

Dear Anam Cara Apprentices,

Welcome to Month Three of the Celtic Myth track. We hope you have been enjoying a reflective and insightful Samhain season and are starting the Celtic New Year in good spirits!

Month 3: Fionn MacCumhail (Finn MacCool) and the Salmon of Knowledge

Reading Assignments:

All About Dreams Chapter 6 pp 145-197

Dream Work See PDF.

Awakening the Heroes Within Chapter 16 The Sage pp 209-220

Reading on the Apprentice/Servant archetype: Please watch Caroline Myss Youtube presentation ‘The Indentured Servant’. You can access this at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SnExO8NaVk>

There is also a brief article on the servant archetype by Mary McGregor. See PDF

Listen to the Land Speak Boglands pp232-277

Dream Assignments:

This month we will be engaging with personal projective dreamwork in groups. What personal projective dreamwork means is that we are beginning to recognise our own projections onto the symbols that emerge in our dreams – spotting the personal significance that arises when our unconscious mind meets a symbol that triggers an insight or awakening. This is also why some poems, stories, images speak to us while others leave us unmoved, and it is a skill that can be very helpful to us when working with myths as well as with dreams.

Rather than working on a dream this month, we invite you to print out the story of Fionn and the Salmon of Knowledge (from the Month 2 folder) and engage with it as if it were a dream. Look at the symbols, the characters, the action of the story – what do they represent to you? How do you feel about them? Which part of the story speaks to you most? What might it be reflecting to you about your own life? Is there a part of the story that disturbs you – that you don’t like? Stay with that for a while too... It’s fine to just pick one or two elements of the story and engage with them reflectively, you don’t have to cover everything. Some of the symbols might include the salmon, the river, the pool of wisdom, the hazelnuts, the poet, the young boy... If you want to return to the art exercise from month one with a story symbol, that’s fine too.

Nature Assignment

This month’s assignment is to create a nature mandala. At this time of year, as leaves fall and plants die back to conserve energy for the spring, the transience of nature and the

natural cycles of life and death are never far from our minds. This exercise is about embracing the beauty in the transience without trying to hold on to it.

Go for a walk and gather natural materials that call to you. Try to do this in a slow meditative way. Ask for permission before removing an object from its home or taking from a plant. Arrange your gatherings in a mandala (circle) shape. There are many ways to do this – in rings from the centre out, or by dividing a circle into quadrants... follow your intuition. When your mandala feels finished, take some time to appreciate the beauty of nature in this moment. Reflect on the preciousness of transient things and the inevitable cycle of life and death. Take a photo to share with the group if you feel comfortable to do so. When you feel ready (doesn't have to be immediately), dismantle your mandala with reverence and return the elements to nature. Journal on what this experience was like for you / what feelings it evoked.

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.

The **reflection questions** for Month Three are:

1. One of the main themes of this story is what it means to gain wisdom – Finn apprentices himself to Finnegas to learn the things he will need to know to be a good leader. Who have been your mentors and teachers on the spiritual path? Do you place yourself within a spiritual lineage?
2. Finnegas's obsession with the salmon is ultimately ego-driven. Have you ever been blinded by ego on your spiritual path? How did you find your way back to a more authentic way of being?

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 in writing your papers.

Optional resources

Audio:

The *Candlelit Tales* podcast retells Fionn and the Salmon of Knowledge in episode 216 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BecourfhUUQ>. No discussion this time.

Shrink Rap podcast #51 Interview by David Van Nuys with Jeremy Taylor on Group Dreamwork <https://shrinkrapradio.com/51-group-projective-dream-work/>

Book: *Return to Segais* is a poetic, sometimes cryptic musing on the Salmon of Knowledge and related mythology by Anthony Murphy of the Mythical Ireland website. Reminiscent of John Moriarty in places. PDF of pp31-38 is included. (Note: the pool of Segais is where the salmon was said to have originated; the Irish word Cnó means nut)

Article: “A Simple Method for Group Dream Sharing” by Kelly Bulkeley <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ie/blog/dreaming-in-the-digital-age/202301/a-simple-method-for-group-dream-sharing>

Article: “The healing power of storytelling” by Seren Friskie [An interesting example of how work with myth and story can have healing impact in everyday life] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342967240_The_Healing_Power_of_Storytelling_Finding_Identity_Through_Narrative

The Native American organisation Native Hope also offers the following on the healing power of storytelling – I think it is well worth a read and thought-provoking in terms of how stories can have a real-world impact on us. <https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/1965224/Understanding%20the%20Healing%20Power%20of%20Storytelling%20/NH%20Understanding-the-Healing-Power-of-Storytelling.pdf>

Article: Metaphor in Dreams, Waking, and the Brain by Gloria Sturzenacker [see PDF]