



# The Complete Node Book: Understanding Your Life's Purpose

By Kevin Burk

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*The Complete Node Book* presents a new and empowering perspective on the nodes. It defines and analyzes the specific lessons and challenges presented by each of the 144 possible placements of the nodes. Both sign and house placement of the nodes are considered for extraordinarily insightful and accurate interpretations.

For beginning astrologers, this guidebook provides easy-to-find personal interpretations and a free birth chart offer. For advanced astrologers, it will serve as the definitive reference manual on the Moon's nodes.

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## **Editorial Review**

### About the Author

Kevin Burk (California) holds a Level IV NCGR certification in astrological counseling and has practiced astrology in the San Diego area since 1993. His website ([www.astro-horoscopes.com](http://www.astro-horoscopes.com)) has won several internet awards for design and content, and has hosted more than 400,000 visitors since its inception.

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### Introducing the Moon's Nodes

The Moon's nodes are probably the most misunderstood points in astrology.

Although few astrologers would dispute their importance in the chart, equally few astrologers could offer a modern, supportive interpretation of the nodes, what they represent, and why. Traditional astrology takes a rather consistent view of the nodes. The North Node (*Caput Draconis*, which means the "Dragon's Head") was given a similar quality to the traditional interpretations of Venus and Jupiter, and was associated with all of the good things that we could possibly experience in our lifetime, including success, advancement, increase, and personal fulfillment. The South Node (*Cauda Draconis*, which means the "Dragon's Tail") was of the same nature as Mars and Saturn, and was associated with huge heaping amounts of what one would expect to come out of the tail end of a dragon. The traditional interpretations of the Moon's nodes pretty much boil down to "North Node *good*; South Node *bad*."

As modern astrology moved away from the extremely fatalistic and often very negative traditional style of interpreting the planets, the nodes too received a facelift of sorts to make working with them more empowering. The North Node became the processes and experiences that we must strive for in order to work with our karma and to grow in this lifetime. And the South Node got promoted from evil incarnate to the point in the chart where we're most likely to take the easy way out and to rely on habit. The South Node is also related to the karma that we're working off in this lifetime. In other words, "North Node *good*; South Node *bad*."

One of the difficulties in coming up with a truly comprehensive understanding of what the nodes represent in the natal chart is that the Moon's nodes are the only points in the chart that do not have an associated Western mythology. The associations of the dragon with the Moon's nodes comes from Hindu mythology, and while working with this myth is a great help in understanding the nodes as they are used in Eastern astrology, the Hindu myth doesn't help us come up with a Western, humanistic understanding of the nodes. If we want to understand the energy of one of the zodiac signs, for example, we can simply break it down into its component parts. Is it cardinal, fixed, or mutable? Is it earth, air, fire, or water? When we combine our understandings of the elements and the modalities, we can easily come up with an accurate understanding of the energy of each of the signs. In a similar vein, by examining the things that we can observe about the Moon's nodes and interpreting them individually, we can come up with a much more structured, comprehensive, and, above all, supportive approach to interpreting the Moon's nodes.

Let's review what we know about the nodes so far. The nodes are mathematical points that represent where the orbit of the Moon around the Earth crosses the ecliptic (which is the apparent path of the Sun around the Earth). The North Node is the point where the Moon's orbit rises above the ecliptic, and the South Node is the point where the Moon's orbit falls below the ecliptic. The North Node and the South Node are always exactly opposite each other in the chart.

This information about the nodes may not appear to be as helpful to interpreting them as the elements and

modalities are to interpreting the signs; however, just this simple physical description of the Moon's nodes can help us gain a more complete understanding of what they represent in astrology.

### ***The Nodes Are Mathematical Points?***

#### ***They Are Not Physical Bodies***

The nodes are mathematical points; they are not physical bodies. What this means is that the nodes do not emanate light. The nodes can *receive* aspects from the planets, but they cannot directly influence how a physical body expresses itself.

