The Taste of MTG's Color Pie

Introduction

So, I have since finished my little miniseries on the tribes of Innistrad and how their color philosophies express them in their culture, story, and mechanics, and I really enjoyed talking about it so I figured I would write some stuff on the factions as we see them on different planes and how the color philosophies manifest within them.

I have also realized that this article is way longer than I thought it was going to be so I'm going to make a different version that splits each section into parts.

Before I move on, if you want to see my previous(much shorter) MTG articles covering the tribes of Innistrad then you can view them here-https://douglysium.tumblr.com/tagged/TheTasteOfMagicTheGathering. If there's a specific tribe you want to read about then you can view them here.

Werewolves-https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/662623213059276800/the-taste-of-innistrads-werewolves

Humans-https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/662755543203643392/the-taste-of-humans-on-innistrad

Angels- https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/663299115099308033/the-taste-of-innistrads-angels

Geists- https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/664030257036361728/the-taste-of-innistrads-spirits

Zombies-https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/664566115054256128/the-taste-of-innistrads-zombies

Vampires-https://douglysium.tumblr.com/post/664656723908362240/the-taste-of-innistrads-vampire

I could basically talk all day about the Color Pie if you caught me in the mood, and it turns out I am in the mood.

Although, before we jump straight into the philosophies themselves I decided to make this little intro first to cover my overall goal with this piece. The idea behind this is that it's basically a housekeeping article. I take what I feel are some important overarching things to consider no matter what color or mechanic you are looking at and try to summarize them so I won't be forced to repeatedly explain the same concepts over and over, and we can spend more time looking at the aspects that are more specific to each color.

As for what this series covers? Well, my first goal is simply to give my own explanations and thoughts about how the colors work but I also want to look at both the philosophical, and mechanical/gameplay sides of each color and how they tie into each other. I want to look at flavor questions such as how a White-aligned character may act or why this Green-aligned character may not like that Green-aligned character or how a faction's color alignment can tell us about its goals and priorities, and gameplay questions like "Why does Blue draw so many cards? Why does Red have Haste? Why is Black always bringing stuff back from the graveyard?" etc. I do plan to still cover the color identities of factions within Magic's multiverse eventually, probably between color articles to keep things interesting, but for now, our focus is on the colors the,selves as I feel this creates a good foundation for any future tribe or faction based analysis, since if anyone is ever confused about something I bring up regarding colors in general then they could probably check them out here.

I should also mention that I'm definitely not the first person to cover the philosophies of the colors. You have people like TheManaSource*(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ReIn6rU_fQ&list=PLGsoeNcK9QA8IRNfjhaIKoSAtXWp1D3bJ&ab_channel=TheManaSource)*, Dicetry*(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.youtube.com/watch?v%3Dm0jlJWSuewc%26list%3DPLYRIFj7E0RZGLmR578Vcb3YucMqLYw7gF%26ab_channel%3DDiceTry&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1634378885379000&usg=AOvVaw0O2qPKRJqCwjSvwKXI83j1)*, It's Not Good(*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDabYcNOyhc&t=243s&ab_channel=It%27sNotGood)*, Lorely Writes*(https://www.reddit.com/r/colorpie/comments/db3yw0/sarpadianloreleywrites_color_analysis_updated/)* and even people who literally make Magic the Gathering products at Wizards of the Coast themselves, like Mark Rosewater, have plenty of blogs, videos, and podcasts that cover it. In fact, as I'm writing this Mark has recently made a convenient compendium of all his Color Pie-related stuff, which you can check out here → https://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/making-magic/lets-talk-color-pie-2021-10-11.

So at the end of the day, my goal with this article is to 1. Summarize and go over some general overarching themes or questions regarding the colors, 2. Act as the groundwork for the rest of the series and 3. Hopefully, allow me to explain why I personally love the Color Pie. So let's begin.

The Color Pie in General

So first off, what does it even mean to be aligned with a certain color? Well, basically the gist of each color is that they represent a character's core values and, by extension, their ideology. An example of this would be how Blue believes that the most important thing in life is being the best you one can be and that the optimal way to achieve that is through gaining knowledge, meanwhile Red believes the most important thing in life is to follow your heart and do what you want. What determines what color alignment someone/something falls under is not necessarily the state of their existence or even their personalities but rather what they believe in and value. I mean yeah, goblins are often Red-aligned and different species or tribes within Magic tend to share one or more colors for various reasons, such as culture, but this isn't the end all be all mind you. Being human doesn't mean you have to have White in your color identity, and just being a living thing isn't enough to make you Green-aligned, and simply being hungry and wanting to eat or just feeling emotions does not guarantee you are of the Red-alignment. Heck, if you want to go back to the second point, we have even seen robots with Green in their identity. Which I know may surprise some considering how often it can destroy artifacts and how much it holds nature in high regard.

When it comes to the point about personalities, what I mean is that while it is true that a character's personality can give you clues about what someone's/something's values is there is quite a bit of nuance to it. A common example we are given to help prove my point is that just because someone is super organized does not mean that they are aligned with White, but if they VALUE organization and the greater good they might be White-aligned(by extension I suppose this would also mean you can have messy or slovenly White-aligned characters). A mistake that I feel happens relatively often is that I see people assuming that a color has a sort of monopoly on a concept, behavior, or trait. For example, Red is the color that values emotion the most. So some

people may look at Red and determine "Ok, so every card that depicts strong emotions, or an emotional moment has to have Red in it right?"

Cathartic Reunion — 1 R

Sorcery

As an additional cost to cast Cathartic Reunion, discard two cards.

Draw three cards.

The chasm of years and worlds collapsed under the power of their embrace.

109/264 C
KLD • EN — Howard Lyon

Inordinate Rage — 1 R

Instant

Target creature gets +3/+2 until end of turn. Scry 1.

"In my years wandering this land I've seen a veritable menagerie of fantastic creatures, but one that has eluded me thus far is the fabled 'easygoing minotaur.'"
—Ko, expedition wizard

144/280 C
ZNR • EN — Tomasz Jedruszek

Anger — 3 R

Creature — Incarnation

Haste

As long as Anger is in your graveyard and you control a mountain, creatures you control have haste.

"For its time as a mortal, Anger chose a shell of boiling rock."
—Scroll of Beginnings

Illus. John Avon

2/2

Forbidden Friendship — 1 R

Sorcery

Create a 1/1 red Dinosaur creature token with haste and a 1/1 white Human Soldier creature token.

The two looked at each other, and neither fled. "I see," the soldier murmured. "We're both just fighting for survival out here, aren't we?"

119/274 C
IKO • EN — Jakub Kasper

Tentative Connection 3🔴

Sorcery

This spell costs 3 less to cast if you control a creature with menace.

Gain control of target creature until end of turn. Untap that creature. It gains haste until end of turn.

Lukka was ordered to kill a threat. He chose to make a friend.

Well… no…

Akroma, Angel of Wrath 5⚪⚪⚪

Legendary Creature — Angel

Flying, first strike, vigilance, trample, haste, protection from black and from red

"Wrath is no vice when inflicted upon the deserving."

6/6

Secret Rendezvous 1⚪⚪

Sorcery

You and target opponent each draw three cards.

Strixhaven's five colleges encourage natural rivalries among the students, but some bonds transcend all barriers.

Avacyn, Angel of Hope

5🌑🌑🌑

Legendary Creature — Angel

Flying, vigilance

Avacyn, Angel of Hope and other permanents you control are indestructible.

A golden helix streaked skyward from the Helvault. A thunderous explosion shattered the silver monolith and Avacyn emerged, free from her prison at last.

Jason Chan

8/8

Radical Idea

1 💧

Instant

Draw a card.

Jump-start *(You may cast this card from your graveyard by discarding a card in addition to paying its other costs. Then exile this card.)*

Genius is finding the edge of what's possible, then jumping over it.

052/259 C
GRN • EN Izzy

Malevolent Hermit

1 💧

Creature — Human Wizard

💧, Sacrifice Malevolent Hermit: Counter target noncreature spell unless its controller pays 3.

Disturb 2💧 *(You may cast this card from your graveyard transformed for its disturb cost.)*

2/2

061/277 R
MID • EN Daarken

2/1

Benevolent Geist

Creature — Spirit Wizard

Flying

Noncreature spells you control can't be countered.

If Benevolent Geist would be put into a graveyard from anywhere, exile it instead.

336 R
MID • EN Daarken

2/2

Rage-Scarred Berserker

4B

Creature — Minotaur Berserker

When Rage-Scarred Berserker enters the battlefield, target creature you control gets +1/+0 and gains indestructible until end of turn. *(Damage and effects that say "destroy" don't destroy it.)*

The fury of the slaughter god Mogis burns within him.

5/4

113/254 C
THB • EN ☙ Antonio José Manzanedo
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Confront the Past

X B

Sorcery — Lesson

Choose one —
• Return target planeswalker card with mana value X or less from your graveyard to the battlefield.
• Remove twice X loyalty counters from target planeswalker an opponent controls.

"Why, Gideon? Of all people, why save me?"

067/275 R
STX • EN ☙ Kieran Yanner
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Cower in Fear

1 B B

Instant

Creatures your opponents control get -1/-1 until end of turn.

"You will fully understand fear when you discover it is the final thing you put your faith in."
—Nicol Bolas

Nils Hamm

Primal Rage

1 G

Enchantment

Creatures you control have trample.
(If a creature you control would deal enough combat damage to its blockers to destroy them, you may have it deal the rest of its damage to defending player.)

Brian Snõddy

Now don't get me wrong, Red is clearly the MOST LIKELY to have cards depicting strong emotions due to its belief that you should follow your heart first and foremost. However, that doesn't mean that the other colors don't have any emotions or can't have emotional moments. What tends to be more important when looking at the colors as a whole is not only whether a character within that color has emotions but how they view their emotions and the emotions of others.

Let's say you have two characters that are both really really angry. We will refer to these characters as John and Jim. John hates bottling up his emotions or holding them back. He

believes that you should follow your heart if you want to be happy in life. So when John gets angry he doesn't pull punches. If someone pisses him off he'll simply fight them and say something like "Well he shouldn't have pissed me off," or maybe he'll just scream at them and storm off. Both of these outcomes are equally likely.

On the other hand, there's Jim. Jim is also super emotional but he has a strong moral code. He argues that it's wrong to get into fights with people when it can be avoided and that you shouldn't let your emotions control you or else you may end up causing a lot of unnecessary pain for both yourself and others and that's something he abhors. So when Jim gets super angry he may raise his voice a bit but he will avoid throwing the first punch and will usually go home and do jumping jacks as an outlet for his anger.

Now as many can probably guess in this example, I think it's safe to say that John is of the Red-alignment in some way while Jim is of the White-alignment in some form. John is someone who believes in following his heart and thus will prioritize what he feels and wants above basically everything else in a given situation. Jim is also an extremely emotional character but he prizes morality and peace above his emotions and is thus more willing to put off things that he wants to do(like punching someone in the face or yelling) for the greater good, or the good of the many. The point I'm trying to get across here is that it's not that all White or Blue-aligned people intrinsically hate emotion in all its forms but rather they disagree with what Red values and how it reacts to emotions, and by the same token Red has a problem with White and Blue's priorities. It's also important to take into account that no one is perfect. It is possible for Jim to get so angry that he fails to properly contain his emotions and he ends up punching someone or getting into a fight. However, due to the philosophy of the White-alignment, I think it's safe to say that he would probably feel bad about it or at least consider it a mistake/failing on his part in some way. Hopefully, you get what I'm trying to say, the color alignments don't have a monopoly on concepts like emotion, order, intelligence, greed, concern for one's own well being, etc., and even though color may be more likely to have it be more pronounced or emphasized in their personality or actions it does not guarantee it nor does it mean that the other colors are completely restricted from having it show up in their personality. The key point I'm trying to get across here is that the best way to help determine where someone sits on the Color Pie is based on what they VALUE as opposed to personality being the end all be all. Also, it should be noted that, yes, a personality can give you clues into what someone values. I mean, if you're someone who views forethought and knowledge as part of the ideal we should strive for then you are more likely to be thoughtful but not everyone with the same or similar philosophy has the exact same personality. It should be noted that outside factors can also affect how a character acts even if it does not change their alignment, but more on that later.

The Gist of the 5 Colors

Now as with most philosophical things there is a lot of discussion and debate to be had, and honestly, I could probably write an entire book solely on Color Pie philosophy alone. However, I figured that since it might be a bit before I finish writing the next article it might be

helpful to give you all a taste of what each color is all about. Also, in case you don't know we are going to go over them in WUBRG order, and for those of you who are unfamiliar with that term, it's short for White, Blue, Black, Red, and Green and is the order in which the colors are represented. Why is Blue represented by U? I'll talk about that when I make an article solely dedicated to Blue.

White believes in "Peace through Structure." That is to say that it wishes to achieve peace and prosperity through various structures, such as laws, moral codes, religion, etc. It also believes in some form of objective morality(there are just some things that are morally wrong to do and some things are morally right). White values the community and the greater good over the good of the individual, and it often attempts to use social constructs and rules in order to help as many people as it can get what they need and guide them on the right path. Now, there is an extremely important distinction in the fact that White believes that there are enough resources for everyone to do what they NEED, and not everything they WANT. Which ultimately ties into White's theme of sacrifice. Since White believes in putting the greater good above personal/selfish needs it argues that sometimes sacrifices are necessary for the bigger overarching goal. Also, when I say sacrifice in this case I am not solely referring to giving one's life for a cause, although that can happen, I also mean sacrificing more mundane things like one's time, money, making sure to avoid going to massive gatherings in order to help prevent the spread of something like a disease or sickness during a pandemic, even if that one party looks rad as hell, and other similar things/concepts. Before I continue, one thing that's important to remember when looking at all the colors is that none of the colors are inherently good or bad. I mean yes due to White's moral bent it will basically always want to do the right thing and even if it's in an antagonist/villainous role it will usually believe it is doing the right thing because… I mean White genuinely does want to help and do the right thing, but at the end of the day intentions can only take you so far. You could also argue that certain colors are more likely to commit acts that a majority of people would consider "bad" or "evil" but again none of the colors are necessarily only negative traits by default. So in order to help get this point across I've decided to list one strength each color has as well as one weakness. I will go into more detail regarding each color's strengths and weaknesses in future content.

One of White's major strengths tends to be its teamwork and organization. Due to the fact that White prioritizes structure and the needs of the group it tends to be good at working in teams

or large groups of people. It also often leans towards utilizing laws and/or moral codes in order to help people stay on the right track.

One of White's weaknesses is that since it believes in the group over the individual and an objective morality it can sometimes end up having extremely black and white(get it?) view of the world can end up creating a mindset that is extremely controlling of others in an attempt to get them to fit into a strict idea of what is right and a mold that is extremely stagnant and inflexible to changing and adapting.

Some words that are heavily associated with White are peace, law, structure, selflessness, and equality.

Blue believes in seeking "Perfection through Knowledge." An important clarification is that Blue's philosophy doesn't believe you can literally be perfect but rather that we should be constantly trying to improve and be the best us we can be(perfection here is a process not necessarily an end goal). Thus, in a way it can be described as attempting to achieve perfection, since what it's trying to do is trying to get as close as possible to it. Blue argues that the best way for us to be the best we can be is through knowledge, information, education, etc. At the end of the day, knowledge is power and the key to being able to do something is to simply know how it works and how to do it. Blue believes everyone is a blank slate and that with the proper knowledge basically anything is possible. Now Blue isn't a philosophy that's dumb enough to argue that if you are born without wings or with bad vision you could just gain flight and 20/20 vision with sheer willpower. Rather, if you learn how flight or vision works you could do things like build a jetpack or create a set of glasses that could compensate or negate certain issues or even allow you to do new things you never thought possible. In Blue's eyes, you only have one life so it makes sense that you shouldn't waste it or ruin it by making shortsighted or emotional mistakes. Thus, you should carefully consider your actions and plan for the future.

One of Blue's greatest strengths is probably the most obvious, knowledge. Due to the fact that its philosophy prizes knowledge and thinking it tends to be very good at utilizing the information at its disposal and it is less likely to make a silly or shortsighted mistake because it likes to keep the bigger picture, and the future, in mind. So even though a Blue character is capable of making mistakes they will at the very least decrease their chances of making a careless or not thought out action.

However, one of Blue's major weaknesses is that it can end up being too passive and slow at times. It often sits around thinking and when tasked with making a choice it will try to figure out the best option. While this is often all well and good, sometimes this can lead to Blue getting "frozen" with all the choices it has. This is in the sense that sometimes they take too long to make a decision or act so they can end up not reacting to something fast enough, or in extreme cases just not end up making a decision at all. Sometimes the easiest way to get the upper hand on Blue is to simply act before it has time to think or formulate a plan.

Some of the words that are associated with Blue are knowledge, deceit, cautious, deliberating, and perfecting.

Black believes in "Power through Opportunity". This means that, unlike say White, Black believes that there is no objective morality and it prioritizes the self over others. This means that Black believes that there is nothing wrong with doing whatever it takes to win, no matter how underhanded, inhumane, dishonorable, immoral, or unlawful, and thus it's priorities can be described as trying to amass as much power and strength via any opportunity that it can make or encounter. At the end of the day, Black believes that it's power that talks and that frankly, the world is a ruthless and unfair place. While some of the White alignment may claim that those who are of the Black alignment are the reason bad things exist, in Black's eyes it's the other way around. People are Black-aligned because the world is full of unfairness and brutality which in turn means that it is reasonable that people do whatever they can to survive and gain power. Black isn't always creating all the world's problems more so playing with the hand it was dealt in life. It is also important to note that Black is not inherently evil and White is not inherently good. First of all, Black is amoral, which means that it doesn't actually believe in any sort of objective good and evil, and second of all, from Black's perspective, life is already hard and unfair enough as it is. Compounding that issue with a bunch of subjective ever-changing morals, limitations, laws, and traditions that you yourself or others put on you is only hindering you. Not to mention that at the end of the day, the only one you can truly guarantee to care about you, your wants, and your safety is yourself. No one else is guaranteed or obligated to look out for you so you should look for any opportunities you see or create and use them to the fullest without mercy or shame. You should do what is best for you and whatever it takes for you to survive.

One of Black's strengths as a color is that, at its best, it can end up being the most pragmatic out of all the colors, and thus it will be willing to do what needs to be done to achieve

its goals. Sometimes other colors may be unwilling to tap into a resource they consider to be icky, scary, or unholy, such as corpses that can be used to make a zombie army, but Black is a color that rarely lets resources like that go to waste.

Now, ironically this sort of ties into one of Black's biggest weaknesses. While Black does think things out, it's "nothing is off-limits" ideal can end up manifesting as something that leads Black taking a lot of risks and sacrifices in order to get what it wants. Black is one of the colors that are most likely to end up messing with stuff that people say you shouldn't mess with for a good reason, and being willing to sacrifice things for an important goal can end up making backfires or misplays blow up in your face all the more. This means that sometimes the color that is most likely to defeat Black can end up being Black itself, since at its worst it's selfishness, greed, power-hungry ideals, and "no line is a line I'm unwilling to cross" philosophy can sometimes end up shooting it in the foot immediately or down the line.

