

On Rhiannon
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My daughter Dee, as I call her here, is fifteen and lives in another state and we stay in contact through email. Here is a portion of an email I sent to her:

Dear Dee—

...

Here's a YouTube of a singer named Stevie Nicks, who I don't suppose you have heard of, from 1976.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_O4Ygcgh8w

She was really big back then, like Taylor Swift, Katy Perry, or Billie Eilish is now. Notice the way she is dressed, in flowing, lace-y, dresses, often with a shawl, and how she whirls in a kind of airy, floating, way.

A bit about the song, called "Rhiannon," which Stevie wrote. It was a hugely popular. It's about a major figure in Welch mythology—Welch refers to the country of Wales, which is next to England and Scotland. A mythology is a collection of stories, or myths—they aren't factual, they didn't actually happen—that are set in the long-ago past. They depict the way of life and basic beliefs and values of a people, in this case the people of what is now Wales. Rhiannon is a character in a story collection from the medieval times, around 1300, called the Mabinogi.

Mythological figures like Rhiannon are often depicted as both real and supernatural. They have an other-worldly, fantasy quality. Rhiannon was a queen and very beautiful and intelligent and generous, and she was a wife and mother. But she is also the goddess of fertility (which relates to giving birth, generating life), wisdom, beauty, re-birth, self-transformation, and artistic inspiration. She rode on a white horse. A key aspect of the

Rhiannon myth is that she was falsely accused of murdering her new baby and unfairly punished for it, and she triumphs over that very difficult experience. Her son had actually been kidnapped, and she was reunited with him.

Here's how a contemporary artist [Alan Lee] depicts her. Notice she is on a white horse, and notice the mystical, magic-like quality of the background.



Some young women in our time look to Rhiannon for inspiration and direction in how to live. Here's an example, a few pages from the book, *Rhiannon: Divine Queen of the Celtic Britons* by Jhenah Telydra. The word Celtic in the title (pronounced with a "hard C." like cold) refers to the people whose descendants live in the countries of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The word "Divine" in the title refers to Rhiannon being god-like, or a deity. This writer uses the word "sovereign" a lot. It usually refers to a country or leader of a country, but in this case, it has a personal meaning--being in charge of yourself, being who you are, living in a way that is true to you, conducting your life in the highest, most majestic, manner. Here are a few pages from the book:

(The author of the book imagines that she is Rhiannon speaking to young women living in this time.)

I come to you in this Now time, the threshold Between where all is sacred... always on that precipice between what Was and what may Be. What Is, is that place—that time—the Now where all changes go. To pursue the fair prize of the Wonder is to never touch it, for you cannot by its nature; to remain in fear of the Blows, you cannot escape its sting. Caught in dream, lost in fear, the Now slips by and the bag can never be filled.

You who would follow me must be prepared to wear the ass's collar... to be whisked away into the Otherworld of pain and growth and silence to forge a self with many hammers. The Wondrous Youth is your sovereign self—the next king to be—the next part of the self that needs to be birthed forth.

I am the Great Divine Mother. The Nurturing One. The Threshold Guardian. I birth and I receive: the womb and the tomb are mine. My strength carries you through each portal, stands waiting for you at each threshold—not just those of death and of life, but also of new beginnings and of the releasing of old ties.

The steady gait of the milk-white Steed of the Moon, of the Bounty of the Breast—this is the elixir that heals the Wasteland. This is what frees the prisoner, for it is when you leave my breast, it is when you have forgotten who you are, that you dwell in the ancient prison of your own design.

You must move through the sentries of these layers, through the threshold of these mysteries: the blackbird, the stag, the owl, the eagle, and the salmon.

This last is the wisdom that will unlock the gate and set the prisoner free. That prisoner is the Wondrous Child... YOU. Heir of the Abundant Mother of the Earth. Next in line from the lineage of Ancestors, from the Otherworld of their memory.

Your father, also Wisdom, the King of the Otherworld, Master of the Past, of what lies Within, of what has come Before. He battles himself at the ford, in the waters of the Within... there at the threshold of summer and winter, of knowing and wisdom, of consciousness and unconsciousness. One blow is all that is needed. The Sword, the Spear, the Blade of Truth rings through,

and you emerge victorious. Child of the Father... your own child, your own father.