This also means that the nodes do not filter the energy of the signs. With the nodes, as with the angles, we have a pure expression of the energy and symbolism of the signs. Our experience of the energy of Aries, for example, is very different when we are experiencing Venus in Aries than when we are experiencing Mars in Aries. The personalities of the planets color the expression of the signs that they visit. The nodes, however, do not change how the signs are expressed or experienced.

#### ***The Nodes Are Related to the Moon, the Sun, and the Ecliptic***

The nodes are most closely related to the symbolism and processes of the Moon because they represent points on the Moon's orbit around the Earth. But the nodes are also related to the Sun because of their relationship to the ecliptic. In other words, the nodes are the points where aspects of the lunar and solar principles connect.

Let's look at the Moon first, and get a feel for what the Moon brings to this process. The Moon reflects the light of the Sun; it is passive, receptive, and feminine. The Moon responds, and produces emotions and feelings. The Moon is the container of our experience, providing form and location for the Sun's expression. The Moon relates to our conditioning, habits, vices, and learned responses; in other words, the Moon is our memory. The Moon is not just our memory of this lifetime; it is our soul's memory, and it is what our soul wants us to remember from other lifetimes. The Moon is our unconscious and our subconscious.

The Sun, on the other hand, is our conscious, active life force. The Sun is our will, our power, and our sense of purpose. The Sun is the heart of our existence; it is the motivation for our life this time around. The Sun is how we are seen, how we shine, and how we express and project ourselves. The Sun is how we want to be a hero in our life; it is how we want to become an individual.

The ecliptic, the apparent orbit of the Sun around the Earth, describes the path that our journey will follow in this lifetime. When we look at a natal chart, what we're actually looking at is a two-dimensional representation of the positions of the planets as viewed from the Earth, flattened to the plane of the ecliptic. In other words, in a chart, the ecliptic is the chart wheel itself. When we look at the positions of the planets along the ecliptic, we are looking at where along our journey we encounter these energies. The position of the Sun at birth shows the point where we chose to begin our quest for self-expression and self-realization in this lifetime. The ecliptic, the chart wheel, represents the actual course that we will follow.

Viewed in this way, the nodes represent the places in the chart where our past, our soul memories (the Moon), intersect with our current conscious experiences and our current cycle of lessons and growth. The South Node is the point where we are able to dip below the ecliptic into our past and access our memories from previous journeys. The North Node is the point where our past lessons intersect with our present journey, the point where we emerge from the past and move into new territory. It is the point where our past lessons come up into the light of conscious awareness and enable us to look at this piece of our past in an entirely new way.

Since the South Node relates to our past soul lessons, and the North Node relates to our current soul lessons, the traditional association of the South Node to our past and our karma, and the North Node to our future, or dharma, makes sense.

#### ***The Nodes Are Always in Perfect Opposition***

Next, let's look at the opposition aspect. Planets are said to be in opposition when they occupy points across the wheel from each other, at an angle of 180 degrees. Traditionally, oppositions were considered "hard" or "challenging" aspects, but fortunately this opinion has been largely

updated.

When I look at oppositions, the keywords I start with are *balance* and *perspective*. (Others also use *compromise*, but I find that limiting. To me, *compromise* means that each person has to give up something that they want in order to get something that they want. *Balance* just means that there is agreement and harmony.) The thing about oppositions is that both planets really "want" the same thing; they just approach it from different ends of the spectrum. If we can get each planet to see things from the other's point of view, then we can find that middle ground where they can work together and both get what they want. This process is made easier by the fact that, being directly across from each other, the two planets can "see" each other easily and are able to gain greater perspective on the big picture.

### ***Putting It Together***

So, the key to the nodal axis is to get the South Node and the North Node to work with each other, right? Not quite. The nodes are not planets; they are mathematical points in the chart. This doesn't make them any less important than a physical body; it just makes them a bit different to work with. The planets, remember, represent physical urges (for want of a better word) and drives that we all have. We can either choose to work with our Mars, for example, or to ignore it. Either way, we're going to be very aware of its presence in our chart. When Mars is activated by transit, or when transiting Mars triggers activity in our chart, we feel it. If we choose to become aware of it and own it, we can learn to use the energy in the most constructive way possible. If we don't, we're still going to experience it.