Some words that are associated with Black are power, self-interest, death, sacrifice, and uninhibited.

Red believes in "Freedom through Action." That is to say Red believes that in order to enjoy life to the fullest you need only to follow your emotions/heart and do what it is you want to do whenever you feel like doing it. If you feel angry and want to punch something then punch something, if you're sad and want to cry then cry, if you're happy and want to laugh then laugh, so on and so forth. Red doesn't even bother to promise that you won't make mistakes or get into fights but in Red's eyes those are just part of life anyway, so there's no point in trying to bottle up your emotions or sit around scared to do what your heart tells you. I mean you only have one life to live so why spend it not doing the things you really want to do or not acting on the stuff you feel.

One of Red's strengths is the fact that it often acts quickly. It often knows what it wants and because of that, it will often immediately begin taking the steps needed to get what it wants. It is a color philosophy that doesn't like just waiting around pining after things and will try to go for what it wants.

One of its weaknesses is that it can be extremely short sighted or chaotic in a lot of situations. It prizes just doing what it wants and following, often fleeting, emotions which means that it may not always think through the consequences of actions or choice. This can lead to Red

being bitten in the ass either immediately or down the line because it failed to consider the long-term ramifications of something it did.

Some of the words that can be associated with Red are freedom, emotion, active, impulsive, and destructive.

Last but not least is Green. Green is a color that believes in "Growth through Acceptance." Green's philosophy argues that one is born with all they need to be fulfilled and by extension nature has all we need to live a complete life, one just needs to embrace it. It believes that everything is born with a purpose, wolves are born to hunt, deers are meant to be prey, birds are supposed to fly and grass needs to grow. Now, it's important to remember that Green does believe that things can change, as nature itself is something that evolves and changes over time, but in its eyes such changes should either occur naturally and/or help you better realize your role in nature and the grand scheme of things. If you were born a sparrow then that means you were born to fly and can learn better ways to fly for example. Due to these themes of acceptance regarding your place in the universe and the natural order Green is a color that is tied strongly to things like destiny, divine purpose, and/or many other forms of predeterminism. Green advocates that, instead of fighting against our natural place, we should simply accept them as they are and come to terms with the fact that there are things we just can't change and some things we can't fully understand. One cannot magically sprout wings if they are a turtle or become immortal just by thinking about it, and that's just the way things are. Green is also a color that is strongly connected to the past, tradition, and history as one of the best ways one can figure out where they belong is to look towards the past. If you want to figure out what the role of a bear is in the ecosystem then you may want to look at how bears have impacted the ecosystem in the past or the role they played in the history of that ecosystem.

One of Green's strengths is that its belief in the natural systems of the world/universe/planes often gives it a strong understanding and connection to nature and the things that occur in it. It is a color that can definitely really appreciate how nature works and the wonder nature can hold.

One of Green's weaknesses is also tied to the fact that Green sees nature as the best thing since sliced bread. In a weird way, it can sort of end up putting all its eggs in one basket by being unwilling to try anything that it deems unnatural. It also means that if the nature it's relying on is

lacking in something or is too damaged/destroyed it may have trouble adapting due to it's potentially go natural or go home style beliefs.

Before we move on I might as well at least touch on Colorless, since there are objects and characters that aren't aligned with any of the five colors. Colorless, as the name would suggest, is the lack of any color and thus it usually represents something that doesn't have its own ideology to speak of, such as non-sentient objects or artifacts. However, it can also represent characters who have sort of transcended the normal mana colors, such as Ugin as a spirit, or beings that are beyond the understanding of the Color Pie or normal logic, such as the Eldrazi. That's not to say that a Colorless character can't have a personality or some sort of value but Colorless as a whole has no consistent permanently overarching philosophy.

Karn, Scion of Urza

4

Legendary Planeswalker — Karn

+1: Reveal the top two cards of your library. An opponent chooses one of them. Put that card into your hand and exile the other with a silver counter on it.

−1: Put a card you own with a silver counter on it from exile into your hand.

−2: Create a 0/0 colorless Construct artifact creature token with "This creature gets +1/+1 for each artifact you control."

5

RA1/008 M Masterpiece
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Ugin, the Spirit Dragon

8

Legendary Planeswalker — Ugin

+2: Ugin, the Spirit Dragon deals 3 damage to any target.

−X: Exile each permanent with converted mana cost X or less that's one or more colors.

−10: You gain 7 life, draw seven cards, then put up to seven permanent cards from your hand onto the battlefield.

7

001/274 M
M21 • EN ➤ Raymond Swanland
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Emrakul, the Aeons Torn — 15

Legendary Creature — Eldrazi

This spell can't be countered.

When you cast this spell, take an extra turn after this one.

Flying, protection from colored spells, annihilator 6

When Emrakul, the Aeons Torn is put into a graveyard from anywhere, its owner shuffles their graveyard into their library.

15/15

Colorless as a whole doesn't have any philosophical upsides or downsides since it doesn't have a coherent philosophy it is adherent to.

Also, for the sake of clarity, there do exist artifacts and objects with a color alignment, even if they tend to be less common than those of the colorless variety. These colored artifacts are either sentient while also having a strong adherence to one of the 5 color philosophies or are just heavily attuned with or connected to some color, or color combination, of mana for whatever reason.

Color Allies and Enemies

Now, earlier I mentioned the Color Pie and WUBRG(White, Blue, Black, Red, and Green) order. Well, let's come back to that for a second. You see, each color has two of what are called allied colors and two enemy colors. A color's "allies" are the colors that are directly next to it on the Color Pie while enemy colors are the two colors on the opposite side of the pie from said color.

For example, White's allied colors are the colors next to it, Blue and Green, and its enemy colors are Red and Black. As the names would imply ally colors from a purely philosophical standpoint tend to have more things they agree on with the colors they are allied with and enemy colors tend to have a lot of ideologies that directly oppose their respective enemy colors. If we go back to White we can see that one of the things White prioritizes is structure and the greater good. Green also has a sense of right and wrong like White does and it also has a sense of structure about the way things are supposed to be. Blue also likes structures that can help improve things and spread knowledge, plus it has a sense of the bigger picture and understands that you shouldn't always put your needs and wants above everyone else. On the other hand, you have Black and Red. Black argues you should always put yourself first and look out for yourself and Red's philosophy is that you should follow your heart and do whatever you feel like doing. These ideals directly oppose White's ideals of the greater good and selflessness(These are just brief examples by the way they aren't meant to be super in-depth).

Now just to be clear, just because a color is allied with another color does not mean that those colors see eye to eye on everything or always agree with each other, and even enemy colors still have things they agree on. Furthermore, not every character that aligns with a color gets along with every single character that is of the allied colors nor do they hate all characters who align with their enemy colors. I mean, yes a Green aligned character is probably more likely to get along with a White aligned character than a Black aligned one because of the fact that in general people with similar philosophies about how the world should work are usually more likely to get along with each other, but this isn't the end all be all or a hard rule. Heck, characters that fall under the exact same color alignment(s) can be diametrically opposed. Two Blue characters may have different ideas of what perfection they should be striving for and one White aligned character may have a different definition of what's morally good and peaceful than another White aligned character to the point where they may become enemies, see each other as

threats or just simply find themselves on opposing sides of some sort of conflict.

Remember, color philosophy, and philosophy in general, is not just a stock character personality. Certain overarching traits are more likely to occur due to their ideals but this does not mean literally everyone in said color alignment has them nor does it mean everyone within said color alignments embodies literally every aspect of that color.

When it comes to ally/matching color alignments it helps to think of it this way. Does every person within a political alignment or party see eye to eye on every issue, do they all have the same exact personality? No, of course not. There may be some traits a lot of them have due to who their philosophy appeals to but they aren't all carbon copies of each other nor do they all get along. A color's relationship with enemy colors can be thought of in a similar way. I'm sure everyone has at least one friend who has wildly different opinions on how good a tv show is or a certain aspect of what they consider ideal for themselves, their community, or the world. Just because your opinions aren't one to one doesn't mean you aren't friends.

To that end, where the color pie places each color is a sort of measurement for how well each philosophy sinks up with each other. A Blue aligned person or character can still have Red or Green aligned friends and family(just make sure to avoid talking about politics with them on thanksgiving). I mean heck, Teferi is a Blue, and sometimes White-Blue, aligned character that is in a happy and loving relationship with the Red aligned Subira, and White and Blue are about as opposite from Red as you can get on the color pie.

Teferi, Time Raveler — 1🔆💧

Legendary Planeswalker — Teferi

Each opponent can cast spells only any time they could cast a sorcery.

+1: Until your next turn, you may cast sorcery spells as though they had flash.

−3: Return up to one target artifact, creature, or enchantment to its owner's hand. Draw a card.

4

221/264 R   WAR • EN 🔆 Chris Rallis

Subira, Tulzidi Caravanner — 2🔥

Legendary Creature — Human Shaman [M21]

Haste

1: Another target creature with power 2 or less can't be blocked this turn.

1🔥, ⤾, Discard your hand: Until end of turn, whenever a creature you control with power 2 or less deals combat damage to a player, draw a card.

2/3

162/274 R   M21 • EN 🔆 Leesha Hannigan

Teferi, Hero of Dominaria — 3🔆💧

Legendary Planeswalker — Teferi

+1: Draw a card. At the beginning of the next end step, untap up to two lands.

−3: Put target nonland permanent into its owner's library third from the top.

−8: You get an emblem with "Whenever you draw a card, exile target permanent an opponent controls."

4

248 M   SLD • EN 🔆 KNIIO

It is also important to mention that characters of various color alignments can rub off on each other in various ways without completely altering the alignment of whoever they're affecting. You can have a Black aligned character hanging around a bunch of White aligned people and thus have them be more likely to follow whatever laws and/or rules these people make because they know that breaking them and getting caught might be way more trouble than

it's worth. Conversely, you could have a White aligned character hanging around Black aligned people who does something that could normally be considered more Black aligned or immoral due to things such as peer/social pressure without losing their White alignment.

We should also consider that not every person or character necessarily embodies literally every aspect of the color they fall under. Yeah, there are a few key aspects to the ideology which in turn makes the occurrence of certain strengths and/or weaknesses more prevalent or easier to fall into for those aligned with said colors. but not every White aligned character is uncompromising, and not every Blue character comes off as cold or emotionless to others for example. It's just that characters in these alignments are more likely to fall into these pitfalls when compared to other colors due to their heavily moral and information-dependent values respectively, but it's not universal or a trait literally every character will have. A lot of these potential shortcomings can also act as various forms of inner conflict, and not just an outer conflict, for characters.

Color Combinations

I might as well randomly segue into color combinations. So you don't have to pick just one if several colors sound equally correct to you. Any person or thing can have anywhere from one to all five colors in their identity and all the various combinations that entails. Heck, as I went over previously, in Magic there are some things that don't have any colors in their color identity.

Each color combination has its own philosophy that tends to be based on the agreements of the component colors. For example, Green likes understanding nature and watching nature change and evolve and Blue also likes understanding things, knowledge, and watching things

improve. So when you slap these two philosophies together you often get one that prizes things like progress and evolution.

   I should also mention that just like mono-colors, there are a myriad of ways that characters with these philosophies can manifest ,and there are no hard rules about how they act or who they can be. Also, the same combination of colors can manifest differently depending on how the two colors combine. Instead of combining the progress aspect of Green and Blue, you could combine Green wanting to understand nature along with Blue wanting to understand things too in order to get a character who seeks to fully understand and harness nature to its fullest potential...

or you could take Green wanting to preserve nature and Blue wanting to preserve things for the sake of preserving information to create a way of thinking that wishes to protect nature.

This is all without even getting into center and secondary colors by the way.

Where Colors Fall

Before we continue on, let's quickly go back to the Color Pie in general and look into more of the specifics regarding why cards within Magic are put into certain color(s). For the sake of convenience, I have decided to make my own categories for the three general reasons that determine where a card ends up, Flavor, Mechanical and Mixed.

I already touched on a bit of philosophy and flavor earlier so I will keep my covering of the Flavor category brief. Cards that I have put in this category have their color identity based on the fact that the action, idea, archetype, or character said card is depicting is either straight up inherently a type of ideology or trait that falls under the philosophy of a specific color(s) or is something that is far more likely to fall under the philosophy of said color(s) than it would in other color identities.

Alaborn Trooper

2 ☀

Creature — Human Soldier

"I dedicate my body to my country
And my life to my King."
—Alaborn Soldier's Oath

Illus. Lubov

2/3

Armored Whirl Turtle

2 💧

Creature — Turtle

Not all enormous beasts are quick to anger.

0/5

007/040 C
GS1 • EN Tingting Yeh
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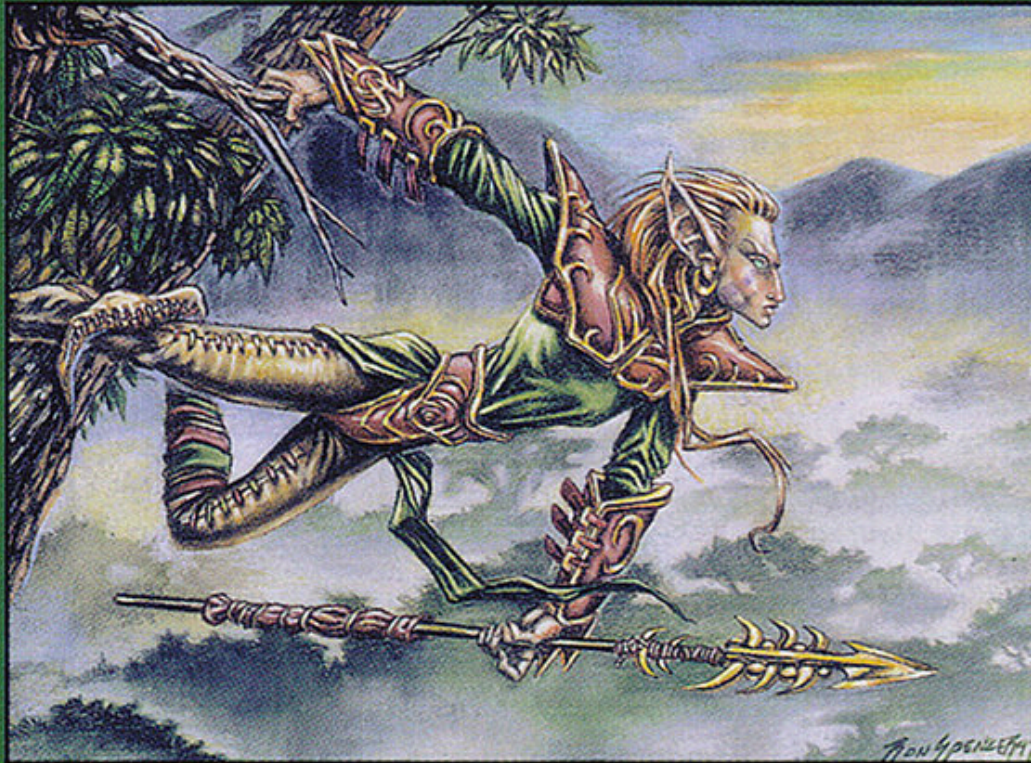
Bane Alley Blackguard

1 ⚫

Creature — Human Rogue

"I'm in the field of procurement, and business is good. The guilds want all kinds of maps and relics these days, though what they want them for I'm not quite sure."

1/3

Mike Bierek
™ & ©2013 Wizards of the Coast 203/56

Norwood Ranger

Creature — Elf

The song of the forest is in perfect harmony. If a single note is out of place, the elves will find its source.

⌐Ron Spencer

1/2

Cards that fall under the Mechanical category are there because their colors are strictly based on their gameplay or mechanics(cards that have their mechanics based solely on the fact that they are part of a cycle could also be considered a subcategory of this type). I've noticed that cards in this category can have actions, ideas or archetypes that don't necessarily align perfectly with a color's ideology or method of doing something but it's mechanics do align with the color's gameplay identity.

I think a good example of what I mean would be cards like Baffling End and Fateful Absence. I'm going to be honest, I don't really know what is inherently White-aligned about a poor motherfucker just vanishing for no explainable reason, but mechanically these cards fit into White's ability to sort of "trade" with a player by exiling or destroying something they control and giving them something in return.

The final category is of course the Mixed category. Which is kind of just here for any cards that don't fit cleanly into either of the previous categories.

I should mention that I don't believe this is a perfect categorical system. MTG is very complex and nuanced at times so there are plenty of arguments to be made. For example, you could argue that Armored Whirl Turtle is of the mixed or mechanical category because having high toughness and low power does fit into like White and Blue sections of the Color Pie. These categories are a kind of simplification that is meant to help get some of these ideas and flavor or mechanic themes across.

Adding and Subtracting Colors
One thing that is interesting about the Color Pie is that one isn't stuck within a color identity until the end of time. At the end of the day, these colors are philosophies and it's only

natural that our personal philosophies evolve and change over time as we gain new experiences, come across new things, and obtain information we didn't have before. This ability to change colors is something that MTG likes to use in order to portray a character arc, important character moment, or a major change in how they view the world or themselves.

Nissa, Sage Animist

Planeswalker — Nissa

+1: Reveal the top card of your library. If it's a land card, put it onto the battlefield. Otherwise, put it into your hand.

−2: Put a legendary 4/4 green Elemental creature token named Ashaya, the Awoken World onto the battlefield.

−7: Untap up to six target lands. They become 6/6 Elemental creatures. They're still lands.

3

189/272 M
ORI • EN   ☙ WESLEY BURT   ™ & © 2015 Wizards of the Coast

For example, Nissa, a normally Mono-Green planeswalker temporarily became Green-Blue after encountering the trial of a Blue-aligned god named Khefnet on Amonkhet and being forced into a situation where she had to rely more on her thoughts and mind rather than instinct and she used that revelation in order to utilize her powers in new ways. In this case, she realized that the gods of Amonkhet could be manipulated in the same way that she manipulates the mana from leylines.

Nissa, Steward of Elements

X 🌳 💧

Legendary Planeswalker — Nissa

+2: Scry 2.

0: Look at the top card of your library. If it's a land card or a creature card with converted mana cost less than or equal to the number of loyalty counters on Nissa, Steward of Elements, you may put that card onto the battlefield.

−6: Untap up to two target lands you control. They become 5/5 Elemental creatures with flying and haste until end of turn. They're still lands.

224/322 M

C20 • EN 🖐 HOWARD LYON

X

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So overall, don't be surprised if you see a character gain, add, lose or change one, or more colors in their alignment, and I think it's helpful to consider why a character may have shifted color alignments.

It should also be mentioned that sometimes cards will mess around with the color alignment of a character for balance-based reasons, rather than purely character-based.

Tibalt, the Fiend-Blooded

Planeswalker — Tibalt

+1: Draw a card, then discard a card at random.

