

# 'Pop astrology' pops off

*Diluted star signs provide fun, identity*

The first 17 years of my bleak existence are defined simply: short jokes (I've heard them all before), my inability to pronounce the word curtain without tossing in a miscellaneous "d" (think: the cheese curd-ification of the word) and the fact that I am absolutely, positively, without a doubt, *not* an Aries.



**ELLA MITCHELL**  
Editor-in-Chief

An Aries wants to normalize being the drama, needs to learn that yelling louder doesn't make them correct and thinks everything is a game they can

win, according to the popular astrology app Co-Star.

In other words: the polar opposite of me.

I mean, I've never once uttered a single phrase that could possibly be construed as dramatic in the entire span of my mortal being, not even to the tiniest of degrees. No, that's not yelling, that is projecting and articulating my objectively correct point to those in the back. And competitive? Ha! Not me.

Fast forward down a deep internet rabbit hole, and I've finally come to terms with an important self-truth: I am, to my core, a textbook Aries.

But more importantly, I've officially graduated from the Penguins of Madagascar's smile-and-wave-boys life hack. That's right. The days of understanding the tip of the iceberg of astrological conversations are gone. Instead, I'm able to say something with a semblance of sense, thanks to my baseline knowledge of "pop astrology."

That's on character development.

Astrology itself is the divination of the supposed influences of the stars and planets on human affairs and terrestrial events by their positions and aspects, according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary. For those who are scratching their heads at those top-earning Scrabble words that were just thrown around, astrology is, like, the thing with the Zodiac signs.

While many people discount it completely as a pseudoscience (OK, haters), when used positively, astrology can be a fun outlet, grant people verbiage to identify with or provide clarity that allows for self-reflection.

Writer and professional astrologer Leah Pellegrini is an Aquarius sun and moon (creative, rebellious, freedom) and a Taurus rising (grounded, kind, steadfast). Her interactions with astrology fall within the latter two categories.

"It helps you find shared language and framing for complex pieces of who you are," Pellegrini said. "[Astrology allows me] ... to be able to go, 'Oh, who I am is true, who I am is valid, and there's meaning and purpose there.'"

Now, I'll be the first one to admit that I don't take astrology super



**STARRY KNIGHT:** Social media serves as a spreader for astrological knowledge. The younger generations use this buzzword-based language to have fun and connect with themselves and others. (cartoon by Bella Brouillette)

seriously. I most certainly fall into that first basket of pop astrology followers: I have my silly little Aries necklace; I occasionally scroll through astrology memes and screenshot the ones that call me out or make me snort the hardest; I'm able to keep afloat in basic conversations of pop astrology. No more, no less. This is my Goldilocks of astrology interaction.

Pop astrology manifests, in a lot of ways, from very limited stereotypes about how certain signs work, which is a big reason why people, along with the Ghost of Ella Past, may not resonate with their sun signs.

Pellegrini says that, without deeper digging, these generalizations lack the necessary depth to fully understand one's birth chart.

"People will be like, 'Ugh. I'm a Gemini and people are always saying that Geminis are two-faced and evil, so I guess that [must be the case].'" Pellegrini said. "... You hear these things and these statements are such shutdowns that they tend to lead people away from [astrology]."

Through her astrological counseling sessions, Pellegrini infuses more complexity into the conversation, using people's perceptions of their own sun sign to guide it. This nuance is the distinction between astrology and pop astrology.

No matter which of the two (if at all) you subscribe to, I do realize the need to address the elephant in the room: "But astrology is stupid and fake and I don't understand why anyone enjoys it."

OK, fine. You don't believe in astrology. So what? Some people do. In fact, one in four Americans believe in astrology, according to a 2022 Youth Gov survey. The opposite is also true: 51% of Americans don't believe in astrology, according to the same survey. The remaining chunk answered with a compelling, "I don't know."

My brother, for example, scoffed (quite aggressively, I might add) as I was scrolling through Co-Star's Instagram feed. His sentiment echoed that of the elephants: "Why are you wasting your time with that? It's fake anyway."

Sure, maybe it is. But that doesn't negate the fact that sometimes it is fun to scroll through as-

trology memes in the middle of the night. I mean, who doesn't love being told that they "spew whatever pops into their head with zero forethought" and that the best way to fix their life problems is by "[adding] an extra hour in the day?"

