

7.2 An I Ching Reading by the Yarrow Stalk Method

Assuming the myths are true, then King Wen was imprisoned when he conceived of this divination method—so he had time on his hands. These days, without the patience of a buddha, the traditional yarrow stalk method can be overwhelming. It's no wonder the coin toss approach was popularized over this one.

Yet something can be said about the power of this casting method. If I'm coming to the Oracle for an everyday mundane problem, I'll probably skip this option and go for one of the easier methods. But if I need an answer to one of life's Big Questions, then the yarrow stalk method is the one I'll go for.








When working with the I Ching to channel spirit entities or achieve spirit contact, I find that the lengthiness of the process itself gives me the time I need to truly immerse into the altered state of consciousness. The process is ritualistic in such a way—and the collective psychic power it's enriched with from millennia of use by the most powerful diviners of Asia—that I can feel the motions of my hands interacting with the sacred stalks as activating sympathetic magic. It's like plucking the strings of an instrument and creating music that I'll then interpret. When you take this method seriously, and approach it sincerely, you will feel the progression of the counts amplifying your personal power, and your *qi* intensifying.


Do not simply take my word for it—try it out for yourself. Record your first attempt with the traditional yarrow stalks method in the space below. Consider what it means to you in the present, but then revisit it years from now and see if the added life experiences have changed its meaning to you.

TOTAL SUM OF THE THREE COUNTS

6	 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Changing Yin	Younger Yin
7			Fixed Yang	Elder Yang
8	 		Fixed Yin	Elder Yin
9		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Changing Yang	Younger Yang

For a reference on how to fill in the tables, the below would be a record of the First Line casting results from the photographed demonstration. See Steps 29 and 30 on page 282.

Line 1       	Count 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 stalks = 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9 stalks = 2
	Count 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 stalks = 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 stalks = 2
	Count 3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 stalks = 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 8 stalks = 2
	TOTAL SUM, <i>adding the 3s and 2s:</i>		8

RESULTING LINE:  ☐

Begin by thoroughly washing, cleansing, and clearing desk space for the divination ritual. Burn three sticks of incense on this table top and wait until all three burn to their end. Now your divination space has been consecrated.

Set out everything you will need for the divination. This is part of your preparation. Make sure you won't need to get up in the middle of the casting method to grab something. Get your paper, writing utensils, copy of *I Ching*, *The Oracle*, this workbook, any additional books you'll wish to consult, and your yarrow stalks.

When you are ready to begin the divination, wash your hands clean and rinse out your mouth with water. If it is feasible (and just as an optional measure to take), approach the reading table from its east and then sit down.

In the space below, write out the question presented for divination:

Proceed with the yarrow stalk divination method instructed in Chapter 7, pages 273 - 302. Per the traditional casting method, three operations of counting will yield a single *yao* line. Begin with your set of 50 stalks. Set down 1 vertical as the significator and as you do so, anchor your question presented in your mind.

Proceed with Steps 1 through 12 on pages 278 – 279.

Divide your bundle in two, setting one above for Heaven, and one below for Earth, as you see on page 278 of the text.

Pick up one stalk from the bottom horizontal bundle (Earth) and hold it with your pinky finger. Then proceed to count the bundle into groupings of 4 until you have a remainder of 4 or fewer stalks.

Count the Heaven bundle, grouping into 4s until you have a remainder of 4 or fewer stalkers. Count the total remainder stalks you have in your hand, as instructed in the steps on page 279. You've now completed the First Count.

Write down your result for COUNT 1.

If you had **5** stalks remaining from Count 1:

At the initiation of what became the matter at hand you're inquiring about, terrestrial influences were at play. The number 5 here represents the Wu Xing, five phases of change. Which of the five phases are at play are governed by the Trinity of Lucks 福祿壽 (Fú Lù Shòu), also known as the Three Celestial Stars 三星 (Sānxīng): Jupiter, Ursa Major, and Canis Major. To reenact the Creation myth, 5 converts to 3, because in the Beginning, the Wu Xing 5 agents of change create the Three Celestial Stars that govern fate and destiny.

If your result was **5** stalks



Assign it the number:

3

If you had **9** stalks remaining from Count 1:

At the initiation of what became the matter at hand you're inquiring about, celestial influences were at play. The number 9 here represents the nine heavenly kingdoms (the Nine Heavens). The Nine Heavens dispense of yin and yang throughout the universe to create matter. To reenact the Creation myth, 9 converts to 2, because in the Beginning, the Nine Heavens dispense of the divine binary principle to produce changes.