-4: Tibalt, the Fiend-Blooded deals damage equal to the number of cards in target player's hand to that player.

-6: Gain control of all creatures until end of turn. Untap them. They gain haste until end of turn.

2

The best example I can give is Tibalt who, according to Mark Rosewater in one of his Drive to Work podcasts covering Planeswalkers, mentioned that Tibalt has always been Black-Red aligned, with Red being his center color, but we only saw him when he was Mono-Red all the way up until Kaldheim.

Tibalt, Cosmic Impostor

5 ☠ 🔥

Legendary Planeswalker — Tibalt

As Tibalt enters the battlefield, you get an emblem with "You may play cards exiled with Tibalt, Cosmic Impostor, and you may spend mana as though it were mana of any color to cast those spells."

+2: Exile the top card of each player's library.

−3: Exile target artifact or creature.

−8: Exile all cards from all graveyards. Add 🔥🔥🔥.

◀ God   1 ☠   5

114/285 M

KHM • EN Yongjae Choi

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Ob Nixilis, the Hate-Twisted 3🁢🁢

Legendary Planeswalker — Nixilis

Whenever an opponent draws a card, Ob Nixilis, the Hate-Twisted deals 1 damage to that player.

−2: Destroy target creature. Its controller draws two cards.

5

100/264 U

WAR • EN — Yongjae Choi

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We also know the same thing applies to Ob-Nixilis because we know that Ob-Nixilis' color alignment is also Black-Red(with Black as the center color) and yet, at least at the time of this writing, we have only seen him when he's Mono-Black.

Edgar Markov

3 🔴 ⚪ 💀

Legendary Creature — Vampire Knight

Eminence — Whenever you cast another Vampire spell, if Edgar Markov is in the command zone or on the battlefield, create a 1/1 black Vampire creature token.

First strike, haste

Whenever Edgar Markov attacks, put a +1/+1 counter on each Vampire you control.

4/4

036/309 M
C17 ★ EN 🔜 VOLKAN BAGA
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We also know that factors like this did affect the Color alignment of Edgar Markov. Since he appeared in Crimson Vow as a White-Black card instead of Red, White and Black because, as Mark Rosewater pointed out when answering questions about the manner of the color identity on his blog, Innistrad sets tend to usually be two-color and if they had put him in as a three-color card he would be out of place in multiple aspects. First of all there would be no support whatsoever for any wedge colors and it would also make his card really weird and unsupported in draft(among other reasons I didn't mention).

Edgar, Charmed Groom

2 ☀ 💀

Legendary Creature — Vampire Noble

Other Vampires you control get +1/+1.

When Edgar, Charmed Groom dies, return it to the battlefield transformed under its owner's control.

"Our kind has taken my gift for granted. It is time to correct that folly."

4/4

236/277 · R

VOW · EN — Volkan Baga

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Now just to be clear, just because mechanics and set design factor into a card's color identity does not mean that the designers don't care about the character or their Color identity, far from it actually. In the case I gave with Markov, it's important to mention that in the story of Crimson Vow Sorin notes this as he watches the ritual Olivia is performing to wake Edgar up: "Any moment now, that woman's blood will drip onto his grandfather's lips. The rush of it will leave him overwhelmed—and, worse, her own memories and emotions will mingle with his," "Sorin was so careful whenever he woke his grandfather. He'd wait and wait until his own storm of emotions had settled, he'd keep his mind trained on pleasant memories, he'd do whatever was necessary to see that his grandfather woke comfortably. To wake from slumber is a frightening thing, much as no one wants to admit it," and "...now his grandfather is going to wake tasting that woman's blood, thick with ambition..." This tells us that if this ritual is not done carefully it can influence the mind and perceptions of the person it's waking up. Which to me is the most likely reason for his color identity changing, at least in-universe anyway. He has become mixed with Olivia's ambition and the desire for the wedding to finish along with a bunch of politicking stuff. It's also possible that Edgar is just much older than we last saw him so his personality has changed. So it's not like the designers or staff don't care about characterization or that the characterization doesn't matter, it's just that there are multiple factors at work here.

Center/Focus and Secondary Colors
Due to all this talk about multi-colored alignments, I think it's time to touch upon center and secondary colors.

A person or character can have one or more "center" and/or secondary colors in their color identity. For example, someone like Teferi might be both White and Blue but their center color is Blue and their secondary color is White.

Teferi, Hero of Dominaria

3 ☀ 💧

Legendary Planeswalker — Teferi

+1 : Draw a card. At the beginning of the next end step, untap two lands.

−3 : Put target nonland permanent into its owner's library third from the top.

−8 : You get an emblem with "Whenever you draw a card, exile target permanent an opponent controls."

4

Teferi, Master of Time

2 🌢🌢

Legendary Planeswalker — Teferi

M21

You may activate loyalty abilities of Teferi, Master of Time on any player's turn any time you could cast an instant.

+1: Draw a card, then discard a card.

−3: Target creature you don't control phases out. *(Treat it and anything attached to it as though they don't exist until its controller's next turn.)*

−10: Take two extra turns after this one.

3

075/274 M

M21 • EN Yongjae Choi

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Meanwhile, someone like Kaya has both White AND Black as their center colors. I've also seen center colors referred to as focus colors but they are the same thing.

Kaya, Geist Hunter

1 ⬤ ⬤

Legendary Planeswalker — Kaya

+1: Creatures you control gain deathtouch until end of turn. Put a +1/+1 counter on up to one target creature token you control.

−2: Until end of turn, if one or more tokens would be created under your control, twice that many of those tokens are created instead.

−6: Exile all cards from all graveyards, then create a 1/1 white Spirit creature token with flying for each card exiled this way.

3

240/277 M

RYAN PANCOAST

VOW • EN

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So what even is a center color? As mentioned earlier, multi-colored philosophies tend to be formed from what the colors that make them up agree on. However, when you assign a color as a center or focus you will have the philosophy in question lean towards that color more. The best way to explain is like this, you have a White-Blue character and their center is Blue. So they value Blue's philosophical goal of perfection and being the best you one can be. However, the presence of White as a secondary color sort of alters how they believe that goal should be achieved. In this case, you end up having a character who tries to achieve Blue's end goal through White's means and way of thinking. Thus, you end up with a character who is somehow using White's structure or morals in order to be the best they can be and try to improve the world around them. This presence of center and secondary colors adds a whole new layer of depth to color identity and can be used to better understand multicolored philosophies. As you can tell when it comes to center and secondary colors you can usually break them down into a formula of whatever the end goal of the color is + what they believe should be done to achieve it.

Now of course, like with most things regarding the Color Pie, there are a lot of nuances to be had. So I'm going to save more specific talks about what different center colors can mean when paired with other specific colors and how they can manifest at a later date.

Mechanics

Now of course I can't claim to make a series that will cover how the Color Pie affects Magic the Gathering's keywords and mechanics without discussing how the colors themselves influence the gameplay and game design of Magic.

Just like how each of the colors and their various combinations have their own strengths and weaknesses from a philosophical point of view they also have their own strengths and weaknesses in their respective gameplay. For example, Red is pretty good at damaging creatures, planeswalkers, players, and destroying artifacts but it usually has a really tough time when it comes to having any way to deal with enchantments. Meanwhile, Blue has counterspells to stop things from entering the battlefield, ways to bounce permanents, and to draw cards. However, it tends to be incredibly bad at destroying permanents once they are actually on the field.

It's important to remember that there tends to be at least one exception to these mechanical rules I'm describing. Sometimes the design team just makes an honest mistake and gives a color something that messes with what's supposed to be a color's weakness(es).

Harmonize

2 🌳 🌳

Sorcery

Draw three cards.

"Life's greatest lessons don't come from focus or concentration. They come from breathing and simply noticing."
—Seton, centaur druid

Sometimes the mechanical side of the Color Pie changes and what was once thought to make sense in a color for gameplay and/or philosophy based reasons gets changed, added, removed, etc.

One thing you should always remember, and I can't state this enough, is that a color doing something it normally can't isn't automatically some sort of mistake or Color Pie break. Sometimes colors can do something but only on rare occasions, sometimes there are cards that let a color makeup for a weakness to some degree but at some sort of major cost or downside.

There are times where a set that a color is in has a theme that just ends up applying to all the other colors too. An example of this is Amonkhet's or Innistrad's respective heavy graveyard themes. In such sets colors outside of Black may also get more graveyard recursion than usual, in this case, it comes in the form of mechanics like Embalm, Eternalize, Flashback, and/or Disturb.

We'll come back to Color Pie breaks and bends later. So let's talk about mana and how it ties into the Color Pie and gameplay.

As you probably already know, in Magic there is a mana system. If you want to cast a Blue spell you need Blue mana, and you can't just use Blue mana in order to cast a purely Red mana spell-like Shock.

Counterspell

Instant

Counter target spell.

Shock

Instant

Shock deals 2 damage to target creature or player.

The tools of invention became the weapons of revolution.

AER • EN Jason Rainville

This mana system creates an interesting interaction where players must fight two competing forces within the game. One force is pushing you to play with cards and decks that have as many colors as possible. This is because every color has strengths and weaknesses and the more colors you have in your decks the more likely you will be able to compensate for, and overcome, the weaknesses of each color. You could do something like use Blue to make up for White's lack of card draw, Red to make up for Blue's lack of damage dealing, Black's -1/-1 counters to help Red deal with indestructible creatures, White to help Red deal with enchantments, and so on and so forth.

However, this force comes into direct conflict with the mana system because the mana system actually pushes players in the exact opposite direction.

Since you can't use the Red mana produced by your basic Mountains to pay for your exclusively Blue mana Opt and you are unable to spend Blue mana to cast you purely Green Gigantosaurus you are encouraged to stick to as few colors as possible in order to increase the possibility that you will have the proper mana needed to cast the spells you need at any given time.

Gigantosaurus

Creature — Dinosaur

M19

"Each tooth is the length of a horse, and new ones grow in every sixteen days. Let's get a closer look!"
—Vivien Reid

10/10

If you're running a Mono-White deck you don't have to worry about accidentally drawing a Mountain when you need an Island, but you give up having the presence of Red's mechanical strengths in your deck and it may make any of White's mechanical weaknesses in your deck that much more prominent. You are basically forced to choose between variety and consistency to varying degrees on various levels of gameplay. This helps prevent a gameplay situation where five-color decks are literally the only kind of deck worth playing in all forms of Magic until the end of time. These two opposing forces basically force(haha) the player to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each color while also deciding what is the most optimal way to make their deck consistent.

The colors also help give the players realistic expectations of how a match might play out the moment the first lands have been placed down. For example, If I'm playing against Billy and he puts a Mountain into play I now know Billy is playing Red and will likely have some form of direct damage. So I should be careful and play with those factors in mind or else I may end up being punished by having all my small and important creatures destroyed by direct damage. I should also be careful about letting my health drop too low because while a color such as White might not be able to finish me off unless it manages to deal damage with its Flying creatures, a color like Red can just damage me directly with a variety of different spells.

Now if Billy plays an Island I now know he's playing Blue and that I have to watch out for counterspells. Maybe, I can trick Billy by playing a spell that seems to be important so that if he decides to counter it I can play the spell I actually need to win the game while all he's out of resources.

One of the things that Mark Rosewater points out is integral to game design is restrictions and limits. To a random passerby, saying something like this might come off as confusing but it actually makes a lot of sense. Let me put it this way, imagine if Magic the Gathering had no mana costs to consider, you could put any number of cards in your deck(no matter the format), all colors could do literally everything else the other colors could do with no downside, you could pick the exact cards that start in your hand, and had infinite health. Yeah, the game would fucking suck. It is very rare for a game that has no limitations to have any point in playing it. Yeah, I admit that the infinite health example might be a bit extreme. However, even without the infinite health, the version of Magic the Gathering I've described would literally play out the exact same every time. Most people would probably end up just running the same deck over and over with the exact same outcomes or they would probably just end up putting more interesting limitations themselves via the creation of new formats. In this way limitations actually breed creativity by forcing you to figure out interesting ways to achieve your goals(As mentioned in "Lesson #18: Restrictions breed creativity" in the "TWENTY YEARS, TWENTY LESSONS—PART 3" article).

Maro has also stated that "To design a good game, you need to understand why your target audience wants to play. And then you have to design your game to match that objective" and at the end of the day we all know Magic is a strategy card game. Part of the fun of Magic is that it's kind of like a puzzle. It leads to moments like "Ok, I want to play these colors and what's the best way to do that?," "Ok, I want to play this specific card, how do I build a deck that supports it?," or "Uh oh, My opponent played an enchantment that damages me every time I kill a creature, how do I play around it?"

In that last example do you try to kill them before they can amass enough creatures to be a real threat? Do you focus on gaining enough life to counteract their effects? Do you build an army of fliers and try slipping past their creatures? So on and so forth.

Also, Mark does have a good point about the fact that limitations can create really fun stories regarding gameplay. I remember one time I was using my favorite historic Izzet deck and I just barely managed to win at like one health against a Mono-White life gain deck that had managed to get over 130 total life; it was just insane(I really wish I had recorded it. I'm sure almost everyone who has played Magic enough has at least one story where they barely managed to edge out a win in a spectacular fashion through a storm of luck and wits. Stories and experiences like this wouldn't be possible without the limitations present in the general gameplay and the limitations put on each color.

Luck

I'm going to go off on a bit of a tangent away from just mechanics real quick. It's something that I feel is important to the game and helps it in many ways and yet it isn't talked about too often. That thing being luck.

Now, luck in games is a tricky thing. Most people don't want a majority of their games to be purely luck-based. As that would remove any possibility of using one's own skills to win and would make any game that isn't the purest form of casual frustrating. At the same time, there are times where you do want to spice a game up with some luck because if you don't do that then the game would literally play out the same way time and time again with no variation(which would get boring really fast and limit replay value). The proper ratio of luck to skill in design varies

from game to game depending on its genre, mechanics, and goals but I would argue that luck does in fact help Magic as a game.

First of all, there's the obvious fact that it prevents games from playing out the exact same way even if you or an opponent is running the same deck over and over. If people had complete control over something like their deck order or starting cards in hand then there's a good chance that after a while any games involving that deck would play out in the exact same predictable fashion. Which would mean that the gameplay is more likely to get stale and/or you are more likely to get bored of your favorite decks.

I would also argue that luck can act as one of the previously mentioned limitations that can be ever so important to game design. It is an obstacle a player must overcome or workaround. In deckbuilding this takes the form of generally trying to make decks reach a certain level of consistency in their function and win condition by choosing the proper cards. It can also take the form of using the cards in your hand in the most ideal or strategically advantageous way, forcing the player to think of the different ways in which they can achieve their goals with different hands or situations. This also applies to facing the same opponent, since said opponents will not always cast the exact same spells, creatures, and various threats in the exact same order, if at all.

Luck is also something that helps even the playing field. It's thanks to luck that even a five-dollar budget deck has at least a chance, even if it's small, of beating a finely tuned and more efficient deck. Without luck, there would be very little reason in continuing to play through a game of Magic the second you realized the opponent had a more meta deck than you.

The luck system in Magic the Gathering is definitely not perfect though. We've all had that moment where, for some ungodly reason, you somehow mulligan three hands in a row with one land in it and games where you could have easily won if you just drew that one card that should be in your deck. The point of this isn't to say that Magic the Gathering's luck is ideal or perfect but I would argue that it helps the game.

Considering Keywords

Returning to the topic of mechanics I think most would agree that it would be borderline ludicrous to talk about mechanics without mentioning keywords. What mechanics are is pretty self-explanatory, and they often have little unofficial nicknames based on the first card that was able to do them, ie Flicker and Lure effects(Flicker effects are those that exile a permanent and then return it under its owner's control and Lure effects are those that force an opponent's creature to block the creature with said effect).

Some of these mechanics and/or abilities are keyworded. In order to keep this as clear and concise as possible, we will be using the definition laid out by Maro in his article titled "Keyword to the Wise." Which defines a keyword as "a word or series of words used as shorthand to represent a mechanic. Examples of keywords would be flying, first strike, flashback, and morph."

Magic does something very interesting in which it will keyword certain mechanics that are used a lot but it doesn't keyword literally every single mechanic and it will sometimes keyword something in one set but not another. Well, why is that? Luckily for us, literally everyone and their mom has asked the design team why this is the case and Gavin Verhey actually gives a very in-depth answer to this question in his Good Morning Magic video titled "Why Doesn't Consider have Surveil?"

For those of you who don't know, there was a keyword that appeared in Guilds of Ravnica for the Blue and Black aligned House Dimir guild called Surveil. Surveil is a keyword

that reads "Look at the top N cards of your library, then put any number of them into your graveyard in any order." By the way, N is just a placeholder for a fixed number that can vary from card to card. So a card with Surveil might say Surveil 2 and a different one might say Surveil 1.

The example card Gavin's video addresses is the card Consider. Which is an Instant that costs one Blue mana and reads "Look at the top card of your library. You may put that card into your graveyard. Draw a card."

As we can all see, Consider is a card that literally has the Surveil mechanic in all but name. Which begs the question "So why not just put Surveil on the card?" Well, in the video Gavin gives us several reasons as to why choices such as these are made.

The first reason is that a majority of keywords that exist aren't evergreen. Evergreen keywords are a list of keywords that can, and often are, used for any set or block no matter when and/or where it takes place. Some examples of evergreen keywords you may be familiar with include Flying and First Strike.

This means that keywords that aren't evergreen probably won't appear in another random set unless it's for a cameo, in a product that is meant for veteran and experienced players(such as Modern Horizons), or if a keyword is well-received enough to warrant it being used again in another set or block that has the proper in-universe flavor and/or mechanical themes in said product. Gavin goes on to further explain that, like with most things in game design, there are strengths, weaknesses, and costs to consider when designing or implementing something. In the case of keywords that thing is learning the in-game terminology and jargon. Personally, I would say that Magic generally does a pretty good job of teaching players what various keywords do. They do this in the beautiful and efficient way of just fucking explaining what the keyword does on as many cards with enough space as they can.

This helps ensure that it is very unlikely that a player will encounter a card with a keyword they've never seen before in the middle of a game and being forced into a situation where they have to look up what it does, since they probably will have already seen the keyword typed out on another, probably more common, card or they can just read what the keyword does on the card itself. Of course, the opponent could probably also explain what the card does.

However, stuff like this also means that keywording an ability a player may never see again isn't very efficient. Gavin rightfully points out that it usually takes more words and space to write out the keyword and explain what it does than to simply just write out what the card does without a keyword.

So there are some abilities that have no reason to be keyworded because their abilities have a short enough description anyway.

Also, every time you make a keyword you are requiring players to have to learn and remember what it does and how it works. So, being forced to remember something that would otherwise be just two or three words long anyway is not very efficient. If literally, every possible Magic ability had a keyword it might make things a bit more convenient for veteran players but it would make actually getting into the game super difficult since you would be forcing players to not only

come to understand the game itself but also memorize a dictionary's worth of vocabulary, what they mean, and how they all work.