The nodes, on the other hand, have to do with the spiritual or soul lessons that we can encounter in this lifetime. The nodes are where the path of our soul development intersects with the path of our physical experiences. Since we're presently incarnated on the physical plane, that is where our focus naturally lies. If we don't choose to work with the nodes and their lessons on a conscious level, we are probably not going to be very aware of how they manifest.

In order to really work with and experience the nodes, we have to become consciously aware of our spirituality, of our soul connection and our connection to the universe. We have to accept that we came here with a lesson that we chose to work on in this lifetime, and we have to be ready to ask what that lesson might be. Are we learning it now? Of course. But the soul path lesson is far more subtle than a Mars transit.

The nodal axis is not our spiritual path in this lifetime. What it is, or rather, what it can be, is a spiritual compass, pointing us in the right direction. The nodes show us where our spiritual path and our soul lessons intersect with our physical path, and they are the points where we can most easily align with our spiritual path.

So with the nodes, it's not just about perspective and balance, it's about learning how to consciously work with and integrate the lessons, gifts, and experiences indicated by the North and South Nodes. The nodes can tell us what we have to work with, and show us what direction to go in to experience our lessons and to look for our true path in this lifetime.

### ***The South Node***

The South Node sheds light on our past. By its location in the chart, the South Node represents the types of experiences and memories that our soul wants us to have in this lifetime to help us on our developmental path. If our soul has gone to all of the trouble of bringing up these experiences, shouldn't we pay attention? And would a soul filled with love and light intentionally send us back into the material realm with only excess baggage? Of course not.

The South Node represents gifts to us from past lives. The lessons, skills, talents, and abilities that we struggled so many years to develop and master are still available to us through the South Node. The South Node is our soul's report card. It tells us what subjects we have passed: the South Node says, "Congratulations, you have passed Gemini Level I." For "incompletes" and less impressive marks, look to Saturn for further instruction and retesting, not to the South Node.

Just because we can now look at the South Node in a more positive light doesn't mean that the traditional warnings about the South Node being a "trap" don't have merit. Every planet and point in the chart has a

highest potential and a potential trap. With the South Node, the trap is to mistake summer vacation for graduation. We may be able to take a break, but we're still in school. So long as we are incarnated on the Earth, we are here to learn.

Even though the South Node represents lessons and skills that we have learned, used, and often mastered in the past, it also is an indication that we still have more to learn about them in this lifetime. We may have learned the skills *too* well and limited our growth in other areas. We may have misused the information in the past, learning the letter of the lesson but not the spirit. Or it may merely be time to learn how to use the skills in a different way, to expand our mastery. In any event, for higher education, we look to the North Node.

### ***The North Node***

The South Node is not alone in being long overdue for a revised interpretation.

True, the trap of the South Node is a tendency to stick with what is familiar, which can mean that we miss opportunities for growth and repeat old patterns. Also true, the way to avoid the trap of the South Node is to work with the North Node, which is why the North Node got such a great reputation. But the North Node also has a trap: the tendency to want to turn our back on the past in the singleminded pursuit of growth and new experiences.

The temptation of the North Node is to forget where we've been, and to focus only on where we are headed. The North Node, after all, brings success, happiness, abundance, luck, and freedom from the patterns and habits of the past. The North Node is the spiritual equivalent of the trip to the Bahamas that we've always wanted to take. And just like that trip to the Bahamas, the trap of the North Node makes us feel that much as we want it, we probably can't afford it. The North Node can seem to say, "You can get to the Bahamas, but you have to leave your nice, comfortable boat and swim there on your own. Oh, and by the way, there are probably sharks in the water." The trap of the North Node is just as dangerous as that of the South Node. We buy into the idea that we have to sever our ties to the past and create a new future.