If your result was **9** stalks



Assign it the number:

2

The Counting Operations

First Count → 5 stalks = 3

9 stalks = 2

Second Count → 4 stalks = 3

8 stalks = 2

Third Count → 4 stalks = 3

8 stalks = 2

Sum of Three Counts

Sum of Three Counts

6  X Changing Yin

7  Unchanging Yang

8  Unchanging Yin

9  X Changing Yang

COUNT 1 If 9 stalks → write **2** in box If 5 stalks → write **3** in box

COUNT 2 If 8 stalks → write **2** in box If 4 stalks → write **3** in box +

COUNT 3 If 8 stalks → write **2** in box If 4 stalks → write **3** in box +

TOTAL SUM

Continue with Steps 13 through 21 on page 280, then write down your results in the row "Count 2."

If you had **4** stalks remaining from Count 2:

At a crucial midpoint of the matter at hand you're inquiring about, terrestrial influences were dominant. The number 4 here represents the four seasons and four directions for the quaternary cycles of change in nature. The four seasons and four directions are governed by the Trinity of Lucks. Thus, 4 converts to 3 to acknowledge the lordship of the 3 over the 4.

If your result was **4** stalks



Assign it the number:

3

If you had **8** stalks remaining from Count 2:

At the crucial midpoint of the matter at hand you're inquiring about, celestial influences were dominant. The number 8 here represents the eight trigrams of the Ba Gua. The eight trigrams are constructed of yin and yang to create matter. Thus, 8 converts to 2 to acknowledge the lordship of the 2 over the 8.

If your result was **8** stalks



Assign it the number:

2

COUNT 1 If 9 stalks → write 2 in box If 5 stalks → write 3 in box

COUNT 2 If 8 stalks → write 2 in box If 4 stalks → write 3 in box +

COUNT 3 If 8 stalks → write 2 in box If 4 stalks → write 3 in box +

TOTAL SUM

Continue with Steps 22 through 30 on pages 281 – 282, then write down your results for “Count 3.”

If you had **4** stalks remaining from Count 3:

At the last turning point of the matter at hand, terrestrial influences were dominant. The 4 symbolic of the cycles of space and time converts to 3 to acknowledge the lordship of the 3 over the cycles of the 4.

If your result was **4** stalks → Assign it the number:

3

If you had **8** stalks remaining from Count 3:

At the last turning point of the matter at hand, celestial or spirit influences were dominant. The 8 symbolic of the eight trigrams converts to 2 to acknowledge the lordship of the 2 over the creation of the 8.

If your result was **8** stalks → Assign it the number:

2

COUNT 1 If 9 stalks → write 2 in box If 5 stalks → write 3 in box

COUNT 2 If 8 stalks → write 2 in box If 4 stalks → write 3 in box +

COUNT 3 If 8 stalks → write 2 in box If 4 stalks → write 3 in box +

TOTAL SUM

The assigned numbers for the three counts will have yielded Line 1 of your hexagram.

Receiving **Line 1**







COUNT 1 If **9** stalks → write **2** in box If **5** stalks → write **3** in box

COUNT 2 If **8** stalks → write **2** in box If **4** stalks → write **3** in box +

COUNT 3 If **8** stalks → write **2** in box If **4** stalks → write **3** in box +

TOTAL SUM

Note the Total Sum of the three counts and refer to the table below to determine your Resulting Line 1. This is further explained in the text on page 283.

TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line	TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	  X	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	 
<input type="checkbox"/> 7		<input type="checkbox"/> 9	 X

Continuing on pages 284 - 285, follow Steps 31 through 37 to yield Count 1 and note your results in the table below.







Follow Steps 38 through 42 to yield Count 2.

Follow Steps 43 through 48 to yield Count 3.

Receiving **Line 2**

COUNT 1	If 9 stalks → write 2 in box	If 5 stalks → write 3 in box	
COUNT 2	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+
COUNT 3	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+

Note the Total Sum of the three counts and refer to the table below to determine your Resulting Line 2.

TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line	TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	  X	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	 
<input type="checkbox"/> 7		<input type="checkbox"/> 9	 X

Receiving **Line 3**

Gather your stalks again and begin the count again with Step 49 through 56 to yield Count 1 below. Follow these steps, repeating steps 13 through 23 from this section of the text to yield Counts 2 and 3 for Line 3.

COUNT 1	If 9 stalks → write 2 in box	If 5 stalks → write 3 in box	
COUNT 2	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+
COUNT 3	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+

TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line	TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	X	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	
<input type="checkbox"/> 7		<input type="checkbox"/> 9	X

Fill in the below Lower Trigram result.