Keywords are also used to show the important themes of a set, block, or faction. For example, if you see Landfall you will know that the set will probably care about playing and utilizing lands. However, if another set had only one card with a Landfall-like ability but no keyword it would help convey that even though this specific card cares about land it won't be a major theme in the set.

So forcing players to memorize a keyword only to have that knowledge be used once or twice could end up confusing them because then there was very little point in making the keyword and they might be expecting a lot more cards to have those keywords if they're being forced to memorize it. This also ties in with something that Gavin mentioned in his video "New Evergreen Mechanics?!" This being that when keywords that aren't evergreen show up in a set they are usually going to be focused on in a decent capacity.

In that sense, keywords can act as a sort of highlighter that's meant to help a player know what to expect in a set or faction and what they may or may not want to be playing. If you see a keyword like Mentor then you can guess that the Boros are meant to be aggressive with a large number of small creatures, since the keyword rewards you for attacking by giving you the chance to permanently increase the size of your creatures.

If you see something like Flashback in a set like Innistrad: Midnight Hunt then you know that said set will probably care about the graveyard in some form.

At the end of the day, keywords are mechanics so they can be just as flavorful. Firstly, let's look at some of the ways that keywords not tied to specific Planes or settings, such as Evergreen and some Deciduous keywords, can be used for flavor. The keyword I will be using for this example is Flying, which is a keyword that reads "this creature can't be blocked except by creatures with Flying and/or Reach." When it comes to such a keyword, it is often used in two flavor-based ways. The first way is through the philosophy of each Color and the second way is

more unique to the creature, creature type, or specific person/thing. I guess you could describe the second way as revolving around physiological, biological, magical, or iconic factors in one way or another.

      An example of the first way is how Blue as a color gets a lot of Flying creatures. This ability ties into Blue being a color that often utilizes things like trickery, subtlety, or evasive means in order to help tackle problems indirectly or to help avoid being stopped directly by the enemy. So it makes sense that Blue would try to rely on such an ability when possible.

Symbolically, it also connects to Blue's association with the classical element of air(which I won't go into right here but I have covered it in previous articles and I will cover it again when I make an article covering Blue itself).

An example of what I mean for keywords that revolve around physiological, biological, magical or iconic factors would be how keywords like Flying are used with creatures like dragons.

Shivan Dragon — 4RR

Creature — Dragon

Flying *(This creature can't be blocked except by creatures with flying or reach.)*

R: Shivan Dragon gets +1/+0 until end of turn.

"It's just playing with us, Marsden."
—Dafynne the Radiant, last words

5/5

Almost every dragon you see in Magic the Gathering has Flying. This ties into the fact that a majority of dragons you see in Magic, and media in general, have wings or some other way of flying. This helps the flavor and mechanical identity of dragons in Magic while also making sense for the creature and making that aspect of them intuitive and easy to understand for players.

This also connects to another point that Gavin brought up. That being it is really important to consider the imagery and flavor keywords invoke. Part of the reason that something like the act of dealing noncombat damage to a creature or planeswalker probably won't be called something like "Burn" is because from a flavor perspective such a keyword is extremely limiting in the imagery it invokes. In the case of "Burn" it would specifically call to mind things like fire, magma, lighting, and other stuff that could burn you, and it wouldn't make sense for every damage dealing card to have "Burn" associated with it. A card that's just meant to be a strong punch or strike would not make a lot of sense for hypothetical keywords like Burn, and this dissonance could be disconnecting or confusing for new players.

This is why the names of keywords are also important, I mean both Chroma and Devotion do the exact same thing but Devotion gives off a completely different vibe and thematic connotation than something like Chroma.

This also means that when someone is designing a keyword that's supposed to be evergreen they often want to make sure that the name covers a wide enough amount of potential imagery to make sense in a variety of contexts.

There's also the fact that when you keyword something you have to make sure the mechanic that is being named is cohesive and specific enough. The reason Gavin believes it's

unlikely that something like exiling a creature and returning it to the battlefield wouldn't just be keyworded as "Blink" is because there are too many ways that said ability can manifest. Sometimes when you blink something it is exiled and immediately comes back, sometimes it doesn't come back until after a turn or two, so on and so forth. So trying to label this broad mechanic under one word would be a bit difficult.

Oh, it's also important to mention that which keywords are considered evergreen and which ones aren't can change and evolve over time. Keywords such as Prowess used to be evergreen but have since been changed to deciduous at the time of making this writing. Keywords such as Ward have been added to the list of evergreen keywords as recently as the Strixhaven set. The reasons for why a keyword may have its evergreen status removed can vary. The mechanic itself may just be considered unfun or annoying(this was the reason for why Landwalk is no longer evergreen), or the mechanic in question has simply become obsolete because of a new mechanic that takes its place or the like(Menace replacing Fear is a good example of this).

Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Keywords/Mechanics

Three words you might have seen thrown around when people are discussing keywords, mechanics, and abilities are "primary," "secondary," and "tertiary." These descriptors simply refer to how often a color gets a certain keyword, mechanic, and/or ability. Also, more than one color can be primary, secondary, or tertiary in an ability. For example, both White AND Blue are primary in flying. This means that White and Blue usually get fliers at about the same rate and rarities.

While there's always a primary color for each ability, there is not always a tertiary or even secondary color for a mechanic. When it comes to multicolored cards they can use primary or secondary abilities of the colors in their identity in order to capture the feel of said color(s) but they almost never utilize the tertiary abilities of any colors in their identity, ie White is tertiary in reach but Mark says that the design team wouldn't normally make a White-Black card with reach via the logic of "White gets reach even though Black doesn't so this White-Black card should have reach due to the White part of its casting cost." However, if the ability we were talking about was one that White was primary or secondary in, like First Strike, then it would be fair game for a multicolored card with White in its identity to have First Strike based solely on the fact that White has access to the mechanic.

If a color is primary in something it means that it's the color, or one of the colors, that the ability shows up in the most. If it's an ability that appears in every set then a color that's primary in that respective ability will get the effect in a majority of sets, like how Blue virtually always has cards with Flying in every Magic set you come across).

In Mark's 2017 and 2021 mechanical Color Pie articles he makes it clear that there is a wide range of what being primary in something can mean because of the fact that in Magic different effects and abilities appear in different amounts at different levels. A great example that he gives is how a color that's secondary in Flying can have a greater number of cards with that ability

than the number of cards with extra-turn creating abilities in a color that is primary in said ability.

This is because there is just a massive difference in the number cards made with an ability like Flying and the number of extra-turn-based spells and abilities that are made. Extra-turn spells in general also tend to be at higher rarities than Flying, which helps bring me to my next point. If a color is primary in an ability then that ability is more likely to show up at lower rarities in that color, i.e. it's more likely to appear in common or uncommon rather than strictly mythic or rare cards. Colors that are primary in an ability can also have cards that are capable of granting said abilities to others, i.e. Blue being able to give creatures Flying.

If a color is secondary in something that means the color has the ability show up on its cards on a somewhat regular basis, but not as often as any of its primary abilities. Secondary abilities will not always be in as low of a rarity pool as any abilities a color is primary in. Also, abilities that are secondary in a color usually appear in said color within most sets but sometimes they do have certain restrictions or drawbacks regarding when or how they can be used. An example that is given to us would be how Red is secondary in Flying but it's Flying is usually restricted to the Dragon and Phoenix creature types specifically.

Similar to primary abilities, colors that are secondary in an ability do have the ability to occasionally grant other targets said ability.

Finally, there are tertiary abilities. Colors that are tertiary in something get said ability occasionally and they don't get them in every set. Maro points out that sometimes an ability a color is tertiary can go literal years at a time without showing up on any cards of that color. Similar to that of some secondary abilities, tertiary abilities often come with special rules or restrictions that limit when the keyword can be used.

An example would be how Black is tertiary in First Strike and while it can get First Strike on other things the keyword tends to be more limited to Black-aligned Knights.

Especially if the Knights are meant to act as a mirrored version of a White-aligned aligned Knight or the like.

Unlike primary or secondary abilities, colors that are tertiary in an ability can almost never grant that ability to other cards, i.e. a Black card that grants a creature First Strike is not necessarily impossible but incredibly unlikely and very rare.

Creature Types

Cards with creature types can usually have said type split into two subsets. First, there are creature classes, which are things like occupations, careers, jobs, and callings.

Then there are races, which is more of the genetic makeup or species a creature falls under. A majority of the sufficiently sapient creatures in Magic have one or more classes and one or more creature types.

Some examples of creature classes include things like Knights, Wizards, and Rogues and some examples of creature races include Humans, Vedalken and Vampires. Also, obviously, the way Magic uses race isn't one-to-one with the scientific definition, because I'm pretty sure that would mean birds would be divided up into every possible bird species or something. Also, Mark has gone on record in stating that in the context of Magic the term race is reserved for creatures that are sentient enough to do things like hold a job and the like.

nicolbolas96 asked:

Hi Mark. Following the discussion about the "dinosaur" creature type, can you give your rigorous definitions of the "types of creature subtypes", like class, race and others, please?

Having read a bunch of replies, it's clear my usage of the term "race" is confusing people. I wasn't speaking general English, but using a Magic specific term. The terms "race" and "class", in Magic terms, are used to represent sapient (and usually humanoid) species and jobs they can hold. Races can, but aren't required to, have classes. Classes, in contrast, almost always come with a race creature type.

🕐 November 25, 2020   ♥ 34 notes

Hi Mark. Following the discussion about the "dinosaur" creature type, can you give your rigorous definitions of the "types of creature subtypes", like class, race and others, please?

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Well, whether dinosaurs are considered a race or not in the context of Magic, my point still stands. You have the creature and if it's sentient enough it probably has a class, because I imagine things like antelopes don't usually have jobs unless you're on a specific plane.

Also, there exist cases where a creature type only has a class, most often this happens when making tokens it seems. I suppose these tend to represent summoning something that is playing a specific role while remaining open to the possibility that said role could be occupied by a number of different creatures.

So after reading all of this you're probably thinking "Well that's all well and good but why are you explaining creature types to me in an article about the Color Pie?" I would argue that creature types are actually pretty important when considering how MTG's Color Pie works in the game and that they have a clear impact on each color's abilities and presentation.

Some creature types, be they class or race-based, can have certain overarching abilities or mechanics that a lot of them share for flavor reasons and in order to convey some sort of culture or function those creatures have.

Serra Angel

3 {W} {W}

Creature — Angel

Flying, vigilance

The angel remembers her past lives like dreams. Her song held up meadows. Her blade drove back darkness. Her wings carried her across the ages.

4/4

For example, most Angels have flying because of the fact that they have wings, a lot of Hydras have some sort of way to put +1/+1 counters on themselves in order to represent them growing new heads and artificers typically care about artifacts in some way.

However, to go even further some colors get abilities at certain rates purely because there is some sort of creature type that often appears in their colors. While Red is secondary in Flying, said keyword almost only shows up in the form of Red dragons and phoenixes.

So one of the major reasons Red is considered secondary in Flying is because of the fact that dragons and phoenixes exist.

Similar to keywords, each color also has different creature types that show up within them at varying amounts for various reasons, such as flavor, ideology, mechanics, etc. A creature type like vampires almost always has Black somewhere in their color identity.

However, in certain planes or settings vampires without Black in their alignment do appear, such as the Mono-White and Mono-Red vampires that are on the planes of Ixalan and Innistrad respectively for various flavor related reasons.

Tying back to the point about keywords, some vampires get keywords like lifelink and flying. Which are both keywords that Black has access to and it ties into the life/blood-draining nature a lot of vampires have along with their pop-culture ability to fly in some way.

Two terms you might have heard when people are talking about creature types in MTG are "Iconic" and "Characteristic" creatures.

Iconic creatures are basically the creature type that is usually meant to embody, epitomize or represent a color and they are often heavy hitting or splashy cards that show up in higher rarities than that of Characteristic creatures. Thus, iconic creatures tend to only appear about once to a couple of times in most sets. Think of them as the creatures that when a player sees they should give said player a sense of what the color the creature is part of is all about. For

example, if you look at an Angel you will almost immediately be able to understand that White is a color that probably believes in good and evil and, it seeks to protect people, strives for peace and that it cares about justice, like many angels tend to do.

In the article "BUILDING A BETTER MONSTER" Mark states that iconic creatures must be creatures people already know, so Magic original creatures like Aetherborn or Kor tend to not make very good iconic creatures. So iconic creatures need to be 1. Well-known creatures and 2. Embody their respective color. As of this writing, the current iconic creatures are as follows: Angels for White, Sphinxes for Blue, Demons for Black, Dragons for Red, and Hydras for Green.

Angel of Destiny

3 W W

Creature — Angel Cleric

Flying, double strike

Whenever a creature you control deals combat damage to a player, you and that player each gain that much life.

At the beginning of your end step, if you have at least 15 life more than your starting life total, each player Angel of Destiny attacked this turn loses the game.

2/6

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Arbiter of the Ideal

4 U U

Creature — Sphinx

Flying

Inspired — Whenever Arbiter of the Ideal becomes untapped, reveal the top card of your library. If it's an artifact, creature, or land card, you may put it onto the battlefield with a manifestation counter on it. That permanent is an enchantment in addition to its other types.

4/5

— Svetlin Velinov
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Griselbrand

4 B B B B

Legendary Creature — Demon

Flying, lifelink
Pay 7 life: Draw seven cards.

"Avacyn emerged from the broken Helvault, but her freedom came at a price—him."
—Thalia, Knight-Cathar

7/7

— Igor Kieryluk
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Drakuseth, Maw of Flames

4 R R R

Legendary Creature — Dragon

Flying

Whenever Drakuseth, Maw of Flames attacks, it deals 4 damage to any target and 3 damage to each of up to two other targets.

"Spread out, you idiots! Spread out!"
—Marsden, party leader, last words

7/7

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M20 • EN ☙ GRZEGORZ RUTKOWSKI
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Polukranos, World Eater — 2🟢🟢

Legendary Creature — Hydra

X X 🟢: Monstrosity X. *(If this creature isn't monstrous, put X +1/+1 counters on it and it becomes monstrous.)*

When Polukranos, World Eater becomes monstrous, it deals X damage divided as you choose among any number of target creatures your opponents control. Each of those creatures deals damage equal to its power to Polukranos.

5/5

— Johann Bodin

       Characteristic creatures are what I would describe as the "lite" version of iconic creatures. While they don't appear in literally every set, they are meant to appear more often than not. Just like Iconic creatures, there is one for each color. Well… except for Black which has two for some reason. Characteristic creatures are all humanoid, typically smaller than iconic creatures, and often appear at lower rarities than iconic creatures. Similar to iconic creatures, they tend to capture the "vibe" of a color in one way or another. The characteristic races of each color are Humans for White, Merfolk for Blue, Vampires and Zombies for Black, Goblins for Red, and, last but not least, Elves for Green.

Adeline, Resplendent Cathar   1 W W

Legendary Creature — Human Knight

Vigilance

Adeline, Resplendent Cathar's power is equal to the number of creatures you control.

Whenever you attack, for each opponent, create a 1/1 white Human creature token that's tapped and attacking that player or a planeswalker they control.

*/4

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MID • EN   BRYAN SOLA

Ambassador Laquatus   1 U U

Legendary Creature — Merfolk Wizard   10

3: Target player puts the top three cards of his or her library into his or her graveyard.

"Life is a game. The only thing that matters is whether you're a pawn or a player."

— Jim Murray

1/3

Drana, Kalastria Bloodchief   3 B B

Legendary Creature — Vampire Shaman

Flying

X B B: Target creature gets -0/-X until end of turn and Drana, Kalastria Bloodchief gets +X/+0 until end of turn.

"If our former masters would have us kneel again, they shall feel our defiance slashed across their membranes."

— Mike Bierek

4/4

Josu Vess, Lich Knight   2 B B

Legendary Creature — Zombie Knight

Kicker 5 B *(You may pay an additional 5 B as you cast this spell.)*

Menace

When Josu Vess, Lich Knight enters the battlefield, if it was kicked, create eight 2/2 black Zombie Knight creature tokens with menace.

4/5

095/269 R
DOM•EN   TYLER JACOBSON

Factions

As always before we talk about something we must first define it. According to Mark Rosewater's "FACTION PACKED" article there are four requirements that must be met for a group to be considered a "faction" in a Magic the Gathering set or block. #1: The set has elements that, mechanically and flavorfully, represent various groups, #2: Each group has a mechanical identity, #3: Each group has a creative identity, and #4: The relationship between the groups defines the set.

Mark extrapolates on each of these points and I think it is important to at least skim over them in order to get a better understanding of what he's talking about, starting with his first point.

Flavor-wise, factions can represent any number of things. It can be anything from students majoring in different things in Strixhaven, to the occupants residing on different worlds, such as how Alara's shards once were, to different groups that are all living together across a plane, such as the tribes on Innistrad. While there are plenty of factions who fight each other, such as the two sides of the Mirrodin/New Phyrexia conflict and the guilds of Ravnica, there are factions that live in peace with each other, such as the colleges of Strixhaven. What the goal and identity of each faction is can vary greatly, but one of their most important features is that one faction is going to have to coexist with at least one other faction in some way, and said world tends to be affected or shaped by whatever kind of relationship the factions have with each other in some way(because what's the point of having only one faction with nothing else for them to bounce off of?). The contrast between the factions is also important, or else you risk them all just muddling together either mechanically or flavorfully with no distinct difference.

Haazda Marshal

Creature — Human Soldier

Whenever Haazda Marshal and at least two other creatures attack, create a 1/1 white Soldier creature token with lifelink.

Ravnica's convoluted power structure often boils down to who can muster the most swords on a given block.

1/1

013/259 U   GRN • EN   🔷 Josh Hass   ™ & © 2018 Wizards of the Coast

Flight of Equenauts 7 ⚪

Creature — Human Knight

Convoke *(Your creatures can help cast this spell. Each creature you tap while casting this spell pays for ① or one mana of that creature's color.)*

Flying

"Yes, there's competition between our equenauts and the Boros skyjeks. At least they think it's a competition."

4/5

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GRN • EN 🜲 ZEZHOU CHEN ™ & © 2018 Wizards of the Coast

While there are many different things that can define a faction, they tend to be balanced around the color pie in some way. This balance can be as specific as a unique mechanic or gameplay style, such as the keywords of the Ravnican guilds and the gameplay styles of the Strixhaven colleges, or as simple as what colors a faction is made up of and has access to. Due to the fact that there are five colors in Magic factions tend to show up in sets of five or ten. They also tend to have access to the same number of colors but this is not a hard rule and factions, such as the ones on Ixalan, can each have a different number of colors, and there do exist sets and planes

with less than five or ten factions. The color pie also tends to influence the goals, workings, and culture of a faction

One of the most popular ways to give a faction a clear and easy-to-understand mechanical identity is via a keyword.

Maro highlights the fact that while there are cases with factions having more than one keyword, there will usually only be one keyword per faction if there are more than four factions. This means that only one faction can have said keywords. This doesn't mean that there can NEVER be a card outside of the faction that has that keyword, it just means that the other factions in the set or world cannot have said keyword.

