

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns



Where Are They Now?

Ben Bleiweiss
Uncommon Knowledge
Wednesday, March 6, 2002



In recent years, Wizards of the Coast R&D has hinted that for the last **Magic** set of a block, they throw caution to the wind and print more cards which "break the rules" than they do in the prior two sets. *Apocalypse* consisted of enough opposite-colored gold cards to make entire decks viable just from that set alone. *Prophecy* debuted the Avatar mechanic and Rhythic spells. *Urza's Destiny* ended up with multiple banned cards, including **Replenish** and **Yawgmoth's Bargain**. However, even though all of those were sets where the developers "cut loose," no set in the history of the game has reached the level of innovation present in *Legends*. Yes, that's a very bold statement to make as an absolute, but allow me a moment to explain.

Back in the day, playtesting didn't really exist internally at Wizards as it did today. The developers/employees/playtesters were pretty much all the same people, and they didn't have as much care for balancing cards as they do today. Cards were printed all over the place as far as casting cost (♣♣♣♣ for **Invoke Prejudice**), power levels (**Rust** versus **Mana Drain**), and rarity (**Remove Enchantments** is common and superbly complex, while **Thunder Spirit** was printed in the rare slot). But as a boon to **Magic** players everywhere, Wizards printed so many interesting cards that the set's legacy is still felt today. This week I'll be examining the ideas and mechanics introduced in *Legends*, and explain where they exist in modern-day **Magic**.

For each category, I'll pose three questions: What, Why, Where?

What: What were they? (Defining the card type/mechanic)

Why: Why was it important? (What does it mean to **Magic** as a whole?)

Where: Where are they now? (How has this mechanic/card type evolved?)

Gold Cards

What: Gold cards are cards which use more than one color of mana to cast. Their borders are gold (instead of the colors associated with the casting costs), which explains their name. (Imagine a game where their borders were half of each color, as with the text boxes on *7th Edition* pain lands, or blended between the colors, using gray for white/black cards!)

Why: Gold cards freed the designers from the constraints of mana costs. Previously, cards could only cost either generic mana or mana from one specific color, but this opened up the possibilities of a lot more casting costs. It currently allows a niche where cards which didn't fit the flavor of one specific color (such as **Prophetic Bolt**) to combine the elements of two or more colors to make a more sensible package (red's direct damage combined with blue's penchant for drawing cards).

Where: Gold cards are still alive and well, with their most recent appearance being the **Atog cycle** in *Odyssey*. While in *Legends*, gold cards were used only for legendary creatures. *The Dark* debuted non-legendary gold cards (including an enchantment, **Dark Heart of the Wood**), and these days any non-land non-artifact card can be gold.



Legends

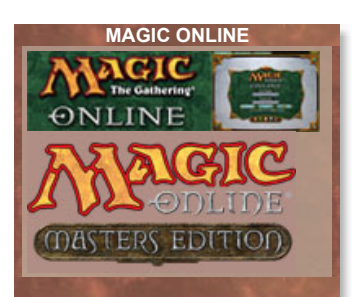
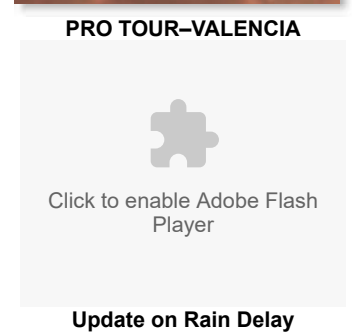
Gold cards and legendary permanents are *Legends'* two biggest hallmarks.

Legendary Permanents

What: legendary cards are cards of which there can be only a single copy in play at any given time, on either side of the board. They are meant to represent a person of unique distinction (such as **Dakkon Blackblade** or **Tor Wauki**), a one-of-a-kind artifact of amazing power (as in the **Mirari** or the **Skyship Weatherlight**), or a specific place (**Pendelhaven** or **Vorlath's Stronghold**). While technically there could exist other types of legendary cards (such as enchantments), none have been printed yet.