	Primary Hexagram	X	Transformed Hexagram
6			
5			
4			
3			
2			
1			

Receiving **Line 4**

Return to page 278 of the text. Proceed with Steps 1 through 12 on pages 278 – 279. Then write down your count results in the space provided below, in the row “Count 1.” Continue with Steps 13 through 21 on page 280, then write down your results in the row “Count 2.” Continue with Steps 22 through 30 on pages 281 – 282, then write down your results for “Count 3.”

COUNT 1	If 9 stalks → write 2 in box	If 5 stalks → write 3 in box	
COUNT 2	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+
COUNT 3	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+

Note the Total Sum of the three counts and refer to the table below to determine your Resulting Line 4. This is further explained in the text on page 283.





TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line	TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	X	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	
<input type="checkbox"/> 7		<input type="checkbox"/> 9	X

Receiving **Line 5**

Continuing on pages 284 - 285, follow Steps 31 through 37 to yield Count 1 and note your results in the table below. Follow Steps 38 through 42 to yield Count 2. Follow Steps 43 through 48 to yield Count 3.

COUNT 1	If 9 stalks → write 2 in box	If 5 stalks → write 3 in box	
COUNT 2	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+
COUNT 3	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+





Note the Total Sum of the three counts and refer to the table below to determine your Resulting Line 5.

TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line	TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	 X	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	
<input type="checkbox"/> 7		<input type="checkbox"/> 9	 X

Receiving **Line 6**

Gather your stalks again and begin the count again with Step 49 through 56 to yield Count 1 below. Follow these steps, repeating steps 13 through 23 from this section of the text to yield Counts 2 and 3 for Line 6.

COUNT 1	If 9 stalks → write 2 in box	If 5 stalks → write 3 in box	
COUNT 2	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+
COUNT 3	If 8 stalks → write 2 in box	If 4 stalks → write 3 in box	+

TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line	TOTAL SUM	Resulting Line
<input type="checkbox"/> 6	 X	<input type="checkbox"/> 8	
<input type="checkbox"/> 7		<input type="checkbox"/> 9	 X

Copy over your Lower Trigram result again into the table at the top of page 75.

Then fill in the Upper Trigram result. Per the “X” that mark the changing lines, cast the transformed hexagram, if applicable.

	Primary Hexagram	X	Transformed Hexagram
6			
5			
4			
3			
2			
1			
	HEXAGRAM #:		HEXAGRAM #:

Consulting the cross-reference Table 1.1 in the front of the *I Ching, The Oracle* book, note your Primary Hexagram # result. Convert the Changing Lines (marked with the X) from your Primary Hexagram to the opposite yin-yang value and cast your Transformed Hexagram. If there are no Changing Lines, then you've cast a Locked Hexagram.

PRIMARY HEXAGRAM

THE ORACLE | **Hexagram Theme Summary.** The initial box of text in the hexagram entry summarizes the divinatory message. This will give you a brief recapitulation of your reading. Copy down what resonates from “The Oracle” boxed section of your Primary Hexagram.

THE TRANSLATION | **Bold Text.** These are the translations of the hexagram statements. Read these statements as riddles that you need to solve. **Annotations and Commentaries.** The rest of the text in the Oracle section are my annotations and commentaries to supplement the translations. The annotations help to offer some hints on how to solve the riddles of the bold text. Free-write your interpretation of these cryptic messages.



Lower Trigram Result:

Lower Trigram. Review the metaphysical correspondences for the lower trigram from Chapter 5 of the text. The lower trigram can often indicate people or personalities involved, the human factor, physical environmental factors and influences, or what's at the foundation. Take note of this trigram's correspondences and list them out in the space below:

Free-write your first impressions on what this lower trigram is telling you, per the above-noted correspondences, about root causation, foundations, and origination points as it relates to your question.

Upper Trigram Result:

Upper Trigram. Review the metaphysical correspondences for the upper trigram. Upper trigram indicates karmic, spiritual, or predestined influences. This is Spirit. The Upper Trigram reveals Heaven's Will and direct counsel coming to you from Spirit.

IF YOUR RESULT IS A SINGLE LOCKED HEXAGRAM

IF YOU RECEIVED CHANGING LINES, THEN SKIP THIS SECTION ENTIRELY AND GO TO THE SECTION “TRANSFORMED HEXAGRAM.”

Follow the interpretive process as noted for the primary hexagram. A locked hexagram means all forces at play have matured and now we’re just waiting for the aftermath. The forces at play have already been simmering for far too long a time. Free-write what you think the implications of your locked hexagram result might be.

