

Bionicle FATE Hack



(Generated with FATE Core and FATE System Toolkit)

In a time, before time... there was an island. Protected by a Great Spirit, the land was home to innocent masked villagers, and strange creatures. But then, the darkness came...

If you're a fan of LEGO, you've probably heard of Bionicle. A pop-culture sensation covering a dozen toy lines and countless comic books and movies packed with lore, this series of buildable plastic figures saved the LEGO company once upon a time. But since then the story has ended, the characters were retired into obscurity and a brief, poorly conceived reboot in 2016 crashed and burned. Now, Bionicle only lives on in the hearts of children who grew up and never quite left behind that mystical island and its magical inhabitants.

But through the magic of RPGs, we can find a use for our bins of Bionicle parts, assuming any of us still have them. (Spoilers, I totally do.) The FATE RPG System allows the flexibility to not just make your own Bionicle story, but accessorize it with real parts, real figures and real LEGO settings that can bring to life the world of Mata Nui in a new and interesting way.

Q&A

Why spend so much effort on resurrecting an old toy line? Because it's fun, dammit. And because the world created by LEGO was so unique and unexpected, it seems a shame to bury it in the past, especially for its hardcore fans.

Why FATE? FATE is a versatile and flexible system capable of handling the crazy powers and lore of Bionicle. Also, we're not trying to reinvent the wheel here--why homebrew an entire Bionicle RPG system when it's easier to just use an existing one?

Why use real figures and sets? Just imagining the world and designing it on paper leaves out the true joy of old LEGO technic sets: building and designing your very own heroes. With FATE, we can incentivize creativity in players and create a physical connection to the story. Even better, big moments or boss fights can be represented by minifigures on real LEGO mats or building brick sets. The tactile play element and ability to accessorize your heroes was a huge part of the Bionicle appeal, and I'd like to bring that back... no matter how silly it might seem.



BUILDING THE WORLD

In the time before time, the Great Spirit arrived...

The world of Bionicle involves titanic, moon-sized “explorer” robots wandering the galaxy. Inside these robots are bio-domes where *smaller* robots live, eke out their lives in various states of technological achievement, and have adventures.

Yes, that’s actually the real setting. Stay with me here.

Disregarding the Great Spirit Robots (GSRs, if you will) let’s boil this down. Your job as a player is to help the GM **build a bio-dome** and populate it with heroes, either inside or outside one of the Great Spirit explorer-machines. If the characters are inside a dome, with an artificial sun and so on, how did they get there? What is the function of their society? What threatens them? These elements can be set up as *setting aspects*.

All Bionicle campaigns start with a few core Aspects:

We All Live Inside/Outside a Giant Robot (pick one)

Sub-Aspects: (Dependant on Players)

Are the characters inside a bio-dome in their Matoran Universe? If not, did they get kicked out or accidentally ejected somehow? Did the Great Spirit Robot crash, malfunction or is it still doing its duty? Is there an island where the smaller characters live, and if so, how are its regions divided? What's the local ecosystem look like? How about the climate and topography?

Take your time with this one--the meat of Bionicle is in its mysticism. For example, maybe the island is in the "brain" of the Great Spirit Robot, and is a massive city. Or maybe it's an isolated backwater somewhere inside the Robot, where dangerous Rahi are made. Perhaps it's even a malfunctioning dome shrouded in darkness, where the Toa are arriving to end a thousand-year "shadow blight." It's all up to you!!

Matoran Tribes

Sub-Aspects: (Dependant on Players)

The biomechanical villagers inside a GSR clump into simple societies: sometimes cities, sometimes towns or communes. Their job is to keep the GSR running via strange religious rituals, machinery maintenance, or even by purging threats inside it like rogue Bohrok or a rebellious Makuta. Either way, you'll need to decide what the local society looks like. Is the society **Divided by Elements, Warlike, Peaceful, Devout** or maybe even **Agnostic**? What are the elders like? Are they faithful to the Great Spirit's artificial intelligence, or have they lost their way?

Unity, Duty and Destiny!

Sub-Aspects: (Dependent on Players)

To keep things peaceful and cooperative inside the GSR, each Robot's "Great Spirit" (the A.I. that controls the whole thing) has established the principles of Unity, Duty and Destiny among its inhabitants. How do the locals practice these principles? Are they expressed through sport, ritual or song? Toss out a couple cultural Aspects to stick onto the local **Matoran Tribes** aspect, so we know who we're dealing with and what their day-to-day society is like.

And that's it!



Now, it's time for the **THREAT ASPECT**.

Some **terrible threat** is accosting your Great Spirit Robot! Is it another A.I., warring for supremacy? Maybe one of the local Makuta demigods has **Gone Rogue**, or maybe the threat is **Not From Around Here**, an entity outside the Robot trying to invade it. Or maybe an insurrection or rebellion is sweeping the domes! Either way, the **threat** must be established before we start playing. The goal of the game, basically, is to defeat or remove the Threat Aspect, which has its own antagonists and special characters attached.

Once your **THREAT ASPECT** is completed, it's time to build your Toa.

Each player is a Toa, a hero sent by the Great Spirit to save their local region from darkness. What does your Toa's **appearance** look like? What **Element** do they wield? What is their **Kanohi Mask** power? (Using existing masks is helpful, because there are tons of Wiki articles to browse for the perfect canon power. But new or Reboot masks are welcome as well!)

Building a Toa is a lot like building an average character in Fate Core RPG. You get a **High Aspect**, a **Trouble Aspect** and a few Stunts. Your **Kanohi Mask aspect** is special—it might allow you a Stunt, or it might be an aspect that is always active, like a **Mask of Accuracy**.

All Fate heroes get a Refresh limit, basically a pool of Fate Points that refresh every Session. Here's the kicker: **if you build your Toa from real-life parts**, you get +1 to Refresh. **If you concoct a minifigure for use on a LEGO stud map**, that's another +1 Refresh. This means industrious (or obsessed) players can get a head start, by using their creativity and ingenuity to bring their Toa to life!



Once your team's Toa are complete, each one needs a **Relationship Aspect** too. This could be an Aspect showing how they feel to another Toa ("Toa of Fire are nothing but hot air!") or a Relationship with their local villagers, the local monsters, or with a village elder. Maybe the Toa has **tamed the beasts of the Air**, or maybe she's a **meditation disciple of a Turaga** (elder.)

To Be Continued...