

Learning about the I Ching system and How to do Readings (taken from the Handbook).



Dragon Wall, Chinese Gardens, Darling Harbour, Sydney.

The Dragon represents powerful expansive energy. While the pearl is the Pearl of Great Price that is gained by transforming raw energy (the dragon) into creative action (a higher aspect of the dragon.)

The I Ching has inspired artists, poets, authors and more recently film-makers. Hence it forms part of an enduring cultural tradition. It has educated, consoled and nurtured people for thousands of years. The book has been treated with great reverence in China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Tibet, etc. Each of these countries has its own unique edition. Symbols from the I Ching are part of the Korean national flag, as they are regarded as intrinsic to their culture.

Those most Likely to use the I Ching

That one can obtain guidance from a book such as this, is acceptable to some people and not to others. This can be understood from a psychological viewpoint. Those most likely to use it, are those who have not denied their more-Yin or receptive awareness. In most societies, there has been a pronounced bias towards a way of operating that is more outward-focussed, analytical – but separative in terms of consciousness. Our necessary gains in rational thinking and hence technology, have often been at the expense of holistic thought or more irrational ways of relating, e.g. to our environment. Carl Jung identified this as the cause of many present-day problems, in that the more Yin qualities are constantly devalued. However, that which is buried often comes back to challenge us.

What is Taoism?

Taoism is a philosophy that promotes **mindfulness** of the unity of life. It suggests ways to attain increasing states of wholeness and balance, in harmony with the natural order of the world. Even if Nature itself involves extremes, there is an overall balance. In Taoism, Chaos and Order are two aspects of Oneness.

After the legendary Yellow Emperor, the two main proponents were Lao Tsu, circa 600 BCE (purported author of the Tao te Ching, or the Classic on The Way) and Chuang Tsu, 369-286 BCE. The word Tsu or Tzu means both sage and child, while Lao means old – hence a wise child-like simplicity. Much of the sense of fun and naturalness of the original Taoism became part of Zen philosophy (Taoism and Buddhism). Thus its essence, childlike simplicity, has been preserved. The witty, charming, well-informed work by Benjamin Hoff – **The Tao of Pooh** is one of the best books on Taoism you could read! ¹ It is serious and great fun.

The Hexagrams as Archetypes

The I Ching or Book of Changes is set out in 64 Sections of philosophy called Hexagrams. Each hexagram is an archetype, prototype, or universal pattern. ² For example, Hexagram No. 52 stands for mountain tops as a place of contemplation and inward renewal – an image relevant for any culture or time. It is received when it is wise to take a short break, in order to make a reappraisal and to avoid imminent damage to the body through stress.

Each of the sixty-four Hexagrams (and each line of a hexagram) refers the enquirer to a symbolic image that is traditional to the system. These images portray **archetypal situations in Nature** that also have their counterpart in human life. They depict, e.g. rivers flowing into a sea, or the stillness of mountains and represent a needed quality or an approach that is currently required. With Hexagram No. 52 the quality of serenity is reinforced, because the hexagram is made up of two Trigrams of Mountain (which both stand for Stillness).









Image for Hexagram No. 52

A Hexagram is obtained by randomly selecting a combination of special I Ching coins or beads, which are simply symbols of Yang or Yin lines. (The method is fully outlined in The Holistic I Ching). The information for that Hexagram is then read.

The Key Hexagram to the whole I Ching System

An ideal arrangement for a Hexagram is represented in Hexagram No. 63, where the lines progress from Yang to Yin alternately. This refers to the one Hexagram in the system that is completely balanced:

Hexagram No. 63 Completion or Wholeness

Top Line	Yin		↓	
Fifth Line	Yang			Trigram of Water (the Moon)
Fourth Line	Yin		↓	
Third Line	Yang			Trigram of Fire (the Sun)
Second Line	Yin		↑	
Bottom Line	Yang		↑	

This is considered to be the classic arrangement of lines for a Hexagram (which means a six line diagram). The lines progress from Yang to Yin alternately and all the lines relate to each other harmoniously. It is the basis of whether (or not) a line is in its ideal place. For it symbolizes someone who can alternate between strength (Yang) and yielding (Yin) when necessary; or someone who can either advance or wait, when required.

Hexagram No. 63 stands for the completion of a stage on the path to wholeness, or the end of a whole phase in life; or it can represent an ideal state of balance that does not last for long. It signifies harmony between the masculine and the feminine – the Sun (Trigram of Fire) and the Moon (Trigram of Water) – or head and heart – brilliance and compassion. Dr. Carl Jung studied such symbols from Taoist alchemy in great depth, recognizing their profound relevance to states of balance within the psyche. These principles were the basis of much of his work. Hence Hexagram No. 63 is a key pattern within the whole oracle.

A Progression of Events Can be Seen in the Lines

An example of a progression of events can be seen in Hexagram No. 1 - The Expansive, which portrays the unfoldment of creative potential in a powerful way. It is made up of the Trigram of Heaven, The Active, doubled.

Hexagram No. 1 - from the Bottom Line up.

A desire to rise too high can cause a fall.	-----	Top Line	(Stage 6)
Wise leadership and public recognition.	-----	Fifth Line	(Stage 5)
A choice of life-paths and patience needed.	-----	Fourth Line	(Stage 4)
A transitional stage to great influence.	-----	Third Line	(Stage 3)
Further help and patronage are required.	-----	Second Line	(Stage 2)
Dormant or potential creative power.	-----	Bottom Line	(Stage 1)

Receiving several moving lines (or texts) in the above Hexagram No. 1, suggests various stages in the unfoldment of a career, a course of study, or the journey towards a chosen goal or vocation. What if the Third, Fifth and Top Lines of Hexagram No. 1 were moving lines, i.e. the texts that you read?

Receiving these specific moving lines in Hexagram No. 1, would suggest that a noble aim will be realized (the Fifth Line). However due to overconfidence (the Top Line), success will be delayed unless the transitional stage (the Third Line) is undertaken in a far more grounded way – and this approach is then maintained. (The author received this reading for a Tasmanian politician who did not succeed the first time, but later became a prominent Senator.)

You do not have to be psychic to understand the I Ching, but do need time to think about readings. Several moving lines usually cover the situation for the next few months, or even much longer. Thus you need to review such readings as events unfold, in order to gain the full implication – instead of asking the same question repeatedly.

The above is a small illustration of what can be gained by learning about the I Ching system, explored fully in the Handbook, *A Guide to the I Ching, Jung and Taoism*, alongside related topics like Zen landscaping, historical I Ching readings, the path to wholeness, etc.

Every minute is an opportunity for a new beginning.
Hence the I Ching is not a crutch for the passive,
but a guide for the courageous.



You can read Hexagram No. 1 in full, as an example of an I Ching Hexagram, by going to this Tab on the Home Page.

1. The Tao of Pooh, and The Te of Piglet, by Benjamin, Hoff, Mandarin Paperbacks. (These books are serious, knowledgeable works on Taoism, in a playful format.)
2. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, C. G. Jung, pp. 4-6.