Why: In the *Alpha/Beta/Unlimited* sets, all of the creatures and spells were generic. There could be multiple **Forces of Nature**, for instance, and hundreds of **Fireballs**. With *Arabian Nights*, Wizards brought a lot of specific flavor to the table, but something was askew. It felt strange to have two **All from Cairo**s on the table at once, since the card referred to one specific person! So with *Legends*, Wizards solved this problem by making the card subtype "Legend," which gave a distinct flair and uniqueness to each of these cards.

Where: legendary cards thrive to this day, and have appeared in a majority of sets since their inception. Originally all legendary creatures were gold cards, but *Ice Age* introduced mono-colored legendary creatures, such as



General Jarkeld. In *Torment*, we were treated to a few legendary cards, such as **Llawan**, **Cephalid Empress** and **Ambassador Laquatus**. Just as a side note: when tournament rules were first established by the DCI, all legendary cards were restricted! The reasoning was that since they were unique entities, you should not be able to have more than one per deck. Eventually, this rule was lifted because while it makes sense from a storyline perspective, it made no sense for the purposes of tournament play.

Poison

What: You can read more about poison [here](#). Poison introduced alternate win conditions to **Magic**.

Why: Before poison, you could only win the game by damage or decking. Poison opened the door to having other conditions to emerge the victor from a match.

Where: Poison itself is not used anymore, but in the past two blocks R&D has gone bonkers producing multiple alternate win condition cards. **Mortal Combat**, from *Torment*, is the latest incarnation. I would expect to see many more alternate win condition cards in future sets, all the legacy of poison.

Rampage

What: A creature with rampage gains +X/+X for each creature *past the first* which blocks it. This was a keyworded mechanic from the set, much like flanking or flashback were in other sets.

Why: Rampage was pretty much the first keyworded mechanic introduced in an expansion set.

Alpha/Beta/Unlimited gave us things like trample, regeneration, flying, banding, and other staples of the game.

Rampage was the earliest attempt as a new mechanic designed to be reused in later sets.

Where: The problem with rampage was the "past the first creature" clause in the blocking. While useful, it rarely got used outside of some interactions with **Lure**. Although rampage itself disappeared after a very short period, it still lives on today through cards like **Sparring Golem** and **Gang of Elk**. These cards essentially have rampage without the drawback, making them the clear descendents of this mechanic.

Bands with Others

What: Don't even ask me to explain. As if banding wasn't a rules headache enough, *Legends* introduced the "bands with others" mechanic. Seriously, I'm not touching this one. If you're *that* interested, go read [Mark Gottlieb's article](#).

Why: It wasn't important, and it never showed up again.

Where: It might have been interesting to see this mechanic be reintroduced with *Mercadian Masques* with Rebels. White was always the banding color, and having a group of Rebels aiding only each other (banding with other Rebels) might have been interesting. On the other hand, banding itself has fallen to the wayside for the time being, so it was even more unlikely that bands with others would take its place.

Enchant Worlds

What: Enchant Worlds were, in essence, mega-legendary enchantments. While you could only have one copy of each legendary creature in play at any given time, Enchant Worlds took this premise a step further. There can only be one copy of ANY Enchant World in play at any time, period! On top of this, the latest Enchant World to enter play takes priority, destroying the previous Enchant World.

Why: This card type really was interesting, since it gave you a trumping effect. Any Enchant World could destroy any other Enchant World simply by entering play, so people would run cards like **Revelation** in their decks as a way to destroy **Nether Void**!

Where: *Visions* was the last set where Enchant Worlds appeared, and the future looks bleak for their return.

Growing Resource Cards

What: They began with the Mana Batteries (**Black**, **Blue**, **Green**, **Red**, **White**). These cards allowed you to build up resources over the course of turns, deciding when and where to use your stored up mana.

