

Down Through the Darklands: Shadow Creature Theme Template

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Purpose of This Document

This is a Theme Template intended to provide tools for making a creature compatible with the Shadow Plane. It might be used for a creature in the Material Plane that comes from the Shadow Plane or a creature that is in the Shadow Plane.

It's not intended to be a precise modification of a creature, so much as a shopping-list of possible ways to convey its shadowy nature to PCs.

Theme Template

Shadow Creature

The Shadow Plane has an effect on the creatures that inhabit it. It's sometimes subtle and sometimes jarring. There are a large number of abilities and features that a creature or NPC type might develop after long (usually generational) exposure to the plane, but a core set of features can be found in common.

Shadow is a theme template¹ applied to creatures and NPCs to reflect powers gained through contact with the Shadow Plane or, in rarer cases, by constant association with creatures so affected. Theme templates provide additional abilities to the base creature based on its level. When you add any template that grants numerous additional abilities, you should strongly consider removing one or more of the creature's original abilities to compensate, or consider raising the creature's level by 1 and adjusting its other statistics accordingly.

After applying the "All Creatures" changes, be very selective about which further features are added. ***This is not a cumulative list*** where high level creatures get all of the features on the list!

All Creatures The following changes are made to all base creatures:

- The Shadow plane tends to blur the lines of morality. "Good" alignments shift to neutral (CG -> CN, NG -> N, LG -> LN).
- Add the [shadow](#) trait.
- If the creature speaks a language, it gains Shadowtongue.

1st Level or Higher: Add Stealth and either Deception or Intimidation to the creature's skills. The creature gains low-light vision; if it already has low-light vision it gains darkvision.

Consider adding a shadow-themed ability to represent their attachment to the mercurial, semi-real nature of the Shadow Plane. Here are some examples:

- Shadow Blending
 - Fetchling version

Shadow Blending When the creature/NPC is concealed as a result of dim light, the flat check to target them has a DC of 7, not 5.

¹ Gods & Magic pg. 9

Shadow Stride ◆ (illusion, occult, shadow) Requirement The creature/NPC is in dim light; **Effect** The creature/NPC Strides. They have a +10-foot status bonus to their Speed during this Stride. The DC from shadow blending increases to 11 during this Stride, and the creature/NPC remains concealed by dim light until the end of the movement, even if they leave dim light during the Stride.

→ Shadow Drake version

Shadow Blend The creature/NPC's form shifts and blends reflexively with surrounding shadows. They gain an additional reaction each round, but can use this reaction only for Shadow Evade.

Shadow Evade ☹ **Trigger** A creature attacks the creature/NPC while they are in an area of dim light; **Effect** The creature/NPC further obscures its position. The attacker must succeed at a DC 11 flat check in order to affect them, as if they were Hidden for the triggering attack.

→ Fey features:

Shadowy Pop When killed, the creature/NPC explodes into shadowy, noxious tissue like a burst bubble. Each creature within 5 feet must succeed at a DC 15* Fortitude save or become sickened 2 (sickened 3 on a critical failure).

→ A selection of **Occult Innate Spells** of appropriate level(s), drawing from those with the [shadow](#) or [darkness](#) trait as well as illusory disguise and a maximum spell level of the creature level divided by two, rounded up. Reduce this by one level if spellcasting is not the primary means of offense.

4th Level or Higher: Some suggested features:

→ Add to **Occult Innate Spells** the following: **7th** plane shift (self only; to Shadow Plane or Material Plane only)

→ Shae features:

Swift Steps The creature/NPC's movement doesn't trigger reactions.

Slip ◆ **Trigger** A creature moves adjacent to the creature/NPC; **Effect** The creature/NPC teleports to a clear space adjacent to another creature they can see within 30 feet.

→ Shadow features:

Slink in Shadows The creature/NPC can Hide or end its Sneak in a creature's or object's shadow.

7th Level or Higher: Some suggested features:

→ **Immunities** A single immunity to one of precision, poison, or shadow

→ Shadow Giant features:

Pall of Shadow (divine, necromancy, shadow) When the creature/NPC hits with a melee Strike, the target must succeed at a DC 23* Fortitude save or become drained 1 and take a -1 status penalty to Perception checks

involving sight as long as they remain drained. On a critical failure, this condition doesn't heal naturally and can be removed only with magic.