Pellegrini also encourages skeptics to dive into the depths of astrology a bit more before making judgments.

"If you can have a little bit of curiosity about it and maybe take a second to look into the complexity of your chart so that it makes more sense, that's a good place to be," Pellegrini said. "But if it's not for you, then it's not for you; that's your right."

Lo and behold, 20 minutes later, my brother was peering over my shoulder, laughing at the Gemini callouts with the rest of 'em. All it took was Co-Star's proclamation that Gemini procrastinate on "folding their clean laundry instead of sleeping next to it."

Maybe you don't have to be a fully-fledged believer, but indulging in a skosh of pop astrology never hurt nobody.

Pellegrini also says that she has never seen astrology be unsuccessful. Through the reading of the birth charts of clients she's worked with or even quick discussions with randos on the street, the verdict is always similar: "Wow, I feel so seen."

Seeing people, Pellegrini says, doesn't mean she is clairvoyant or giving them a crystal (literally!) clear road map to their lives. With great astrological power comes great responsibility, which is something that Pellegrini takes very seriously in her approach.

"I'm really deliberate in the way I work with astrology in not giving people clear, direct 'This is what you should do' instructions, but rather opening up the space to find that own knowing within them-

selves," Pellegrini said.

To Pellegrini, there are lots of ways for people to find knowing within themselves. It doesn't have to be through astrology — Pellegrini is very pro-journaling or other therapeutic models — but having that understanding of self is key.

This best-of-both-worlds type situation seems to be a happy medium for skeptics and believers alike.

No matter if people are tuning into astrology for fun-sies, for language-sies or for self-reflection-sies, when looked at as a guide rather than a rigid set of instructions, then there's absolutely no harm done.

The point is: sure, the stars can guide you, but they should not be the ones driving the bus. Have fun with it; reflect with it; do whatever you gotta do, it's really up to you. At the end of the day, those astrology haters are gonna hate, hate, hate. You just gotta shake it off and shoot for the stars (or, you know, look to them for guidance or the next Aries callout.)

# Old practice starts anew

**ELLA MITCHELL**

Editor-in-Chief

Professional astrologer and writer Leah Pellegrini is an Aquarius sun and moon with a Taurus rising, "to a tee," as she says on her website, the Core Stories. When she sees an Aquarius refrigerator magnet, for example, the buzzwords — creative, rebellious, freedom — displayed on it resonate with her sense of self.

In astrology, the sun and moon signs are identifiers of identity. The sun sign, Pellegrini says, is like the shining orb one can see in the sky: loud, overt and obvious. For Pellegrini, the Aquarius manifests in her creative avenues of work. One's moon sign, on the other hand, indicates internal personality, like how one feels about the way they engage with the world.

One's rising sign is how they show up in their own bodies, as well as impressions of how they interact with the space around them. Through Taurus, Pellegrini is able to get more in touch with her sense of self through her current work on an organic farm because the sign is all about the body, grounding and touching the soil.

All of these elements in Pellegrini's chart manifest in her sense of self.

"There's an interesting complexity to it because all of [my chart] is contextualized within the desire for community," Pellegrini said. "The sort of overall mentality for Aquarius is, 'I want to be free, so we all can be free.'"

She uses the knowledge of her birth chart to guide her decision-making process and stay true to herself.

"[Astrology allows people] to make those decisions from a more authentic place that's grounded in, 'This is what I need; this is what I value; this is who I am,' instead of trying to steer our lives according to rules that someone else made that don't necessarily apply to our personalities," Pellegrini said.

When faced with skeptics, Pellegrini likes to remind people of astrology's roots.

"The one thing to remember is that this is an ancient, ancient, ancient practice that has been around in multiple cultures since pretty much the beginning of human time. It's not something that one person sat down and one day made up spontaneously," Pellegrini said.

It's true; astrology was not pulled out of a magician's hat. In fact, in several ancient cultures, it was inseparable from astronomy, according to Britannica. Originating from Mesopotamia, astrology spread to India before developing into its Western form in Greek civilization around 323 B.C.

After extending its tendrils of influence during the Middle Ages, astrology also played a key role in ancient China when creating horoscopes for newborn children became standard practice in imperial times.

Nowadays, astrology is widely believed to influence personality.

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