If the Selesnya has Convoke then none of the other Ravnican guilds can have Convoke, even if there might be a card in some other non-Ravnican set that has Convoke.

Factions also tend to have a certain playstyle they lean into or gravitate towards that also helps reinforce what the faction is all about. If you were drafting a Ravnica set and decided to draft Red and Blue it is pretty clear that you are going to be casting a lot of instants and sorceries, and keywords like Overload and Jump-Start not only reward you for choosing to play instants and sorceries but also helps give you the vibe of a bunch of mad scientists tinkering with spells and magic in a manner that can sometimes lead to some destructively explosive consequences.

Sometimes a faction's theme can be reinforced without the use of a keyword. For example, Strixhaven's Lorehold college cares and rewards you for playing stuff from the graveyard which helps tie into how they focus on digging up history and the past while also setting them apart from other Red and White factions, like the militaristic Boros.

Sometimes factions will have strong mechanical themes that care about a specific part of the game, typically something the other factions they are in contact with don't care about. The Esper shard of Alara cares about artifacts while none of the other shards do and the Izzet League cares about slinging instants and sorceries while none of the other guilds do. Another popular aspect of

the game that factions can be built around is creature types. When a faction is built around a creature type a considerable chunk of the faction will share that creature type and mechanically care/reward you for playing said creature types. A good example of this would be the five major factions on Innistrad(humans, werewolves, spirits, vampires, and zombies).

Katilda, Dawnhart Prime

{G}{W}

Legendary Creature — Human Warlock

Protection from Werewolves

Human creatures you control have "{T}: Add one mana of any of this creature's colors."

{4}{G}{W}, {T}: Put a +1/+1 counter on each creature you control.

"The angels may have abandoned us, but Ghrin-Danu has not."

1/1

230/277 R

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Tovolar, Dire Overlord

{1}{R}{G}

Legendary Creature — Human Werewolf

Whenever a Wolf or Werewolf you control deals combat damage to a player, draw a card.

At the beginning of your upkeep, if you control three or more Wolves and/or Werewolves, it becomes night. Then transform any number of Human Werewolves you control.

Daybound

4/4

3/3

246/277 R

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Brine Comber

{1}{W}{U}

Creature — Spirit

Whenever Brine Comber enters the battlefield or becomes the target of an Aura spell, create a 1/1 white Spirit creature token with flying.

Disturb {W}{U} *(You may cast this card from your graveyard transformed for its disturb cost.)*

1/1

233/277 U

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Vampire Socialite

{B}{R}

Creature — Vampire Noble

Menace *(This creature can't be blocked except by two or more creatures.)*

When Vampire Socialite enters the battlefield, if an opponent lost life this turn, put a +1/+1 counter on each other Vampire you control.

As long as an opponent lost life this turn, each other Vampire you control enters the battlefield with an additional +1/+1 counter on it.

2/2

249/277 U

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  One thing that is EXTREMELY important to not just factions but Magic the Gathering as a whole is the art direction and creative identity of the game and its groups. This is especially true for factions. Factions in MTG tend to have different appearances and names, unless the name is just whatever creature type a faction revolves around(ie. The zombies on Innistrad). Technically, names like "Izzet" have no mechanical relevance. It's not a keyword and if you were to not put the word on a single card the cards themselves would still function as intended. Names such as these are still extremely important however, as they show up in card titles, flavor text, and help make factions more distinct from each other and easier to identify. It's easier to imagine the Izzet League and understand the type of people in its faction than it is to try to understand some nebulous group of Red and Blue aligned people. This also helps the world feel more complete and lived in and since the factions are more distinct it makes it harder to confuse the Izzet League with the Blue and Red factions of other planes, like the Prismari. Art direction is also important since it's crucial that you are usually able to tell which faction is which at a glance. This is often done in the card art via wardrobe/uniforms, tools, weapons, expressions, spells, colors color palette, etc.

Izzet Guildgate

Land — Gate

Izzet Guildgate enters the battlefield tapped.

🜚: Add 💧 or 🔥.

Every laboratory buzzes with new experiments, each a piece of Ral's ambitious project.

For example, the Izzet League is a group of mad scientists so their spells are often wild and experimental(often with lightning or energy shooting out from somewhere), their expressions are often full of strong/powerful emotions, and their outfits or designs are often asymmetrical in order to make their designs more dynamic or unbalanced. Not to mention that when they are depicted casting a spell they are often seen doing it with the aid of some sort of technology to help show that their technological inventions are an important facet of their identity.

Beamsplitter Mage

Creature — Vedalken Wizard

Whenever you cast an instant or sorcery spell that targets only Beamsplitter Mage, if you control one or more other creatures that spell could target, choose one of those creatures. Copy that spell. The copy targets the chosen creature.

The Izzet love replicating results.

2/2

155/259 U

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Epic Experiment

X 🔵 🔴

Sorcery

Exile the top X cards of your library. For each instant and sorcery card with converted mana cost X or less among them, you may cast that card without paying its mana cost. Then put all cards exiled this way that weren't cast into your graveyard.

— Dan Scott

Flux Channeler

2🌢

Creature — Human Wizard

Whenever you cast a noncreature spell, proliferate. *(Choose any number of permanents and/or players, then give each another counter of each kind already there.)*

"Inform our allies in the Tenth and throw the circuit. It's about to get weird."

2/2

HAIRSTYLE OF WIZARD SHOULD MIMIC THE DRAGON'S FLAIR

One/Two Handed Long Sword

SHORT SWORD

BOTTOM HAS CLAW WITH GLASS ORB WITH GRENADE MAGIC INSIDE

Halberd styles

Older Halberd mostly ceremonial now
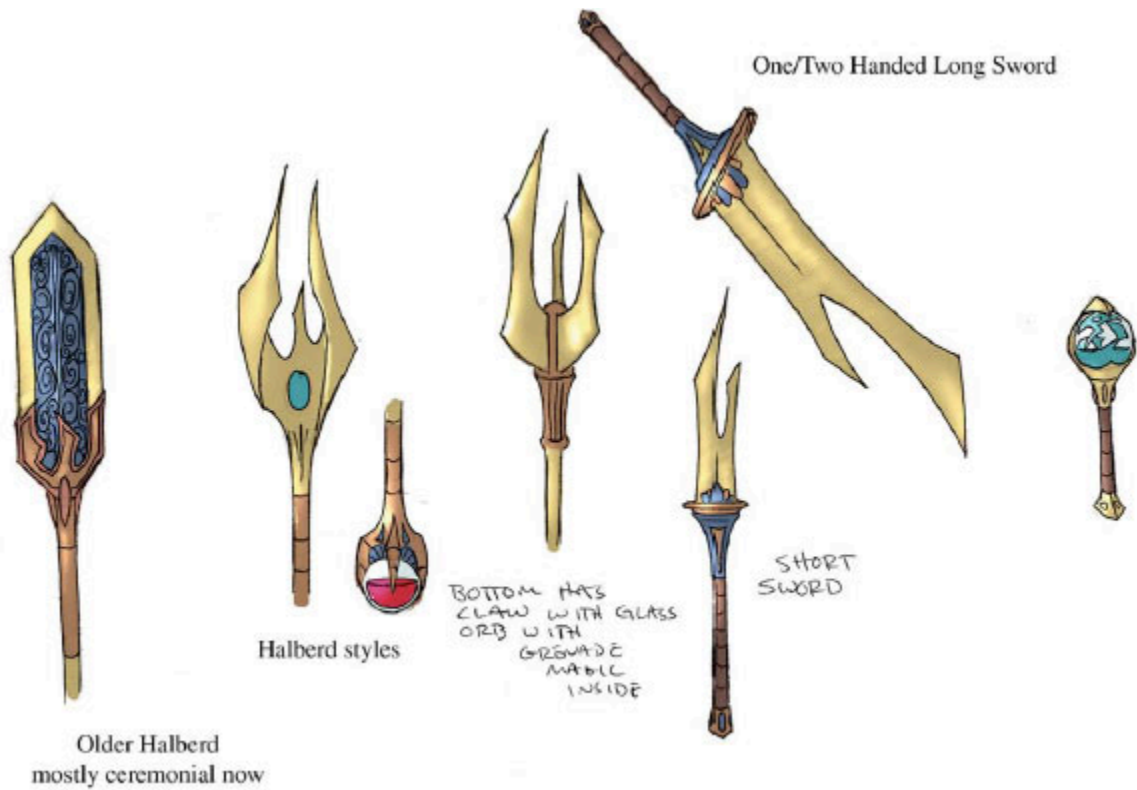
(Costume and weapon references are from the "GUILDPACT STYLE GUIDE: IZZET" article)

The moment you see them you are probably going to get vibes like "exciting," "risky," "explosive," "innovative," etc., and you would never mistake an Izzet spell gone haywire for the bright, controlled, focused, and restraining law magic of the Azorius Senate.

Absorb

Instant

Counter target spell. You gain 3 life.

"In your misguided attempt to subvert the law, you have eloquently explained why the law must exist."

151/259 R

RNA • EN   Izzy

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Lawmage's Binding

1 ☀ 💧

Enchantment — Aura

Flash

Enchant creature

Enchanted creature can't attack or block, and its activated abilities can't be activated.

High Alert

1 ☀ 💧

Enchantment

Each creature you control assigns combat damage equal to its toughness rather than its power.

Creatures you control can attack as though they didn't have defender.

2 ☀ 💧: Untap target creature.

The art of the Izzet League also has a lot of focus placed on their spells and experiments which acts as yet another way of subtly guiding the player to the fact that the Izzet are a faction that slings spells. As opposed to a faction like the Simic or the Gruul which clearly display creatures as their main focus.

Growth-Chamber Guardian

1 🌳

Creature — Elf Crab Warrior

2🌳: Adapt 2. *(If this creature has no +1/+1 counters on it, put two +1/+1 counters on it.)*

Whenever one or more +1/+1 counters are put on Growth-Chamber Guardian, you may search your library for a card named Growth-Chamber Guardian, reveal it, put it into your hand, then shuffle your library.

2/2

128/259 R 🖐 Bram Sels

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Applied Biomancy

Instant

Choose one or both —
- Target creature gets +1/+1 until end of turn.
- Return target creature to its owner's hand.

153/259 C
RNA • EN ⟶ SIDHARTH CHATURVEDI
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With the Simic Combine, we see a lot of their mutant creatures, which shows us that they're all about messing with your own creatures in order to make them better or bigger, and with the Gruul Clans we see their creatures often lashing out in order to attack or destroy things, which plays into their aggressive big creature-based gameplay*(If you want to hear more about art direction in Ravnica, and Magic the Gathering in general, I would recommend Ravnican Artist's videos on the subject-*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hrj4rH5XlhA&list=PL-gCV1NKMUP4g_Vtl9X3EMvd7zgv39HoP&ab_channel=RavnicanArtist*)*.

Bolrac-Clan Crusher

3 🔴 🌳

Creature — Ogre Warrior

🅣, Remove a +1/+1 counter from a creature you control: Bolrac-Clan Crusher deals 2 damage to any target.

Jaharg discovered that the shapes and symmetries so pleasing to the sculptor's eye also yielded a well-balanced bludgeon.

4/4

159/259 U RNA • EN 🖌 CRAIG J SPEARING ™ & © 2019 Wizards of the Coast

Charging War Boar $1\ \textcircled{R}\ \textcircled{G}$

Creature — Boar

Haste *(This creature can attack and* ⟳ *as soon as it comes under your control.)*

As long as you control a Domri planeswalker, Charging War Boar gets +1/+1 and has trample. *(It can deal excess combat damage to the player or planeswalker it's attacking.)*

3/1

271/259 U

RNA • EN ⟨izzy⟩ Izzy   ™ & © 2019 Wizards of the Coast

How a faction's community works and how each faction feels towards itself and other factions is usually clearly defined. The conflict between the Strixhaven colleges is usually a friendly rivalry, as opposed to any serious conflicts, and the conflict between Mirrodin Resistance and the Phyrexians is one where the Phyrexians want to forcefully convert all the inhabitants of the world into biomechanical abominations, and of course, the Resistance does not want that. Also, factions will often have a symbol representing their group, and said symbol is often put onto cards in the form of a watermark. Symbols, being art, also help to define or recognize the guild

in the same way card art or a uniform can in order to give you a feeling of the faction's general vibe.

Azor's Elocutors

3 {W}{U}{U}

Creature — Human Advisor

At the beginning of your upkeep, put a filibuster counter on Azor's Elocutors. Then if Azor's Elocutors has five or more filibuster counters on it, you win the game.

Whenever a source deals damage to you, remove a filibuster counter from Azor's Elocutors.

3/5

Some factions also have things associated with them in order to make their Magic more recognizable or help symbolize certain aspects about them.

Experimental Overload

2 🔵 🔴

Sorcery

M21

Create an X/X blue and red Weird creature token, where X is the number of instant and sorcery cards in your graveyard. Then you may return an instant or sorcery card from your graveyard to your hand. Exile Experimental Overload.

Explosions aren't necessarily failures, just a different kind of success.

218/274 U
EN 🦉 LIE SETIAWAN

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The lightning of the Izzet often makes what they do look more dangerous, erratic, unstable, and energetic while the Gruul's association with fire, rock, and earth makes them come off as more ferocious, aggressive, passionate, wild, strong, and tough.

Gravel-Hide Goblin

1 🔴

Creature — Goblin Shaman

3🟢: Gravel-Hide Goblin gets +2/+2 until end of turn.

"No peace accord will save Ravnica. You don't build on rot. You burn it down and start again."
—Domri Rade

2/1

One thing Mark stresses is important to factions is that players need to be able to identify with factions. To this end, it is important that each faction has a strong voice, outlook, and point of view. "What are the goals of this faction?" "What is it like to be in this faction?" If asked, a player should be able to, at the very least, tell you what the faction represents and what their motivation is. For example, the Gruul want to protect the few remaining natural wilds on Ravnica and they see the city as a whole as something that must be destroyed so that nature can flourish. So at the end of the day, their goal is to protect nature and restore Ravnica to a natural state. The factions also need to be unique from each other, because if they all blur together due to having the exact same philosophies, attitudes, and the exact same gameplay then there isn't much of a reason for a player to identify with any specific faction. One of the tricks Maro mentions using in order to help understand the feel of a faction is to ask what sort of emotional response a faction invokes and then capturing that emotional response in the faction's gameplay and flavor. For example, if one looks at the Gruul the first emotion that comes to mind is probably anger or rage which ties into their extremely aggressive playstyle with mechanics like Riot.

The Izzet on the other hand are more excited and frantic which ties into them being encouraged to sling a bunch of spells or being able to suddenly pump one of their spells with a bunch of mana for a massive effect. Keywords like Jump-start can allow you to cast a spell multiple times which can invoke a feeling of excitement, frantic experimentation, or sudden spell casting and keywords like Overload create massive effects akin to an "unnatural" disaster or a massive experiment going haywire for your opponents.

The feel of a faction extends to not just the flavor but also the gameplay. There are the obvious mechanics and card abilities but there are also other questions that Mark brings up like "What deck archetype is it? What speed of play does it entail? What is its curve like? What game components does it care about? What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses? How does it win?" How do the Gruul win a game? Smash the enemy with big creatures as fast as possible. How do the Boros win a game? Go wide with a bunch of small creatures and attack with your army as fast as possible. How does the Azorius Senate win the game? By leaning into a control playstyle in order to try to restrain the opponent's choices and win over time. If the faction is based on something the audience already knows about then it is important to take into consideration audience expectations. If someone thinks of a zombie they usually think of a rotting shambling undead corpse. So the Zombie faction in Innistrad is designed to have gameplay that leans into being a bit slower and focuses on overwhelming the opponent. When people think of vampires they often think of their blood-drinking. So the vampire faction on Innistrad cares about dealing damage to other players in order to mimic this. This is all not to say that you can never purposefully subvert expectations with faction or card design. You just usually need a REALLY good reason for it, or else you risk having a faction that doesn't feel right to most players.

When it comes to faction-based sets it goes without saying that the relationship between the groups in the set is almost always going to be what a set revolves around. Maybe the factions are at war(such as the Dominarians and the invading Phyrexians), maybe they are all racing to achieve some sort of goal or objective before the other(such as the major groups on Ixalan), maybe the groups live in harmony(such as Strixhaven's colleges or the followers of Amonkhet's gods). While the specific nuances of the relationships between these can have a nearly endless amount of possibilities in how they manifest it is ultimately important for these relationships to have some level of importance to the world(s) they take place in. If the factions don't mean

anything or don't have any real impact on the world they are in there is not much of a point in making them the focus of a set.

Now that we have properly defined a faction, and touched upon some of the things that make them unique or important, we should also go into a little more detail about the design of the faction in terms of set and gameplay design.

We have already gone over the fact that a set with factions is almost always going to have those sets revolving around said faction. But what do the factions themselves revolve around? Well, there are a few things that one must sort out before they go about creating and fleshing out their faction. What are the colors of said factions, what creature types do said factions have access to, and what are the mechanics of each faction? I've already touched upon this stuff earlier in this section so I won't spend too much time going over these points.

Considering how integral the Color Pie is to Magic, deciding on the color of a faction is the first and most obvious step in design. Factions in any given set tend to be balanced in such a way that each color has about the same number of cards in a set when you add all the factions up. Although, Mark does state that the one big exception to this rule is two faction sets. Two faction sets are usually, but not always, flavored as one side fighting against another and they tend to give both sides access to all five colors, although not always in an equal amount. A good example of this would be Mirrodin vs the Phyrexians as both sides have access to all colors of mana.

Mirrodin Besieged

Enchantment

As Mirrodin Besieged enters the battlefield, choose Mirran or Phyrexian.

• Mirran — Whenever you cast an artifact spell, create a 1/1 colorless Myr artifact creature token.

• Phyrexian — At the beginning of your end step, draw a card, then discard a card. Then if there are fifteen or more artifact cards in your graveyard, target opponent loses the game.

057/254 R
MH1 • EN ⌑ BRAM SELS

Ezuri, Renegade Leader

Legendary Creature — Elf Warrior

⚬: Regenerate another target Elf.

2⚬⚬⚬: Elf creatures you control get +3/+3 and gain trample until end of turn.

The infamous Ezuri commands the highest bounty the vedalken have ever placed upon an outlaw.

2/2

Vorinclex, Voice of Hunger

Legendary Creature — Praetor

Trample

Whenever you tap a land for mana, add one mana to your mana pool of any type that land produced.

Whenever an opponent taps a land for mana, that land doesn't untap during its controller's next untap step.

7/6

    Creature types tend to be used in one of two ways with factions. The first way is having each faction be built around said creature type in some way. The most obvious example of this is simply having factions revolve around creature types themselves, usually with some way of encouraging you to play a lot of a certain creature tribe or rewarding you for doing so(this type of faction can be seen with the tribes on Innistrad). The second way in which creature types are used for factions is to help create more distinctions between the factions by giving them access to different creature types. This can be seen with the Ravnican guilds, as even guilds that share a color may still not have all the creatures from said color. For example, despite the fact that the

Boros, Selesnya, Azorius, and Orzhov all have White in their color identities only the Boros and Orzhov have angels within their guild.