Shadowcloak ◆ (divine, illusion, shadow) The creature/NPC becomes shrouded in shadows and becomes concealed. As the nature of this effect leaves their location obvious, they can't use this concealment to Hide or Sneak. This effect lasts for 1 minute or until they are exposed to direct sunlight, whichever comes first.

12th Level or Higher: The creature gains greater darkvision, replacing low-light vision or darkvision. In addition, some suggested features:

→ Shadow Step (Betobeto-san, Shadow-Yai feature)

Shadow Step ◆ (conjunction, primal, shadow, teleportation) **Requirements** The creature/NPC is in an area of dim light or darkness or is standing in the shadow of any Large or larger object; **Effect** The creature/NPC instantly teleports to another location that's in dim light or darkness or to a space that's in the shadow of any Large or larger object within 60 feet.

17th Level or Higher: Suggested features:

→ Nightcrawler features:

Entropy's Shadow (aura, divine, necromancy, negative) 60 feet. The creature/NPC leaks entropy and corruption from their very being. A living creature entering or starting its turn in the aura takes 5d6 negative damage with a DC 36* basic Fortitude save. If it fails, it's also enfeebled 1 for 1 minute and pulled 10 feet toward the creature/NPC.

→ Shadow Yai features:

Shadow Touch The creature/NPC's touch harms their target's spiritual essence in addition to its body. A creature hit by their unarmed or natural weapon Strike must attempt a DC 36* Will save.

Critical Success The creature is unaffected.

Success The creature takes 2d6 negative damage.

Failure The creature becomes drained 1 and takes 3d6 negative damage.

As long as the creature is drained as a result of this ability, it loses the ability to speak above a whisper. When the creature attempts to Cast a Spell with a verbal component, it must succeed at a flat check or the spell is disrupted. The DC of this flat check is equal to 5 plus the creature's drained value (for example, DC 7 if the creature is drained 2).

Critical Failure As failure, but the creature becomes drained 2 and takes 6d6 negative damage.

* DCs listed are for the minimum level for that feature. When adding these features to a higher level creature, use the DCs in the [Table 2-11: Spell DC and Spell Attack Bonus](#), GMG pg. 65. As an exception, do not modify DCs for flat checks.

Example

SHADOW HILL GIANT [CREATURE 7]

[UNCOMMON] [CE] [LARGE] [EARTH] [GIANT] [HUMANOID] [SHADOW]

Based on [Hill Giant](#), Bestiary pg. 170; [Shadow Creature Theme Template](#)

Perception +13; darkvision

Languages Common, Jotun, Shadowtongue

Skills Athletics +19, Intimidation +11, Stealth +11

Str +6, **Dex** +0, **Con** +4, **Int** -2, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +0

Items greatclub, hide armor, sack with 5 rocks

AC 24; **Fort** +17, **Ref** +12, **Will** +13

HP 140

Catch Rock ☹

Speed 35 feet

Melee ◆ greatclub +19 [+14/+9] (backswing, reach 10 feet, shove), **Damage** 1d10+14 bludgeoning

Melee ◆ fist +19 [+15/+11] (agile, reach 10 feet), **Damage** 1d6+4 bludgeoning

Ranged ◆ rock +19 [+14/+9] (brutal, range increment 120 feet), **Damage** 1d8+14 bludgeoning

Throw Rock ◆

Wide Swing ◆ The hill giant makes a single greatclub Strike and compares the attack roll result to the ACs of up to two foes within its reach. This counts as two attacks for the hill giant's multiple attack penalty.

Pall of Shadow (divine, necromancy, shadow) When the shadow hill giant hits with a melee Strike, the target must succeed at a DC 23 Fortitude save or become drained 1 and take a -1 status penalty to Perception checks involving sight as long as they remain drained. On a critical failure, this condition doesn't heal naturally and can be removed only with magic.

Shadowcloak ◆ (divine, illusion, shadow) The shadow hill giant becomes shrouded in shadows and becomes concealed. As the nature of this effect leaves their location obvious, they can't use this concealment to Hide or Sneak. This effect lasts for 1 minute or until they are exposed to direct sunlight, whichever comes first.

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