Why: The Mana Batteries broke the barrier of carrying over resources from turn to turn. Have some extra mana untapped? Just throw a charge counter onto a Battery, and use the extra mana five turns later. This allowed players to build up for really large spells over a longer time frame.

Where: Occasionally these types of cards pop up in sets, with their most well-known incarnation being the **storage lands** from *Fallen Empires* and *Mercadian Masques*. **Ice Cauldron** took the concept to its most extreme, and **Magma Mine** borrowed the idea to do direct damage. Some of the "growing enchantment" cards from *Urza's Saga* borrowed from this mechanic as well (such as **Midsummer's Revel**).

Black Card Drawing for Life

What: **Greed** introduced the idea that black should give up life to draw cards.

Why: The legacy of this color archetype was felt for literally the rest of **Magic's** history, with the introduction of **Necropotence** in *Ice Age*. Suddenly, card drawing for life became one of the colors greatest strengths.

Where: What **Greed** began has never stopped. Each block introduces (sometimes multiple) ways for black to pay life to draw cards. **Skeletal Scrying** from *Odyssey* and **Phyrexian Arena** from *Apocalypse* are the two most significant examples of the legacy of **Greed** from *Legends*.

Mass Graveyard Recursion

What: *All Hallow's Eve* gave players a way to bring back every creature in all the graveyards at once. Previously, only single-card recursion had been available (such as *Animate Dead* and *Resurrection*).

Why: Entire deck archetypes have been built around this ability, which has survived to modern day. The ability to fill your graveyard with creatures and then bring them all back at once lends itself to asymmetrical breakability.

Where: The most popular ancestor of *All Hallow's Eve* came in *Tempest*, with the advent of *Living Death*. In current type two, you can use *Twilight's Call* to bring back the legions of the dead.

Trading Permanents

What: *Gauntlets of Chaos*, *Juxtapose*, and *Mirror Universe* allowed a player to trade his resources for those that his opponent controlled. Unlike previous "steal" cards (such as *Control Magic*) or "copy" cards (such as *Clone*), you literally ended up with one of your opponent's cards (or life totals), and he ended up with one of yours.

Why: Giving your opponent something detrimental could well swing the game in your favor. For instance, *Juxtaposing* a *Lord of the Pit* you control for a *Mahamoti Djinn* he controls could prove catastrophic should your opponent run out of creatures to feed to the Lord. *Mirror Universe* became the kill card of choice for "The Deck," allowing you to bring yourself to 0 life during your upkeep with *City of Brass*, and then trading life with your opponent for the win (note: this does not work under *6th Edition* rules, since you die the instant you hit 0 life in modern-day **Magic**).

Where: This mechanic exists to this day, with the newest printing coming in *Odyssey* with *Cultural Exchange*.

Donate (of the Trix deck) comes from this lineage (giving your opponent your cards to play with), and was taken to the most extreme measure with *Thieves' Auction*.

XX Casting Costs

What: Certain spells and effects were deemed so powerful that instead of needing $\{X\}$ generic mana to power, they needed $\{XX\}$! *Recall*, *Voodoo Doll*, and *Part Water*(!) were all recipients of $\{XX\}$ casting or activation costs.

Why: Previously, cards could only have $\{X\}$ casting costs. The new twist allowed more than one variable to be present in a card's cost, allowing more powerful effects to be printed... at a price.

Where: While $\{XX\}$ has fallen out of favor in recent years, it was parodied quite well in *Unglued* with *The Ultimate Nightmare of Wizards of the Coast Customer Service*. Outside of that, $\{XX\}$ for a while was the standard cost given to creatures who were able to destroy certain types of permanents (*Orcish Settlers*, *Plaguebearer*, and *Gorilla Shaman*).



Multi-Player Cards

What: *Syphon Soul* was the first **Magic** spell really directed to hitting more than just one opponent.