Finally, there are the mechanics. As mentioned before, the easiest and most obvious way to give factions a clear mechanical identity is by giving said factions one or more keywords that the other factions do not have access to. However, one could also opt to have their own combination of keywords to set them apart from the other factions(i.e. having specific keyword combinations as opposed to focusing on the individual keywords being unique). The third way is to have each faction have access to all the important/unique keywords in a set but subdivide how each faction uses said keyword. An example of this would be the Magecraft keyword in Strixthaven. All the factions and groups have access to said keyword but they all tend to use them in different ways, typically varying on the color of the card and the faction that said card is supposed to be aligned with. For example, a Silverquill card may use its Magecraft in order to encourage you to be more aggressive and attack by temporarily giving an increase in the card's power and toughness, or just its power, whenever you cast an Instant or Sorcery, or it may allow you to grant the card Flying in order to score in some extra damage that the opponent may have trouble stopping.

Clever Lumimancer — ⚪

Creature — Human Wizard

Magecraft — Whenever you cast or copy an instant or sorcery spell, Clever Lumimancer gets +2/+2 until end of turn.

"You're too dim to realize it, but you've already lost."

0/1

010/275 U
STX · EN ☙ LIE SETIAWAN   ™ & © 2021 Wizards of the Coast

Silverquill Pledgemage — 1⚪⚪

Creature — Vampire Cleric

Magecraft — Whenever you cast or copy an instant or sorcery spell, Silverquill Pledgemage gains your choice of flying or lifelink until end of turn.

"I avoid violence. It is the last resort of the witless. But if you insist, I'll make an exception for you."

3/1

233/275 C
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However, Witherbloom is a faction that cares about gaining life. So it may use Magecraft as a way to gain life or drain the opponent of their life whenever you cast an Instant or Sorcery.

Witherbloom Apprentice — ⚫🟢

Creature — Human Druid

Magecraft — Whenever you cast or copy an instant or sorcery spell, each opponent loses 1 life and you gain 1 life.

"All we are—every feeling, every action—powered by a single, delicate little organ. Life is so terrifyingly, beautifully fragile."

2/2

247/275 U
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Witherbloom Pledgemage — 3⚫🟢

Creature — Treefolk Warlock

Magecraft — Whenever you cast or copy an instant or sorcery spell, you gain 1 life.

"Death is really just a transfer of energy. Those pests I harvested have the honor of becoming pure magic. What could be more beautiful?"

5/5

249/275 C
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So ultimately the most important attributes of a faction are its color alignment, what creature types it has access to, its mechanical identity, and its artistic/flavor identity. Also, while

factions can be very helpful to a set by giving it a structure and identity a lot of thought needs to go into the faction in order to maximize their usage and impact.

Color Pie Breaks

The term "break" sends shivers down the designers and fans of Magic the Gathering alike. But what exactly is this horrifying "Color Pie Break" anyway, and why do so many people loathe and fear it? What does it mean for a mechanic to be a "Color Pie Break?" Well, first we need a definition. For that I'm going to go with the definition Mark Rosewater layed out in his article titled "Bleeding Cool." Here a Color Pie Break is defined as "They do effects outside the color that actively help the color overcome some weakness that's been built into it." He even makes my job easier by giving a direct example of a famous Color Pie Break in the form of Hornet Sting.

Hornet Sting is an instant that costs one Green mana and reads "Hornet Sting deals 1 damage to any target." The reason that this card is infamous for being a Color Pie Break is that one of Green's mechanical weaknesses is that it usually needs its creatures to do things like deal damage to non-flying targets.

Ram Through — 1🟢

Instant

Target creature you control deals damage equal to its power to target creature you don't control. If the creature you control has trample, excess damage is dealt to that creature's controller instead.

"Need a medic! And some stonemasons!"
—Wyllon, Drannith merchant

170/274 C
IKO • EN ❧ ZOLTAN BOROS

So it's not supposed to just be able to have bolt-like effects that can just damage any target without any sort of restriction. Mark goes on to say "As a result, this card, which feels very weak on its surface, was sideboarded in Constructed play because green so badly needed the effect that it was willing to overpay for it. When I talk about cards endangering the game, these cards are the ones I'm talking about because they start breaking down the barriers between the colors." Needless to say, Green is a color that is usually supposed to encourage a sort of creature vs creature way of dealing with things and Hornet Sting completely circumvents that.

While Green can do things like destroy creatures with Flying it cannot just destroy any creature or damage any player. and creature destruction for Green is specifically restricted to being an anti-flying ability.

Now, there might be times where it is worth messing with the Color Pie for various reasons. Sometimes a card may do something that color doesn't do mechanically but it makes perfect sense for the color to do philosophically/flavorwise or vice versa in a manner that doesn't undermine its weaknesses. At other times a color can achieve an effect that is similar to that of another color but in a more roundabout or complex way. For example, a color like Black may be able to sort of mimic the flicker effects of White by killing or sacrificing one of its creatures and then bringing it back from the graveyard instead of exiling said creature and bringing it back that way.

Flicker

1 ✹

Sorcery

Remove target nontoken permanent from the game, then return it to play under its owner's control.

Who is truer: you who are, or you who are to be?

Village Rites

🩸

Instant

As an additional cost to cast this spell, sacrifice a creature.
Draw two cards.

"You were so eager to take and consume. Yet when asked to give, you refuse?"

126/274 C
M21 • EN 🖌 BUD COOK

Zombify

3🩸

Sorcery

Return target creature card from your graveyard to the battlefield.

"The first birth celebrates life. The second birth mocks it."
—Mystic elder

116/249 U
A25 • EN 🖌 JASON A. ENGLE

Rescue from the Underworld

4🩸

Instant

As an additional cost to cast Rescue from the Underworld, sacrifice a creature.

Choose target creature card in your graveyard. Return that card and the sacrificed card to the battlefield under your control at the beginning of your next upkeep. Exile Rescue from the Underworld.

Raymond Swanland

Meanwhile, colors like White and even Green could kind of "counter" certain spells by granting a creature protection from a certain color with abilities like Hexproof, and/or Indestructible via cards such as Karametra's Blessing and Heroic Intervention.

Now these abilities aren't necessarily one to one with the mechanics they potentially parallel but the overall point still stands. It also makes things that may seem weird at first, like a White or Red counterspell, potentially make more sense if you view them as a specific kind of extrapolation on the color's philosophy and existing mechanics.

A White counterspell might be meant to convey White's ideal of protecting others while a card like Tibalt's Trickery is basically just a weirder Transmogrify.

Transmogrify   3🔴

Sorcery   M21

Exile target creature. That creature's controller reveals cards from the top of their library until they reveal a creature card. That player puts that card onto the battlefield, then shuffles the rest into their library.

"I'd like to introduce you to the new and improved me."

167/274 R   ™ & © 2020 Wizards of the Coast
M21 • EN   Craig J Spearing

Tibalt's Trickery   1🔴

Instant

Counter target spell. Choose 1, 2, or 3 at random. Its controller mills that many cards, then exiles cards from the top of their library until they exile a nonland card with a different name than that spell. They may cast that card without paying its mana cost. Then they put the exiled cards on the bottom of their library in a random order.

360 R   ™ & © 2021 Wizards of the Coast
KHM • EN   Anna Podedworna

One thing that I think is very important for players to consider when a mechanic that seems odd or out of place for a color shows up is to think of the reasons, both mechanically, philosophically, and flavorwise, for why it was put there as opposed to immediately coming to the conclusion that it was a mistake or due to incompetence from the designers. Now just to be clear, Wizards and card designers do make mistakes, I mean just look at cards like Ravenform and the aforementioned Hornet Sting.

I'm also not saying that there aren't times where while it might be clear what they were going for it wasn't worth the Color Pie Break in order to do it(many would argue that Ravenform being able to target artifacts would probably fall under this category).

---

oo11 asked:

People are calling Ravenform a break. Is it?

Here's what I can say about Ravenform. Magic is a game made by a lot of very smart people. Many decisions happen after lengthy and meaningful discussions between them. Ravenform affecting artifacts was one such topic. If the decision was mine and mine alone to make, I wouldn't have had it affect artifacts.

🕐 January 09, 2021   ♥ 130 notes

👍 Like   Be the first of your friends to like this.

Color Pie Bends

In 2008 Devin Low wrote a very interesting series of articles titled "Eight Trials: Color Pie in The Courtroom" which discusses what may be perceived as a Color Pie Break but is, in

reality, justifiable or a Color Pie Bend instead of a Break. However, before I go over that I should define what a bend is.

Luckily, Maro has already defined cards that fall under the category of a bend as "These are cards doing things clearly out of the color pie, but not things that undermine the weakness of the color. Note that these cards shouldn't be bending the color pie for no reason, but rather to serve a larger cause." The example we are given of a bend would be the card Form of the Dragon, an enchantment card that reads "At the beginning of your upkeep, Form of the Dragon deals 5 damage to any target. At the beginning of each turn, your life total becomes 5. Creatures without flying can't attack you."

Normally, Red is not a color that gets moat effects, or abilities that prevent creatures without flying from attacking. White is usually the color that gets them but in the case of Form of the Dragon it makes sense for two reasons. Firstly, while on its own such an ability wouldn't be very Red, the fact that the card is basically turning you into a 5/5 Dragon with Flying is definitely Red in flavor. Secondly, as pointed out by Mark Rosewater in "Bleeding Cool" the Moat-like effect does not undermine the weaknesses of Red overall. Red already has ways of dealing with a majority of non-fliers, usually(but not always) by killing them with damage, so a card like Form of Dragon having this form of non-flying creature hate is justifiable.

Flame Sweep — 2🔴
Instant

Flame Sweep deals 2 damage to each creature except for creatures you control with flying.

"I have calculated that a dragon in flight, in a single strafing run, can cover an area of—"
—Thaedus the Clever, last words

139/280 U   M20 • EN   VIKTOR TITOV
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Magmaquake — X🔴🔴
Instant

Magmaquake deals X damage to each creature without flying and each planeswalker.

"Where will you run when I punish you with the very ground you flee on?"
—Nicol Bolas

133   R   AFC • EN   GABOR SZIKSZAI
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Breath of Darigaaz — 1🔴
Sorcery

Kicker 2 *(You may pay an additional 2 as you cast this spell.)*
Breath of Darigaaz deals 1 damage to each creature without flying and each player. If Breath of Darigaaz was kicked, it deals 4 damage to each creature without flying and each player instead.

Greg & Tim Hildebrandt

Hammerfist Giant — 4🔴🔴
Creature — Giant Warrior

🔴: Hammerfist Giant deals 4 damage to each creature without flying and each player.

"Oh sure, they buy a lot of ale, but I always find myself needing to rebuild after the giants have paid a visit."
—Belko, owner of Titan's Keg tavern

Carl Critchlow   5/4

"Eight Trials: Color Pie in The Courtroom" that discusses what may be perceived by some as Color Pie Breaks and some situations in which a Color Pie Break is/isn't justifiable along with what does/doesn't count as a break in the form of court cases. For the sake of brevity, I won't be going over every single example and case but I will be using the article as a reference for a lot of the points I am making.

The first example given in the article is "A deck can break the color pie if it jumps through enough hoops." Which is something I gave an example of earlier when I brought up

Black being able to pseudo-mimic a flicker style effect by killing a creature and then immediately recurring it with a card like Rescue from the Underworld.

What this part of the article is saying is that some cards may be able to bend the Color Pie by doing something like combining one or more existing effects within a color. When I think about it, I suppose you could probably pull off a flicker-like effect in Green too by using a card like Temur Sabertooth in combination with a card like Elvish Piper by using Temur Sabertooth's ability to return a creature you control to your hand and then using Elvish Piper to put the same creature from your hand into play, and both these abilities can be activated and payed for at instant speed. Although, it is definitely not at all efficient.

The third case of "Eight Trials: Color Pie in The Courtroom" states "A card can stretch the color pie in the mechanical tools it uses, if it stays within the colors' philosophies."

I don't have much to touch on when it comes to this because I already gave two decent examples earlier with Tibalt's Trickery being a different take on Transmogrify and White counterspells being a symbolic representation of its desire to protect and help people.

Sometimes a card will be allowed to bend or stretch the bounds of the Color Pie in order to maintain the integrity, evenness, and consistency of an important rare cycle.

An example of this would be how Green doesn't normally get creatures with Flying but Green cards like Jugan, the Rising Star have Flying because they are part of a cycle where literally all the other cards in the said cycle are supposed to be six mana Spirit Dragons with Flying Although, I should note that Juan, the Rising Star's mana value has the largest number of colored mana in it out of all the Dragon Spirits in the cycle because of the fact that Green isn't a color that gets Flying very often and thus it usually has to jump through more hoops than the other colors in the rare situations where it does have it. The blue Spirit Dragon in the cycle, Keiga, the Tide Star, only has one colored mana in its casting cost due to the fact that Blue is a color that gets a lot of Flying anyways. Thus, it makes sense that a Blue card in this five mana Spirit Dragon cycle would give you a lot of leeway in the mana colors you can use to cast the spell.

Keiga, the Tide Star — 5🌢

Legendary Creature — Dragon Spirit

Flying

When Keiga, the Tide Star is put into a graveyard from play, gain control of target creature.

5/5

Yosei, the Morning Star — 4🌞🌞

Legendary Creature — Dragon Spirit

Flying

When Yosei, the Morning Star dies, target player skips his or her next untap step. Tap up to five target permanents that player controls.

The caress of the morning star frees all from the clutch of darkness.

5/5

Kokusho, the Evening Star — 4⚫⚫

Legendary Creature — Dragon Spirit

Flying

When Kokusho, the Evening Star is put into a graveyard from play, each opponent loses 5 life. You gain life equal to the life lost this way.

The fall of the evening star never heralds a gentle dawn.

5/5

Ryusei, the Falling Star — 5🔴

Legendary Creature — Dragon Spirit

Flying

When Ryusei, the Falling Star is put into a graveyard from play, it deals 5 damage to each creature without flying.

5/5

I should also mention that part of the reason Jugan has Flying is because Dragons, in general, have Flying and the design team was trying to capture the feel of a Japanese dragon for the Kamigawa based set. So don't think you can just bend or break the Color Pie with just any old cycle or at any given opportunity.

Bringer of the White Dawn 7WW

Creature — Bringer

You may pay WUBRG rather than pay Bringer of the White Dawn's mana cost.

Trample

At the beginning of your upkeep, you may return target artifact card from your graveyard to play.

5/5

—Kev Walker

Bringer of the Blue Dawn 7UU

Creature — Bringer

You may pay WUBRG rather than pay Bringer of the Blue Dawn's mana cost.

Trample

At the beginning of your upkeep, you may draw two cards.

5/5

—Greg Staples

Bringer of the Black Dawn 7BB

Creature — Bringer

You may pay WUBRG rather than pay Bringer of the Black Dawn's mana cost.

Trample

At the beginning of your upkeep, you may pay 2 life. If you do, search your library for a card, then shuffle your library and put that card on top of it.

5/5

—Carl Critchlow

Bringer of the Red Dawn 7RR

Creature — Bringer

You may pay WUBRG rather than pay Bringer of the Red Dawn's mana cost.

Trample

At the beginning of your upkeep, you may untap target creature and gain control of it until end of turn. That creature gains haste until end of turn.

5/5

—Christopher Moeller

Such cycles also need to be a key/important and at least rare. So giving a Mono-Green common elf Flying because the Blue card in the cycle has flying is not going to cut it for a card design.

What abilities a color has access to and how often they can use them changes over time. However, the 5th case states "A card can reach into the color pie of the past, especially if it combines it with an aspect of the modern color pie." This is another self-explanatory one. The example we are given for this case is with the Red card Wild Ricochet.

(Wild Ricochet is an instant for two generic and two red that reads "You may choose new targets for target instant or sorcery spell. Then copy that spell. You may choose new targets for the copy.")

Red being able to copy spells happens often enough but redirecting spells has become more of Blue's thing. However, Red is still allowed to redirect spells especially if it combines the mechanic with something else on its side of the Color Pie because doing so doesn't undermine any of Red's weaknesses and it fits into some of its trickster or spontaneous style traits flavorwise.

Case #6 states "It's okay for a keyword to appear in all colors, even when it best matches the color pie of a single color."

A good example of this would be a mechanic like Scry. Which is a keyword that appears in all colors but it appears in Blue the most in order to emphasize its knowledge and forethought based philosophy and it appears in Red the least in order to show that Red is more impulsive and in order to allow it to perform a useful/important in-game action like filtering one's library on occasion.

Case #7 declares "Some mechanics correctly allow you to play some cards of a color without having lands that produce that color of mana."

This one is usually hyper-specific and applies to special cases, like Morph costs, and in these cases they tend to have some other cost to them.

I guess hybrid cards also fall under this category by technicality, since they do let you play with one of two mana choices without having to pay both.

However, it's important to mention that a designer needs to be careful about cost-based stuff like this. While they can be cool and totally harmless for the game when done correctly, if they are done wrong they can cause problems when implemented on certain cards.

Gitaxian Probe

Sorcery

(Φ can be paid with either 💧 or 2 life.)

Look at target player's hand.

Draw a card.

"My flesh holds no secrets, monster. The spirit of Mirrodin will fight on."
—Vy Covalt, Mirran resistance

Blogatog

elnefashu asked: Do you consider Phyrexian mana a mistake?

No, although some cards with the mechanic were.

Tags: (elnefashu) (WotCStaff)

🕐 October 18, 2016   🖤 48 notes

👍 Like   Be the first of your friends to like this.

bitwisenot asked: Would Phyrexian mana have worked better if it was used only in the generic part of the mana costs? (So no colored phyrexian mana costs) That way colored mana would still be required for effects, helping protect the color pie?

The color pie problems were due to just a few cards. We should have simply avoided those handful of effects. (Which Design did, by the way.)

Changing the mana from colored to generic would have greatly lessened the utility and flexibility of the mechanic.

