fortune telling. Because of this, U.S. troops used the card as a form of psychological warfare against the Viet Cong. Decks of cards consisting of only the ace of spades were sent to the troops overseas. They scattered thousands of these cards throughout the jungles in an attempt to instill fear in the Viet Cong.
- During World War II, maps were hidden within the decks of playing cards sent to prisoners of war. When these cards got wet, the top layer was peeled off to reveal a map. This map would lead them to safety.
- In 2003, the U.S. Playing Card Company produced the cards featuring Iraq's 52 Most Wanted. The playing cards were a gallery of the Iraqi leadership, ranging from Saddam Hussein (ace of spades) to scientist Huda Salih Mahdi Ammash (five of hearts). The cards were shipped to American soldiers to help them in their hunt for Iraqi leadership.

Historical Figures

There is a total of 12 court cards in a deck. They are more commonly referred to as face cards. These face cards represent actual people from history. They are:

Kings

- King of Hearts – King Charlemagne, the first Holy Roman Emperor
- King of Clubs – Alexander the Great
- King of Diamonds – Julius Caesar
- King of Spades – King David of Israel

Queens

- Queen of Spades – Athena, the Greek goddess of war
- Queen of Hearts – Judith (biblical figure), Latin for queen

Jacks

- Jack of Clubs – Sir Lancelot
- Jack of Spades – Ogier the Dane (legendary hero of the chansons de geste)

What we know as a jack now was originally called a knave. This was changed in 1864 due to the probability for confusion in the card abbreviations. The abbreviation for knave was Kn. This was too similar to the K used for the king.

Symbolism

- One of the strong areas of symbolism within playing cards is in the two colors of the suits. The clubs and spades suits are black, while the diamonds and hearts suits are red. Many believe this is to represent opposing forces such as day and night, good and bad, right and wrong, etc. This is said to symbolize opposing forces existing harmoniously.
- The king of hearts is known as a suicide king. This is because it appears that he's sticking his sword into his ear. The sword is actually supposed to be raised as if the king is charging into battle. With graphics and printing being what they were at the time, the actual appearance of the card turned out much differently. The sword was also originally a battle ax. Changing this altered the appearance of the card too.
- There are many examples of playing cards representing societal classes. Many believe this is shown through the structure of the deck. Only the royalty, or court cards, are illustrated. The rest of the cards are only represented by their numerical value. Except for the court, the population of a kingdom was not that important in any other way than its quantity.
- Another example of the societal symbolism in a deck of playing cards is in the value of an ace. The ace was originally the low card until the French Revolution. Then, after this time, it was high as a tribute to the peasantry overthrowing the aristocracy.

Conclusion

I bet you didn't realize there was so much speculation surrounding a simple deck of cards. The next time you play a card game, you will probably look at playing cards differently. At the very least, you now have some good tidbits of information to use at the card tables.

The Deck of Cards Bible

A young soldier was in his bunkhouse all alone one Sunday morning. It was quiet that day, the guns and the mortars, for some reason, hadn't made a noise. The young soldier knew it was Sunday, the holiest day of the week. As he was sitting there, he got out an old deck of cards and laid them out across his bunk.

Just then his Sargent came in and asked, "Why aren't you with the rest of the platoon?" The soldier replied, "I thought I would stay behind and spend some time with the Lord." The Sargent said, "Looks like you're going to play cards."

The soldier said, "No, sir, you see, since we are not allowed to have Bibles or other spiritual books in this country, I've decided to talk to the Lord by studying this deck of cards." The Sargent asked in disbelief, "How will you do that?"

The soldier replied,
"Well, Sargent..."

The Ace reminds us that there is only one true God.

The Two represents the two parts of the Bible, Old and New Testaments.

The Three represents the Trinity - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Four stands for the four Gospel Writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Five is for the five virgins; there were ten, but only five were glorified.

The Six is for the six days it took for God to create the Heavens and Earth.

The Seven is for the day that God rested after working six days.

The Eight is for Noah and his wife, their three sons and their wives, who God saved from the flood that covered the Earth.

The Nine is the nine lepers that Jesus cleansed of leprosy; he cleansed ten, but nine never thanked him.

The Ten represents the Ten Commandments that God handed down to Moses on stone tablets.

The Jack is a reminder of Satan. One of God's first angels, but he was kicked out of heaven for his sly and wicked ways and is now the Joker of eternal hell.

The Queen stands for the Virgin Mary.

The King stands for Jesus, for he is the King of all Kings.

There are a total of 52 cards in a deck, each represents a week, 52 weeks each year in which to offer prayer and thanksgiving.

The four suits, clubs, spades, hearts, and diamonds, represent the four seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter, each a visible sign of God's splendor.

Each suit has thirteen cards, the amount of weeks in each season.

So when I want to talk to God and thank him, I just pull out this old deck of cards and it reminds me of all I have to be thankful for."

The Sargent just stood there and after a minute, with tears in his eyes and pain in his heart, he said, "Soldier, can I borrow that deck of cards?"