Sure, other cards had previously done a fine job of affecting multiple people at once (think *Earthquake*), but *Syphon Soul* was where **Magic** basically stood up and said "for the love of God, multi-player games exist!"

Why: While there are a large number of tournament players in **Magic**, there are infinitely more casual players who love cards like these! *Syphon Soul* allowed Wizards to develop cards which could be templated to work effectively in both single and multi player games.

Where: Multi-player cards are not going away anytime soon, and each new block contains a few cards meant almost exclusively for bigger games.

These cards might not seem revolutionary now, but they each added something new to the game.

Legend Hosers

What: With every move there must be a countermove, and *Legends* didn't just introduce legendary cards without giving a way to hose them. *Arena of the Ancients* taps down all your legendary creatures pretty much forever, while *Willow Satyr* allows you to steal them to your side. *Livonya Silone* could landwalk across any of the legendary lands in the set.

Why: Hosers are a part of **Magic**. Randy discussed the acceptable power level of hosers [here](#). Even though, sometimes it's fun to just smash in a card type which has been giving you problems in one fell swoop.

Where: *Invasion* gave **Magic** players a couple of new legendary hosers, with *Empress Galina* (a direct improvement on the Satyr), and *Tsabo Tavoc* (the first protection from legends card).

Haste

What: Haste allows a creature to ignore what used to be known as summoning sickness. *Concordant Crossroads* was the first true haste card in all of **Magic**. Previously, *Instill Energy* allowed a creature to attack the turn it came into play (though it still couldn't use tap abilities), and *Nether Shadow* shared this drawback (you couldn't tap it

the turn it came into play, which would have significant, for instance, if you needed to enchant it with **Psionic Gift**). Since the invention of haste, however, both of those cards have been errataed to grant/have "haste" proper.

Why: Haste added value to creatures, and allowed the printing of creatures which "go away" after one turn (think **Ball Lightning** and **Viashino Sandstalker**). Although it debuted in green, it quickly became one of red's hallmark abilities.

Where: Everywhere! Haste has survived to modern day, and now even is a keyworded mechanic. Nearly every set since *Legends* has featured a haste creature, and *Torment* is no exception (with **Centaur Chieftain**).

Searching for Lands

What: **Untamed Wilds** allowed the green mage to search his library for a basic land and put it into play. **Land Tax** gave you the ability to search your library for three basic lands if you controlled fewer lands than your opponent.

Why: Previously, **dual lands** and **Birds of Paradise** were your only bets for smoothing out multiple colors of mana in a deck (technically, **Sunglasses of Urza** as well). The two new cards gave the player the ability to smooth out their mana bases across multiple colors, giving access to lands of all types.

Where: While **Land Tax** only saw one recurrence (**Tithe**, from *Visions*), **Untamed Wilds** begat **Rampant Growth** and **Harrow**, both of which were played heavily in Domain decks.

Blue Bounce

What: Previously, one of blue's weaknesses came from its inability to handle permanents. *Legends* changed this, by allowed blue to deal with any type of permanent on a temporary basis, with **Boomerang** and **Time Elemental**.

Why: Every color has drawbacks, and blue's drawback was that once something resolved, it was there to stay. **Unsummon** and **Hurkyl's Recall** allowed them to handle certain types of permanents to different degrees of success, but *Legends* finally threw out that rule. Now, if it was on the board, blue could easily return it to your hand.

Where: **Boomerang** still exists even to this day, and **Time Elemental** became **Temporal Adept** in *Urza's Destiny* (and *7th Edition*). Bounce still remains a prominent feature of the color, including **Aether Burst** and **Dematerialize** from *Odyssey*, and **Churning Eddy** in *Torment*.

Discard Hosers

What: You can read more about them [here](#), but in a nutshell, **Psychic Purge** nailed an opponent for playing discard spells. Previous discard hosers had been passive (such as **Library of Leng**), but **Psychic Purge** allowed you to really make your opponent pay for playing discard.