Tags: (bitwisenot) (WotCStaff)

🕐 January 26, 2017   🖤 45 notes

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One thing that I feel should be addressed when it comes to identifying when and what is a Color Pie Break is the notion that when a Color is given a new or unusual ability it is a Color Pie Break. I have had conversations where I see someone call something a Color Pie Break and when I ask why they say something along the lines of "because x as a color has never been able to do that before." In fairness, they will sometimes go more into detail and explain why it's a break by mentioning some of the stuff I've brought up in this very article. However, the problem

is that logic or idea on its own is a sort of fallacy. In essence, it is just an appeal to tradition, "X thing must be bad because it has always been like Y." "Eating apples for a snack must be bad for me because I've always eaten orange slices for a snack." Hopefully, you see what I mean. Just because a color hasn't done something a lot, or at all, in the past doesn't automatically mean it's a break. A color getting access to a new mechanic does not automatically mean it is undermining or negating one of the color's intentionally designed weaknesses. Also, sometimes whether something is or isn't a break can be a bit more debatable, even among the design team themselves,

I have also seen people arguing that X color should be able to do a certain thing because there have been more pie breaks in the other colors in the past. I'm not enough of a Magic history nerd to know the exact ratio of color pie breaks for each color but I would still make the claim that said argument is kind of bad and acting on it would basically destroy the foundation of the color pie itself(which I know is a pretty bold claim for me to make). The simplest way I can put this would be like fucking something up and then deciding the only way to fix it is to continue fucking up, but on purpose this time. I can see where this argument is coming from in the sense that its arguing that each of the colors should be treated fairly but I feel that would just end up undermining the color pie's mechanical side because all the colors would begin to just blend together since whenever the design team makes a mistake they have to go through each of the colors and purposefully undermine their weaknesses or mechanics in an attempt to balance everything out. I don't think the color pie is like some sort of cake where if one person takes too big of a slice then it's only fair to give everyone else a bit more cake. I would think of a break as more like cracking a cup full of water and making water leak everywhere. The answer in the second example is not to go around making all your other cups leak water by breaking them in an attempt to make sure all your cups are matching. Now, once again I'm not saying you can never point out design mistakes or the fact that some colors could have more abilities or mechanics that don't break the color pie and still go underutilized or under-explored(I myself am a firm believer that White should get some form of counterspells more often) but I would disagree with the notion that it should be done because of an "It's ok to give colors a break in order to balance them out" type of mentality. Also, as mentioned before, just because a color hasn't done something in the past doesn't mean it's a break. So, you can totally argue that colors should get certain abilities without them being breaks. Not to mention that I believe that there are plenty of ways to balance the color pie without just giving colors random abilities because they are a break or just because it would be cool.

Color Pie Bleeds

Both Color Pie Breaks and Bends fall under the broader category of Bleeds. Just like with Breaks and Bends, we must define what a Bleed for the Color Pie is. When it comes to said topic the MTG wiki says "While the color pie is the foundation of Magic, from time to time, R&D stretches what mechanically and creatively is allowed in each color. When cards in a certain color do something that the color doesn't normally do, it is called color bleed. When the bleeding

goes too far it is called a color bend or in the worst case a color break. A bend pushes in a direction that falls within color philosophy but outside of normal mechanical implementation. A break undermines a weakness that is core to the color." I feel like this is a pretty accurate definition of what a bleed is.

To go into even more detail in his article titled "THE BLEED STORY" Mark Rosewater uses a circle that is broken up into three sections, a crust, mantle, and core to represent what a color is for Magic the Gathering.
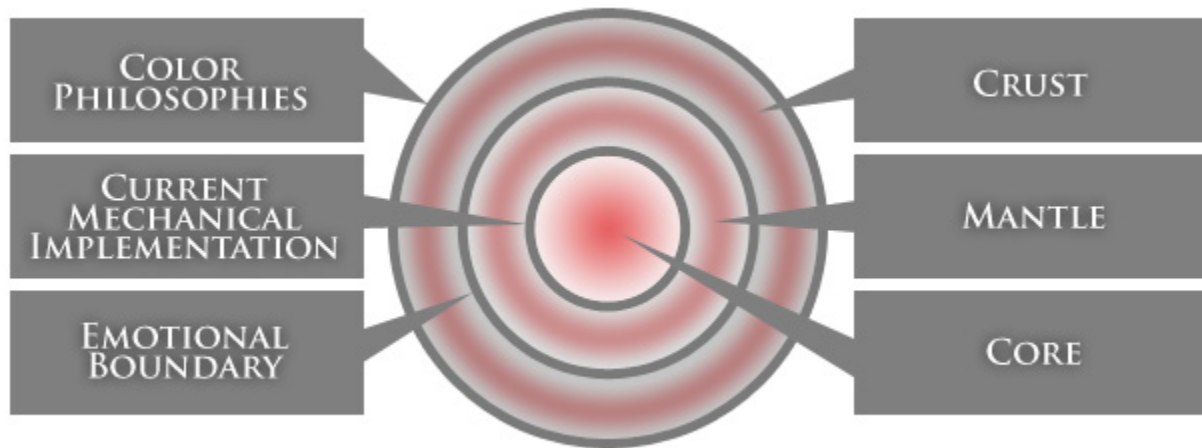
The "crust" is the Color's actual philosophy. This part of a color virtually never changes, yes both R&D and is as the audience may better understand a color over time and how to explain it in a more digestible manner, but the philosophy of the color itself does not change. Black's philosophy of putting the self first and Green's philosophy of accepting the natural order is still the same now as it was when Magic the Gathering first came out(even if you can tell that in the early days the design team still didn't quite finish solidifying what each color can and can't do in terms of card design).

The "core", and the smallest section of the circle, represents the mechanics a color is currently using and the section itself falls within both the crust and mantle of Maro's diagram. Unlike the crust, this part of any given color's identity is almost constantly fluctuating and evolving due to the myriad of ways colors can be represented from a mechanical perspective. If you look back far enough into Magic's history you can see mechanics that colors had or lacked that weren't necessarily breaks or oversights being dropped and added over time.

An example of a color's shifting "core" would be how White as a color got Disenchant to destroy artifacts and enchantments and then Green would later get its own version called Naturalize, which did the same thing. Some other examples include how Green used to have Forestwalk but now Landwalking isn't much of a thing for gameplay reasons or how Black has been given some more cards that allow it to deal with enchantments more often(usually at a cost of course).

None of these examples are color pie breaks and they help show how colors can shift mechanically over time without said shifts breaking the color pie. These constant shifts are also why the core is described as constantly moving and shifting within the two larger circles that surround it. Maro also points out that for a majority of players mechanics tend to be the most recognizable/iconic part of a color's identity. So it's often the part that the average fan tends to immediately think of when considering what a color is and its place in the game(think of stuff like Blue's card draw, Red's damage, White's exiling enchantments, Green's big creatures, Black's creature destruction, etc.

      This brings us to the "mantle" or the second/middle layer of this diagram. It's a bit more complicated to describe than the other layers but it represents an "emotional boundary." Which is to say it symbolizes the sort of feeling or vibe of each color. To be even more specific it is described as the area within the colors with enough similarities for people to accept them as emotionally related or connected. The mantle is the feel of a color and it represents how things need to "feel right" or intuitive when concerning the color pie from a mechanical perspective. At the end of the day, Magic has existed for a decent amount of time and thus has its own history and expectations. This history can act as a limiting factor for design space since over time it can shape and mold player expectations. So even if it might make sense for a color's philosophy or mechanics it is usually not in your best interest to have a billion radically different mechanical shifts for each color and color combination in every set or else you risk jarring and potentially confusing your players. Obviously, there are always exceptions and this is not to say you can never shake things up, for example, the entire point of a set like Planar Chaos was looking at the colors through a lens of what they could have been if Magic's mechanical history had gone differentially. There are also certain Color Pie bleeds here and there that push the emotional boundaries of players more than usual.

      Mark also points out that an important rule is that while in the grand scheme of things the two inner circles representing current mechanical implementations and emotional boundaries can be crossed it is vital that one never crosses the outer circle representing the very color philosophies themselves.

Why Bleed?

      Going into even MORE detail about bleeds, Mark also goes on to give us four upsides to bleeding and, because nothing is perfect or without risk, four potential downsides of bleeding colors in his article "BLEEDING COOL".

      The upsides are listed as being #1: It allows for differentiation between worlds, #2: It opens up design space, #3 It helps designers capture new flavor, and finally #4: It's exciting.

      So let's briefly go over these points starting with #1, the differentiation between worlds. The multiverse of Magic the Gathering is composed of a countless number of planes with a near-infinite number of ways in which their cultures, inhabitants, physics, and even magic can manifest. Thus, one of the best ways to show the difference between each of these worlds is

through how the colors manifest on those planes, whether it be through factions, spells, mechanics, keywords, and/or archetypes. Bleeding makes the mechanical side of this way easier.

The second point of "It opens up design space" I feel is pretty self-evident. The existence of bleeding allows for more flexibility which allows for more possible card designs. Mark makes a point of saying that looking at unexplored territory isn't all about bleeding, even if bleeding does give the design team access to new things to do.

When it comes to the 3rd point of "It helps us to capture new flavor," as mentioned before there are many different planes and each of those planes have different factions, places, magic, etc. By allowing the colors to do different things these features of a plane can be accentuated and highlighted.

For example, if you want to show that turning the deceased into undead mummy servants is a common practice and that zombies, in general, are just a common occurrence on a plane like Amonkhet you might want to use a mechanic like Embalm, which allows the owner to pay a certain amount of mana in order to exile a creature from their graveyard and put a White token version of the creature into play.

Now, White doesn't normally have zombies and colors like Blue don't usually have an insane amount of creature recursion, however, in this instance giving all five colors this keyword doesn't undermine any major intentional weaknesses they have and it helps the player get a feel for an important aspect of Amonkhet as a plane and set, and how said plane/set stands out among others.

Another example of what I'm talking about, as given by Maro himself, is vampires. While most vampires are black aligned the vampires on Innistrad are also of the Red alignment

while the ones on Ixalan are also of the White alignment in order to show the different cultures, ideologies, workings, and goals of these different vampires.

In this case, the Red and Black alignment of the vampires on Innistrad helps show their usually short-sighted and hedonistic driven values and the White and Black alignment of the vampires on Ixalan helps show their corrupt and religious zealotry.

The fourth and final benefit to bleeding is that it simply helps keep things exciting. I mean, having the exact same thing over and over is boring(that goes without saying). If every plane had the exact same mechanics and only one way to represent its colors then there's a higher chance that people will get bored. Also, having bleeds can create really eye-catching cards that help get people talking.

Although, even bleeding has its downsides and risks. Of which Maro gives us #1: It has the potential to kill the game, #2: It confuses player's understanding of the Color Pie, #3: It messes with the balance between the colors, and #4: It can lessen excitement on other cards.

The color pie, and by extension the limitations of each color, creates a back and forth where each color's strengths push players to have as many colors as possible while the mana system rewards you for having as few colors as possible in any given deck. The weakness of each color also helps balance the metagame by, at least trying, to ensure that each deck has some sort of exploitable weakness no matter how powerful it is. If the design team bleeds too much or makes a bunch of bad bleed decisions they may end up accidentally messing with how the colors are supposed to work. It's important to remember that both bends and breaks are types of bleeds, so in a worst-case scenario too many of your bleeds can end up as breaks.

For point #2 It is important to consider the expectations of the player base when designing cards. If the design team puts too many bleeds, even if they aren't color pie breaks, it can start making players expect the bleed to always be there and become confused when it's not. As Mark puts it in "Bleeding Cool" "Every time we print a card that does something the color

isn't supposed to do, we are teaching everyone that yes, the color does do this. See, the card's right here. Planar Chaos, the set where we messed with the color pie as the theme of the set, has caused me no end of headaches. Players are constantly quoting Planar Chaos cards as proof that a color can do something and I then have to explain why it doesn't. On my blog it's even a rule that you can't quote Planar Chaos when arguing color pie."

Now despite what some commander players may tell you, yes the design team does care about balance and yes they at least try to keep the colors balanced. This ties into point #3 in that if you bleed too much you may end up giving a color something it isn't normally supposed to do. Which can greatly tip the scales of how balanced certain colors are and create a bunch of color pie breaks.

Finally the fourth point, "It can lessen excitement on other cards," can be seen as pretty ironic since I just went over how bleeding can be exciting. However, it makes sense when you consider that bleeding may draw attention away from other important parts of a set, deck, or block and it can also increase the chance that other cards may come off as underwhelming unless they are doing something even more extreme than the last.

Color Bleed Categories/Segments

Similar to a lot of things in life, what is and isn't a bleed is not purely black and white, and thus exists on a spectrum. A spectrum that Mark handily gives to us in the form of 8 "segments."

The first segment is segment zero and it is dubbed "THE "EVERY SET" CARDS." The reason this segment is labeled zero, as opposed to one, is because this segment is where all the cards and effects with no bleeding go. That is to say, basic effects that a color gets in every single set go into this segment. Some examples of mechanics that fall under this category are Blue counterspells and Red damage dealing spells.

How these effects and abilities manifest varies from set to set. Sometimes they are put into a set in the form of reprints and sometimes there will be slight tweaks to the effect for the set, usually these tweaks involve the mechanics in the given set. These cards are, by their nature, the bread and butter of a lot of card designs and are stated by Mark to be the kinds of effects a designer can put into their design skeleton(In case you don't know what a design skeleton is, to put it simply, it's kind of like the blueprint or outline of a set to cover all of a set's necessities). Since the design skeleton is the blueprint and segment 0 effects are in every set they will always be there. Due to this a majority of cards in any given set usually fall under this category. If you want to

read more about design skeletons Mark wrote an article about it that you can find here(https://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/making-magic/nuts-bolts-design-skeleton-2010-02-15).

Next up is Segment #1, which is where "THE "EVERY BLOCK"" cards go. This segment is for effects that a color, or color combination, does but with less regularity. Maro says that mechanics in this category tend to be something a color does about once per block, or about once every couple of sets, as opposed to every single set. In case you don't know what a Block is, the Magic the Gathering Wiki defines a block as "a group of sequential expansion sets with shared mechanics, flavor, and rotation schedule. Blocks have ranged in size from two to four sets and were usually named for the first set they contain. A large expansion led off each block to establish its world and mechanical themes, which were explored further in the block's remaining set or sets, which have varied in size. Most block stories took place on a single plane and linked to the stories of adjacent blocks." and it also states that "In mid-2018, following the Ixalan block, the block structure was retired in favor of discrete large sets." Mark does give us some reasons for why an effect may not be used in every single set. It may be a type of effect that the designers don't want to appear too often in standard, it can be something that they want to remain splashy and cool(and thus they are careful about making sure it doesn't become overexposed) or it can be something that's really narrow and specific, and thus is not really needed that often outside of like a single card. While this category is not as core to the Color Pie as Segment #0 Mark says that he would still not call these abilities true bleeds. Colors do get these effects; they just don't appear as often as the staple abilities for a given color.

Segment #2 is dubbed "THE "WHEN NEEDED" CARDS." Effects that fall into this segment are one's that are used occasionally but not in every block. Mark describes these effects as being a little more specific and things that the design team tends to use when they need them.

The most common form this manifests in is when they have a theme in a set, block, etc. that they want to run through all the colors. The example we are given is graveyard sets, such as Innistrad.

Sun Titan — 4⬥⬥	**Luminous Broodmoth** — 2⬥⬥
Creature — Giant	Creature — Insect
Vigilance	Flying
Whenever Sun Titan enters the battlefield or attacks, you may return target permanent card with mana value 3 or less from your graveyard to the battlefield.	Whenever a creature you control without flying dies, return it to the battlefield under its owner's control with a flying counter on it.
A blazing sun that never sets.	*It soars through currents of moonbeams to give hope to the forsaken.*
6/6	3/4
073 M AFC · EN Todd Lockwood	021/274 M IKO · EN Lie Setiawan

Nullpriest of Oblivion — 1☠	**Call of the Death-Dweller** — 2☠
Creature — Vampire Cleric	Sorcery
Kicker 3☠	Return up to two target creature cards with total converted mana cost 3 or less from your graveyard to the battlefield. Put a deathtouch counter on either of them. Then put a menace counter on either of them.
Menace, lifelink	
When Nullpriest of Oblivion enters the battlefield, if it was kicked, return target creature card from your graveyard to the battlefield.	*The living fear Nethroi's whispers. The dead heed them.*
2/1	
118/280 R ZNR · EN Yongjae Choi	078/274 U IKO · EN Vincent Proce

Bala Ged Recovery — 2🍀

Sorcery

Return target card from your graveyard to your hand.

"Always have a backup plan."
—Doral, Bala Ged guide

Land — 🍀: Add 🍀.

180/280 U
ZNR · EN — LUCAS STANIEC
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Multani, Yavimaya's Avatar — 4🍀🍀

Legendary Creature — Elemental Avatar

Reach, trample

Multani, Yavimaya's Avatar gets +1/+1 for each land you control and each land card in your graveyard.

1🍀, Return two lands you control to their owner's hand: Return Multani from your graveyard to your hand.

0/0

075   M
ZNC · EN — RYAN YEE
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Typically, White, Black, and Green are the colors that care the most about the graveyard but when there is a graveyard-themed set or block they need graveyard-based things for Blue and Red to do too. He goes on to say that this theme is something the Wizards hits upon on a regular basis, which has led to the design team carving out small mechanical areas for Blue and Red when it comes to the graveyard, for example, Blue and Red are both capable of returning instants and sorceries from the graveyard.

Beacon Bolt

1 💧 🔥
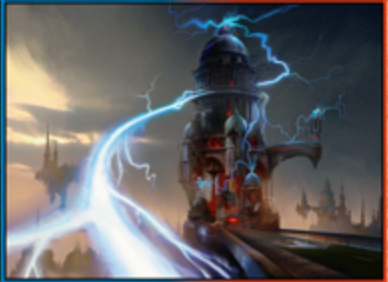
Sorcery

Beacon Bolt deals damage to target creature equal to the total number of instant and sorcery cards you own in exile and in your graveyard.

Jump-start *(You may cast this card from your graveyard by discarding a card in addition to paying its other costs. Then exile this card.)*

154/259 U
GRN • EN ☙ Titus Lunter
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Arcane Infusion

Instant

Look at the top four cards of your library. You may reveal an instant or sorcery card from among them and put it into your hand. Put the rest on the bottom of your library in a random order.

Flashback **3** U R *(You may cast this card from your graveyard for its flashback cost. Then exile it.)*

Mark says we can think of these kinds of things as subtle bleeds that the design team has created for long-term use.

Segment #3 is called "THE "PLAYS UP BLOCK THEME" CARDS." This section is for cards that do something a color normally does but said card's ability is connected to something more unorthodox. The example we are given for this is the card Chained to the Rocks.

Which for one White mana is an Enchantment Aura that enchants a target Mountain you control and when it enters the battlefield it exiles a target creature an opponent controls until Chained to the Rocks leaves the battlefield.

Now White is no stranger to Oblivion Ring-style enchantments that exile some sort of target until said enchantment leaves the battlefield, I mean it's almost everywhere these days.

However, what makes this card interesting is the requirement of the caster controlling a Mountain in order to work, and such a requirement isn't constantly appearing in White. The extra effect also helps make cards more unique and flavorful when compared to other cards that do the same thing, and it helps play up the Greek mythology-inspired imagery of Theros. Thus, while a card like this can appear outside of the set it's usually going to be restricted to places where the flavor and mechanics make sense, such as the block in which it was printed.

Segment #4 is called the "2+2 DOESN'T EQUAL 4" CARDS" segment. Within it are cards that take two in-flavor abilities a color has and combine them in order to achieve something that is out of flavor for the color. An example that we have gone over is the card Rescue from the Underworld in Theros. This card is a mono-black instant card that costs 4 generic and one Black mana that has "As an additional cost to cast Rescue from the Underworld, sacrifice a creature. Choose a target creature card in your graveyard. Return that card and the sacrificed card to the battlefield under your control at the beginning of your next upkeep. Exile Rescue from the Underworld."