Read all six of the line statements of your single locked hexagram. Start with Line 1 and progress to Line 6. They will shed light on the matter at hand chronologically. Line 1 represents the past and earlier in time, the early movements of the forces at play. Line 6 represents the forecast of what’s to come.

Table 7.19 Changing Lines Position Correspondences

Line 6	Greater spiritual forces at play; karma or destiny. Hand of God, or Acts of God. Extenuating circumstances beyond your control caused this situation, and your own actions are not to blame. Now, what matters is how you respond to what has happened. A changing sixth line can also indicate that one chapter is coming to an end and a new one is beginning. Transition phase. Heading into a figurative afterlife.
Line 5	<i>HEXAGRAM RULER.</i> A changing fifth line can be a sign that executive leadership or decision-making is needed from you. In the situation at hand, your action will have a significant impact on others. A sign that what’s to come will have long-term implications.
Line 4	Interpersonal relationships, matters of the heart, emotional responses, or family matters are key factors. Could also be a sign that decisive action must be taken now. Time is of the essence. If you do not act quickly or implement change immediately, you might lose your window of opportunity.
Line 3	Legal matters, civil, or social affairs are key factors at play. This could also indicate the moment in the narrative arc that the plot thickens. Complications. Conflicts. Oppositional forces have the most impact on the situation at hand.

Table 7.19 Changing Lines Position Correspondences

Line 2	Physical health, medical, or technological factors at play. Could also indicate the moment that a situation is beginning to gain momentum. Blooming and developmental phase.
Line 1	Short-term financial or economic factors at play. Situation is still at the onset or beginnings of the narrative arc. This is still the initial setup for what's to come. Decisions made will only have short-term implications.

Free-write a summary synthesizing these six lines and what they, collectively, seemed to be saying to you about your situation.

Hexagram Ruler. Focus on Line 5 of your locked hexagram. The fifth line is the crux of the Oracle's message for you. Read the statement for Line 5 as the answer to the inquiry. In the space below, copy down any text that resonates strongly and free-write your interpretation of Line 5.

Spiritual Guidance. As a supplement to the answer, I'll read Line 6 as spiritual guidance for navigating the situation at hand. Note your impressions of Line 6.

Review the lower and upper trigrams as noted for the primary hexagram. Look to the upper trigram as the key to how you might want to spell-craft, pray, or petition for the best

possible outcome for the situation. Take notes on what corrective metaphysical action you might take, as guided by the upper trigram of your locked hexagram.

IF YOU RECEIVED A LOCKED SINGLE HEXAGRAM FOR YOUR RESULT WITH NO CHANGING LINES, END HERE.

CHANGING LINE(S)

Read the Line Text for all of your changing lines. Copy down into the space below what resonates from the Line Text in totality and free-write your interpretation.

Corresponding Meaning of the Line Positions. Summarizing the various traditions of interpretation covered earlier in Chapter 7, which of the six lines are changing may have certain implications. **Assess the Number of Changing Lines.** If there is only one changing line, the solution to the matter and action required for the best possible outcome is going to be straightforward. If, however, you have three or more changing lines, the situation right now is quite volatile. There is still a lot of uncertainty, due in large part to your own indecisiveness. **Note what the number of changing lines in your reading result conveys to you. Refer to Table 7.19, Changing Lines Position Correspondences. The corresponding Changing Lines in your reading imply specific areas of life to focus on and what the Line Text of these Changing Lines are trying to tell you.**

TRANSFORMED HEXAGRAM

THE ORACLE | Secondary Hexagram Theme Summary. The initial box of text in the transformed hexagram entry gives a brief summary of the “what if.” This is all prophecy and future or forward-looking projections, but based on the current trajectory, and therefore fairly accurate projections of what’s to come.

THE TRANSLATION | Bold Text. These are the translations of the hexagram statements. Read these statements as riddles that you need to solve. **Annotations and Commentaries.** The rest of the text in the Oracle section are my annotations and commentaries to supplement the translations. The annotations help to offer some hints on how to solve the riddles of the bold text. Free-write your interpretation of these cryptic messages from the Transformed Hexagram.

Upper Trigram. This trigram is your key when spell-crafting, praying, or petitioning for a positive outcome to your situation. The nature of actions corresponding with the Wu Xing phase of your transformed hexagram’s upper trigram is the final message of what action to take in direct response to what’s going on.

Upper Trigram of the Transformed Hexagram:

Look to the upper trigram of the transformed hexagram as the key to how you might want to spell-craft, pray, or petition for the best possible outcome for the situation. Take notes