Why: Suddenly, discard became dangerous. With **Library of Leng**, you still made your opponent lose cards out of his hand (gaining card advantage), even if he decided which cards he'd see again in the future. With the Purge, it became downright deadly to risk stripping an entire hand.

Where: Currently, **madness** combines several elements of different mechanics, the most important of which comes from discard hosers.

Untargetability

What: **Spectral Cloak** made your creature completely invulnerable to targeting effects or spells (except interrupts, which don't exist anymore), and **Anti-Magic Aura** had a similar (narrower) effect against enchantments.

Why: Untargetable creatures have been a mainstay of **Magic** ever since. One of the most powerful creatures ever, **Morphling**, featured untargetability as its flagship ability.

Where: These cards still remain as a popular part of **Magic**, with the latest version being **Nimble Mongoose** from *Odyssey*.

Naming of Cards

What: **Petra Sphinx** allowed you (or your opponent) to guess a card. You then revealed the top card of the respective library. If one of you was right, you put the card in your hand. If the guess was incorrect, the card went to the graveyard.

Why: The Sphinx drew on the knowledge of every card in **Magic**. If you couldn't name the card, you couldn't keep the card. It was the first card which really rewarded having knowledge of a large pool of cards.

Where: **Meddling Mage** really took this mechanic and popularized it. Other cards, such as **Predict** and **Null Chamber**, also took advantage of the idea.

Stopping Landwalk

What: A cycle of enchantments in the set (**Deadfall**, **Great Wall**, **Crevasse**, **Quagmire**, and **Undertow**) along with a few legends (**Gosta Dirk**, **Lord Magnus**, and **Ur-Draco**) allowed your creatures to block creatures that ordinarily would be able to landwalk.

Why: Although nowadays this would be considered more of a boon in limited events, these cards were effectively hosers for creatures such as **Bog Wraith** and **Righteous Avengers**.

Where: Landwalk hasn't been seen at that powerful an ability in recent years, and so cards like these haven't been as popular. **Staff of the Ages** from *Ice Age* combined all the different enchantments into one big package, and **Merfolk Assassin** gave islandwalkers a thing or two to think about.

Walls, Walls, Walls

What: Ok, *Legends* didn't really innovate anything regarding walls. But the set contains more walls and wall-affecting cards (**Fortified Area** and the five **Glyphs**) than any other **Magic** set in history, so I thought I would be remiss if I didn't mention this fact.

Why: Strangely enough, *Legends* didn't introduce a card which allowed walls to attack. Players would have to stick to using **Animate Wall** until **Rolling Stones** came along years later.

Where: **Pitchstone Wall** is the latest wall to see print (from *Torment*), though there are very few cards which interact specifically with walls anymore.



There were a whopping eleven walls in Legends, none of which were green. By the way, (Walls cannot attack.)

I do hope you've enjoyed this trip back in time to *Legends*, and seen that a huge chunk of the ideas introduced in this set have carried over to this day in many ways, shapes and forms. Next time you play a game of **Magic**, take a moment to appreciate the history of the cards you are playing with, because chances are that the card you are using descends directly from a card people were playing around the time of *Legends*.

Next week: Cards which smash control decks!

Ben may be reached at uncommonknowledge@wizards.com.

Ben Bleiweiss has written about his obsession with **Magic: The Gathering** for over a decade. He's travelled the world because of **Magic**, both as a player and a writer. When not spending time playing **Magic**, writing about **Magic**, or thinking about **Magic**, Ben is employed by StarCityGames.com, where he works with **Magic** cards all day long. He lives with his wife in Virginia, and they sleep comfortably at night under their Orgg down comforter.



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Ben Bleiweiss](#) archive

[About Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [New to the Game?](#) | [Inside Wizards](#) | [Find a Store](#) | [Press](#) | [Help](#) | [Sitemap](#)

© 1995-2007 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)