And I... I will sanctify you, reinforce your victory, reconsecrate your sovereignty. The cost is constant renewal, oh my child! The battle is yearly, for the next prisoner needs to be freed. Seek out the Guardians of the inner temple: the Oldest Animals, the inner instinct that knows, if not the truth of who you are and where dwells your sovereignty, but then at least the places you can find them—where to look.

Temper your impulse with wisdom. Do not jump too quickly into the unknown, but also do not deprive yourself of opportunity for fear's sake. The greatest wisdoms lay in the Cauldron of Rebirth—four chains uphold it. And when you've entered its fortress, you must pause. You cannot speak of the Mysteries. They are for you alone. Be aware of the signs and follow your instincts. Learn the difference between fear of change and growth, and the fear that is triggered because of danger and deception.

Think too on that which you truly need: how big of a bag must you carry? There is honor in hard work and your crown is not tarnished by it. It is only when you bow to the fear and illusions of others that the torc [a metal necklace; here it seems to refer to its losing its proper shape] begins to unwind. When you can make peace, make peace. Your personal sovereignty is threatening to others when you do not play by their rules, when you excel and succeed because you have been true to who and what you are. Be wary, but be compassionate. Do not turn the tools of Art into weapons, for even if you defeat your enemies in combat, it is they who will have won.

Honor yourself by honoring your word. Fulfill your commitments as best you can and do not be afraid to ask for help. Even if the world shifts and you no longer recognize the landscape around you, seek to be grounded in the landscape within you. Find the tools you need to re-craft your life.

Be generous with your bounty.

Be clear and careful with your words.

Be true to your vision.

Be honorable in your actions.

Be grounded in your sovereignty.

Be welcome in my presence.
I of the broad back to carry you.
I of the sweet song to comfort you.
I of the wide lap to nurture you.
I of the deep bag to fortify you.
I of the threshold to
LEAD YOU HOME.

Love yourself and others.
Forgive yourself and others.

The past is your teacher.
The future is your student.
The present is the threshold between.

Step through every moment.
Step through each breath.
Step through the space between each heartbeat.

Where you stand is ever the bridge.
How you cross this moment,
What you choose to bring with you,
Where you land on the other side...
This is the burden of sovereignty.

And if where you land has pain unavoidable—loss, hurt, injury,
death—how we step through is what we can control:
the way we carry the burden,
the companions we choose to walk with us,
the tools within us to help us move through,
the release of the struggle so that we are open to learn,
open to yet love, open to face the truth of the prison,
and seek how to set our wonder child free once again.

We are not born to suffer, to carry shame, to live in fear.
We are born to remember our sovereignty, to find healing in the
pain, release in the shame, love in the fear.
To harness the challenges—the disappointment, the loss, the
hurt, the fear, the pain.
To move through them.

To use them as a bridge to understanding, a pathway to increased sovereignty, a KEY to unlock the door of your inner prison.

The challenges are not the endpoint. We aren't meant to dwell there.

They are the THRESHOLD over which we are meant to step, the bridge we are meant to cross, the boundary we are meant to break through.

For on the other side of it is the joy of release, of freedom, of the renewal.

the reunion of Mother and Child,
of self to source,
of emptiness to wholeness.

The burden is lifted.

And we are free.

And sovereign.

I am the swift steed.

I am the law of right rule.

I am the door that swings into life and into death.

I am the pathway to the chieftain's court.

I am the key that frees the sacred prisoner.

I am the mother that births the warrior.

I am she who receives him home again.

Who receives YOU home again.

Evangeline Walton is a popular writer of fantasy books. Her book, *The Song of Rhiannon*, retells the Rhiannon myth and was written around the time Stevie Nicks wrote her song, though Stevie based her song on another book, which actually departed from the myth. I haven't read the Walton book, so I don't know how good it is. But it has a good reputation, so I took a chance and Amazoned a used paperback copy to you, due in a week or ten days. You can

see whether it is any good and whether you are interested. If you read it, let me know your response. It might get you into mythology and fantasy fiction. Libraries around here don't have the book, so I ordered a copy from Amazon for myself. I'll let you know what I think of it.

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Love always,

Dad