Normally being able to flicker a creature, i.e. exiling a permanent before returning it to the battlefield, is something that colors like White and Blue do and it would be a Color Pie Break for Black. However, Rescue from the Underworld sort of finds a way around this by using two effects that Black gets a lot of, specifically sacrificing and reanimating creatures, in order to achieve a sort of pseudo-flicker effect. It also flavorfully fits the Theros Block because the underworld is an important place and there are beings that manage to escape it through various means. Also, I should note that technically you don't have to flicker with this card, if you have a lot of stuff in your graveyard you could sacrifice two creatures before reanimating two different creatures, but the point is that you CAN still choose to use it to "flicker" something, even if it is in practice a slightly worse flicker since there are certain cards that could remove things from the graveyard at instant speed but the point still stands. It's a flicker-like effect in a color that usually doesn't get flicker-like effects.

Segment #5 is dubbed the "ON RARE OCCASION" CARDS." Effects in this segment are things that a color normally doesn't get but on very rare occasions via special cards, or within a flavorful enough set, they will be put on a card anyway despite this fact. The example Maro gives, and probably one of the more common examples, are dragons that lack Red in their color identity, since dragons are Red's iconic creature.

Another example Mark gives is how Green will on occasion get a big flier or two.

Due to how rarely these attributes are utilized in this manner, the design team tries to be very careful with them in order to save and implement them in places that need them the most.

Mark further elaborates on this concept by comparing the card Hornet Queen, a card that appears in the Magic 2015 set and is a 2/2 mono-green insect creature that costs 4 generic and 3 Green that has Flying, Deathtouch and has "When Hornet Queen enters the battlefield, create four 1/1 green Insect creature tokens with flying and deathtouch," to the flying Mono-Green dragons that appear within the Fate Reforged and Dragons of Tarkir sets.

Despite the fact that both these cards are big fliers Mark mentions that he does not like Hornet Queen and yet he's fine with the flying Green Tarkir dragons. The reason for this is that while Hornet Queen is flavorful in a vacuum it did very little when it comes to playing into the overall themes of the set it was first printed in. Conversely, the Tarkir block was defined by the very existence of Dragons, and thus Tarkir was the perfect place to bust out the rare big green flier or two.

Now for Segment #6, "THE BENDING CARDS." As mentioned in the Color Pie Bends section, these are cards that are doing things clearly out of the color pie but not things that undermine the weakness of the color. Note that these cards shouldn't be bending the Color Pie for no reason, but rather to serve a larger cause." I'm going to skip over a majority of what's talked about in this segment because I already covered basically all of it in the previous "Color Pie Bends," "Color Pie Bleeds," and "Why Bleed?" sections. However, I should mention that it is stated that one shouldn't go around bending the Color Pie for no reason, but for a greater cause(like the sheer flavor captured in Form of the Dragon).

Finally, we get to the most infamous and recognizable segment #7. Which is titled "THE BREAKING CARDS." The name alone lets you know that if a card falls under this category then some people fucked up. However, I'm going to skip over the rest of this segment's explanation because of the fact that I covered the information regarding breaks in the Color Pie Breaks portion.

Why I Like the Color Pie

One thing that I strive to do with my work is to add a bit of my touch or thoughts into it in order to make it more unique. I mean anyone could simply list off all the details and mechanics of the Color Pie and how it works but why do I, as an individual, care enough to even explain it to you. Well, I've done some introspection and decided to gather some of the major reasons I enjoy the color pie. These reasons ultimately fall into four categories that I have created: mechanics, the fact that they're not just personality types, they are not immutable or unchanging and each philosophy cultivates its own strengths and weaknesses

I'm not really going to dive really deep into mechanics because this entire article covers a lot of mechanical concepts, and a lot of the mechanical stuff I mention there are things that I like, and I want to avoid repeating myself. The thing I like about the color pie from a mechanics perspective is it has a pretty good balance between each color being restricted to certain mechanics but still having enough flexibility to not always be the exact same thing.

For example, Green is the color that usually gets big stompy creatures so its gameplay tends to be pretty creature-focused. However, the other colors are also capable of getting big creatures in a more restricted capacity or at a cost.

Essentially, each of the colors gets access to certain mechanics and they actually share a lot of mechanics. However, the way each color utilizes or calls upon a mechanic tends to be different

and distinct enough that each color still clearly specializes in doing specific things without being pigeonholed into only being one thing until the end of time. For example, you could have a Red deck that is a spellslinger deck or attacks aggressively with a bunch of small creatures. You still get a feel for Red's gameplay and strengths(direct damage and attacking as quickly as possible) without being stuck to one type of deck. There is also the fact that even when more than one color does something in the exact same way another one can, they still manage to seem different because each color has a different combination of mechanics. For example, White and Blue both get flying creatures at the same amount, and at the same rarity White has things like Lifelink and First Strike while Blue does not.

Healer's Hawk

Creature — Bird

Flying, lifelink

The wounded see the glow of its vials long before they see its wings diving out of the clouds.

1/1

Battlefield Raptor

Creature — Bird

Flying, first strike

It wheeled upward, away from the shrieks and thunder. It reached the point where sky met smoke, and, with but a glance at the horizon, aimed itself and dove.

1/2

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I also think the fact that you can put any number of colors into a deck, or that a card can potentially have any number of colors, really adds to the mechanical side of Magic and gives players a lot more freedom while also building on the foundations created by the five basic colors. Are you a new player who likes the damage-dealing capabilities or Red but also enjoys the card draw of Blue? Why choose one? Just start working on a deck that utilizes both colors. Enjoy Green's big creatures and Black's graveyard recursion? Well, you can have a deck with both of those things. Similar to the individual colors, the various color combinations also have a wide variety of mechanics they can lean into or combine, and because they have access to more colors they can also have even more types of gameplay. Green and Black usually cares about the graveyard or destroying things but they are both colors that also care enough about gaining life that you can end up with something like Witherbloom, which cares about gaining life and draining your life of your opponents.

Cram Session

1 {B/G}

Sorcery

You gain 4 life.

Learn. *(You may reveal a Lesson card you own from outside the game and put it into your hand, or discard a card to draw a card.)*

The only thing more delicious than a top grade is Gyome's signature cake.

170/275 C

STX • EN ~ MARTA NAEL

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Blood Researcher

1 💀 🌳

Creature — Vampire Druid

Menace *(This creature can't be blocked except by two or more creatures.)*

Whenever you gain life, put a +1/+1 counter on Blood Researcher.

"Dean Valentin warns us not to consume the samples for our safety, but I think he's just being greedy."

2/2

166/275 C

STX • EN 🦅 Cristi Balanescu

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Beledros Witherbloom

5🖤🌳

Legendary Creature — Elder Dragon

Flying

At the beginning of each upkeep, create a 1/1 black and green Pest creature token with "When this creature dies, you gain 1 life."

Pay 10 life: Untap all lands you control. Activate only once each turn.

4/4

163/275 M

STX • EN 🗲 RAYMOND SWANLAND

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The reason I adore the colors from a philosophical perspective is that they are just that, vague PHILOSOPHIES. They aren't some universal personality trait or some unchangeable part of your soul. Now don't get me wrong, things that align with certain colors are more likely to exhibit certain traits or personality quirks since by default your personal philosophies are going to affect how you act or approach things. For example, Red's ideals of following your emotions and doing what you want first and foremost means that people that agree with its ideology are more likely to be impulsive or emotional but it isn't the end all be all for every Red character. Even a philosophy such as this can cause the personalities of those who subscribe to them to

manifest in dramatically different ways. If a Red character feels fear, sadness, or scared more often than not then it makes sense that they would end up more reserved or quiet.

Craven Hulk

3 ⦿

Creature — Giant Coward

Craven Hulk can't block alone.

Abandoned at birth, the giant was raised by goats. Ironically, it grew up to be the most cautious member of the herd.

4/4

127/285 C • KHM • EN 🜛 Nicholas Gregory

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At the end of the day, the colors are more of a vague representation that shows us what people value or see as the ideal and they think one should try to achieve it. I think it's very important to remember that the Color Pie is ultimately a vague representation of ideals and values and it is not supposed to be some strict personality type you are supposedly born with like a Zodiac sign or a more strict categorization like the Myer Briggs categories. It's also important to remember that a lot of stuff about the Color Pie is for the sake of Magic the Gathering the game and for its players. Red being attracted to fire or a majority of Red aligned characters or entities having Red as a major part of their color palette is really just a hand shorthand to help us learn about a character at a glance. The same thing applies to things like most fish being Blue due to Blue's association with water or a lot of the trees we see in the game being Green. Going back to what I said about personality types and what they mean for Magic, let's use an example. In this case, let's take something like pride. A zodiac sign or some random personality test online may assign extreme pride to a specific personality category/categories. However, within the color pie, high levels of pride are something that any color-alignment can have. Yes, some colors may be more likely to be more prideful than others and it may be more likely to manifest in different ways but at the end of the day, any given person could be very prideful no matter their color alignment. There's nothing preventing you from having a prideful Black or Red-aligned character along with a White, Blue, or Green aligned character that is equally just as, if not more, prideful.

Tragic Arrogance

3⚪⚪

Sorcery

For each player, you choose from among the permanents that player controls an artifact, a creature, an enchantment, and a planeswalker. Then each player sacrifices all other nonland permanents he or she controls.

The spear thrown by Kytheon's own hand was the weapon that felled his friends.

038/272 R
ORI · EN · WINONA NELSON
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Arrogant Wurm

3🌳🌳

Creature — Wurm

Trample

Madness 2🌳 *(You may play this card for its madness cost at the time you discard it from your hand.)*

It's hard to be humble when the whole world is bite size.

Illus. John Avon

4/4

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Arrogant Poet

1⚫

Creature — Human Warlock

Whenever Arrogant Poet attacks, you may pay 2 life. If you do, it gains flying until end of turn.

"I would be kinder to my peers, Professor, but I simply don't have any."

2/1

063/275 C
STX · EN · BILLY CHRISTIAN
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As I covered in the John and Jim example within the "Color Pie in General" section, despite Red being the color of emotion and impulse you can still have extremely emotional characters that fall under other colors because of the fact that at the end of the day it's not being emotional that makes a character Red but how they view and value their emotions. For example, an emotional Red character may cry and shout to show their upset while an emotional Blue character may cry but try to not let their emotions cloud their judgment or keep their crying to themselves(and this is only one of the myriad of ways in which characters of these respective alignments may react to their emotions). The conflict between Red and Blue as a whole is not about whether or not you

should have emotions but rather how you should choose to act on your emotions and what is more important. Logic and reason or emotion and freedom? I think another thing people tend to do is that they assume that because a Color or Color Combination argues something is the most important that it must be the only thing they care about. However, just because a Blue character values using your head doesn't mean they don't value emotions or argue that you shouldn't bother to make your body physically strong, and just because a Red character values its heart doesn't mean they necessarily don't care about information or knowledge.
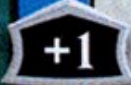
Jace, Ingenious Mind-Mage

4 U U
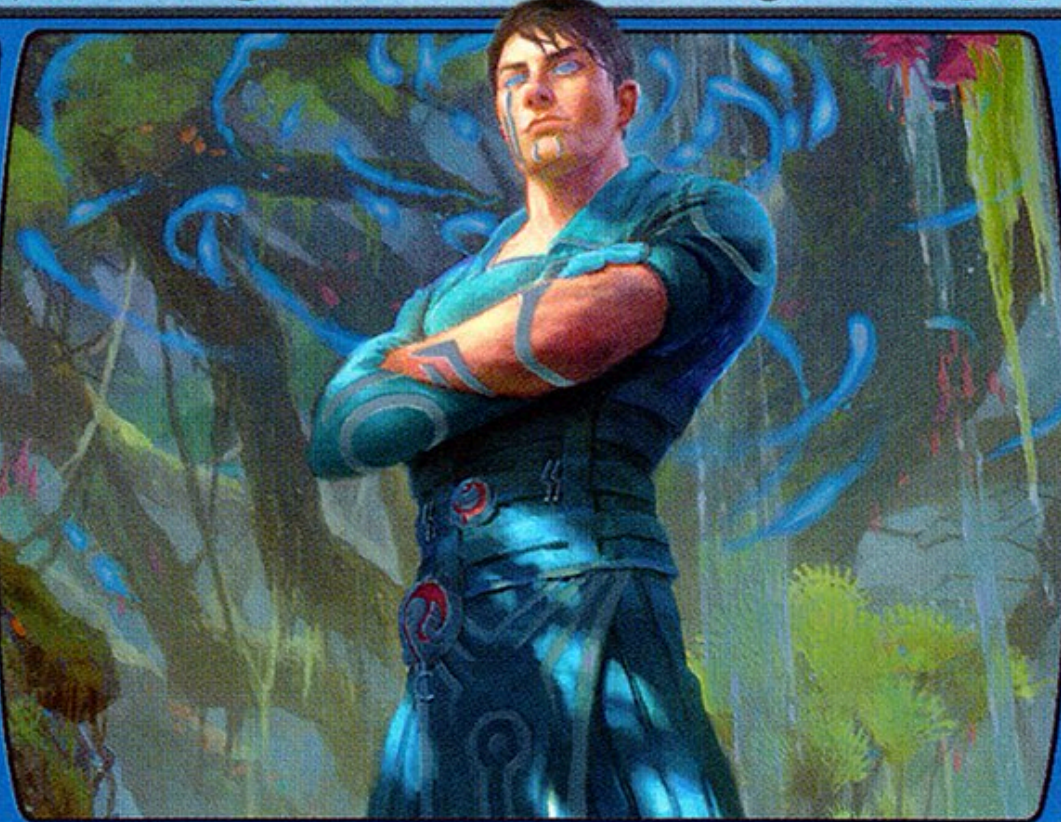
Legendary Planeswalker — Jace

+1: Draw a card.

+1: Untap all creatures you control.

−9: Gain control of up to three target creatures.

5

280/279 M

XLN ★ EN 🔁 CLINT CEARLEY

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Thermo-Alchemist

1 🔥

Creature — Human Shaman

Defender

🅣: Thermo-Alchemist deals 1 damage to each opponent.

Whenever you cast an instant or sorcery spell, untap Thermo-Alchemist.

"Madness can't touch a mind ignited by genius."

0/3

I think a good way to frame a color alignment is by asking what does the ideal self and the ideal world look like.

In my opinion, the Color Pie would suffer greatly as a concept if the categories were like "You're Blue, you like long quiet walks on the beach, drinking lots of water, and reading" or "You're Red, you like talking a lot, you must be an extrovert, and you might be a pyromaniac." I feel like this aspect also makes the colors easier for me to relate to and understand. It's way easier to ask yourself questions like "Hey, out of all these colors and color combinations what do I value most and what do I think is the best way to achieve that?" and "Which color do I think is right most often and would make the world a better place if more people followed its ideology?" in order come to the conclusions like "I agree with the White alignment the most because I believe in good and evil and that we should strive to live in a world where we put others before ourselves." Of course, this method isn't flawless but I think that aspect still elevates it. It also helps that each color, no matter how much you disagree with them, always has at least one good point. It is impossible to look at all the colors and come to the conclusion that they are literally always wrong. This can be seen with how each color has philosophical agreements and disagreements with their ally and enemy colors alike.

This also extends to giving you a pretty solid feel of what other colors a character or gameplay mechanic may fall under. The color pie, by default, makes a decent character foundation. The philosophy of each color will be more likely to have certain strengths and, just as importantly, weaknesses due to their ideology encouraging them to act a certain way or do certain things. For example, a Blue character might be very good at analyzing and improving things but slow to act upon a threat due to its ideology promoting thinking before acting as much as possible. On the other hand, a White character may be caring and selfless but inflexible due to their ideology encouraging them to lean into a potentially very black and white, good vs evil, view of the world. These aspects help the philosophies, and the characters in said philosophies, feel more human. The fact that colors like White and Green aren't just "the good ones" and Black and Red aren't just "the evil ones" adds a lot of nuance and fun to the colors. This also lends the colors very well to not just character making but also faction making. If you have a faction with multiple colors you can explore the conflicts that faction may have within itself and you can avoid having each Black aligned faction be the villain and each White-aligned faction be the good guy in literally every single case.

Another part of the color pie that I think is extremely important is the fact that anybody can be aligned with more than one color at any given time. This adds a whole new layer of nuance and potential exploration and it helps show how complex or overlapping philosophy/values can be, because sometimes a person may view multiple colors as equally correct or they may agree with specific parts of a color but not how said color tries to get them done among other things. It also helps prevent things with color alignments from being pigeonholed into one alignment, even if they don't really fit into any one color that well. Not to mention that since the Color Pie is a representation of one's values one can lose or gain colors. For characters, this can be used to help highlight a character arc or downfall/corruption and it helps show that one's personal philosophy may change or fluctuate over time.

I guess what I'm truly saying is that the Color Pie finds that nearly perfect sweet spot between being specific enough to have a good understanding of it but also vague enough for there to be enough room within them to explore different aspects and potential characteristics each color could have. If the color pie had been too loosey-goosey then it would feel vapid and like it's only really there for aesthetic but if it had been too restrictive then there would only be like one or two ways each color could predictably manifest in the game. Hopefully, this helps get across that I love discussing the color pie and that I'm not exaggerating when I say the Color Pie is one of the reasons I play and keep up with Magic the Gathering in any capacity. Without the color pie Magic would lack a lot of the spark that sets it apart from other, more generic, card games.

Now before I close this out I want to briefly discuss my plans for this series. Which is to cover each Color both philosophically and mechanically and have a couple of bonus articles between each Color dissection that cover things like certain creature types or factions in order to spice things up while also not leaving you high and dry on some of the other content you might be more interested in seeing. My goal this year is to have at least one Magic the Gathering

related article a month but I can't make any hard promises(I mean just look how long this one ended up being and it took really long to write).

Ending

With that, I ask you which color/combination do you like the most(either mechanically philosophically or both) and which color/combination do you disagree with the most before bidding you farewell(Oh, and if you want to check out all of Mark Rosewater's color pie stuff he made a convenient compilation of it all right here → https://magic.wizards.com/en/articles/archive/making-magic/lets-talk-color-pie-2021-10-11), and if you want to see even more of the reasons for why I like the color pie then you can check out this Reddit post made by Firemind→ https://www.reddit.com/r/colorpie/comments/j3m52o/you_and_your_color_guidance_for_potential/).

Also the next article will be covering the color philosophy of White.

Happily Ever After

2 ⬤

Enchantment

When Happily Ever After enters the battlefield, each player gains 5 life and draws a card.

At the beginning of your upkeep, if there are five colors among permanents you control, there are six or more card types among permanents you control and/or cards in your graveyard, and your life total is greater than or equal to your starting life total, you win the game.