We dive into the water to swim out to the Bahamas, get part of the way there, and either get too tired or too scared of the sharks in the waters, and hurry back to the comfort and familiarity of our boat, the *S. S. South Node*. And if we've *really* bought into the trap, we may feel like a spiritual failure on top of it all.

Obviously, this is not an interpretation that is very supportive. My intention is not to bash the North Node, only to point out that the traditional interpretation of the nodes encourages us to stay away from the South Node to reap the rewards of the North Node, and that is just *not* what it is all about. The true process of the North Node is not about turning our back on the past. The North Node is about taking stock of the past, honoring it, working with it, building on it, and learning how to use it in a new way.

For example, the North Node Sagittarius/South Node Gemini axis doesn't tell us that we're done with Gemini and now have to learn Sagittarius. Instead, it tells us that we are now going to learn how to use our Gemini experiences in a Sagittarian way. It tells us that part of our path, part of our lesson in this lifetime, is to recognize that there *is* a point of balance between Gemini and Sagittarius, and finding it will be a key to our spiritual growth and development. By working with both the North Node *and* the South Node, we get to take the boat to the Bahamas instead of having to swim there.

### ***Interpreting the Nodes***

Before we can begin to integrate and interpret the nodal axis, there is one more factor to consider: the houses. The single most important thing to remember about the houses is that *the houses are NOT the same things as the signs*. Every book on the Moon's nodes that I have come across makes the same assumption and claim that, for example, the North Node in Aries is the same thing as the North Node in the 1st house. This is simply not the case. Remember that the signs are the roles the actors play and the costumes they wear, while the houses are the scenery, the locations, and the places where the actors go to play out their roles. The signs represent the underlying motivations and the evolutionary lessons that we must learn. The houses represent the areas of life where we are most likely to encounter these lessons. The signs, then, are the "What" and the houses are the "Where." The house placement of the nodes does not in any way change the fundamental lessons and gifts of the nodal axis; it simply shows where in our life we need to look to find the lessons and gifts.

The houses, too, have their lessons, and like the lessons of the sign axis, the house axis teaches the importance of balance and perspective. The opposing houses, like the opposing signs, represent areas of life that we must learn to integrate and harmonize. Just as we may tend to get a little too comfortable with the gifts of the South Node, we may also tend to focus more on the area of our life represented by the house of the South Node. We may also occasionally focus too much on the North Node or spend too much time involved in the affairs of the North Node's house, and forget to draw on the support and resources of our South Node. Because the houses represent the places where we will naturally encounter the nodes, if we want to work with our nodes, we can simply devote time to activities that relate to the houses in question, and then we will naturally encounter our nodes. When interpreting the nodal axis, the first and most important factor to consider is the sign axis of the nodes. What do the two signs have in common? All opposing signs share some common theme; they simply approach it from different perspectives. Next, we look at the sign placement of the South Node and the North Node within this axis. What are the gifts that the South Node offers? What are the best and most wonderful expressions of the sign of the South Node? How can working with the North Node balance and enhance these gifts? By exploring these questions, we can discover some of the lessons of the specific nodal axis. Now, we can take this understanding and look at the house placement of the nodes to learn more about where in our life we will be able to experience and encounter these lessons. Finally, let's try to put things into perspective. Remember that the nodes are not physical bodies, and because they are not physical bodies, they operate on a far more subtle level than the planets do. Unlike the planets, the nodes do not play a very big part in the development of an individual's personality. The nodes, however, are the key to understanding more about what our spiritual purpose is in this lifetime. Sometimes the nodes are closely connected with the planets in a chart, and the connection between the individual's physical life and his or her spiritual path is obvious. Sometimes the nodes seem to exist on their own, separate from the rest of the action in the chart. Whichever way the nodes appear to be linked with the other elements in the chart, the nodes can help us step back and see beyond the limitations of our time on Earth, and once again glimpse the bigger picture of the evolutionary journey of our soul.

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