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# Hallmark Cards

Ben Bleiweiss  
 Uncommon Knowledge  
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*Phaedren Haelphanae crept through the forests slowly and silently, like a nimble panther. He had been on the trail of the Force of Nature for months now, and felt like he finally was close. He paused for a second, holding his finger up to the wind to see if there were any shifts in the air. Suddenly, a huge foot came down from the above. Phae had found his Force of Nature.*

Squish.

Way back when I first started penning this column, I wrote a [story](#) wherein I tried to show off all the fattest of fat green creatures in each set. Unfortunately at the time, I handcuffed myself with strict guidelines that the biggest creature in each set would be measured by power and toughness, and not by flavor or aesthetics. Let's face it, while *Skyshroud Behemoth* might have been the largest creature out of *Nemesis* in a technical sense, *Blastoderm* will be the fatty people remember years down the road.

Then during *Judgment* preview weeks, several people debated the idea of "flagship creatures" on my [message board](#). Here's what I had to say:

*"To say that Lord of the Pit was the flagship creature for black in Alpha it to say that Personal Incarnation was the flagship creature over Serra [Angel]. By design it might have been intended that way, but history will show that Serra and Sengir [Vampire] are the most recognizable and popular creatures from their respective colors in the base edition."*

What do I mean by flagship creature? These are the creatures which embody the themes of each particular color. While there are many reiterations and variations within each color in **Magic**, some are much more prominent than others. If you pointed to a creature and said, "you know, this dragon *really* is the example I'd point to when I wanted to show a dragon to a friend," that would be your flagship dragon. So without further ado, let's delve into the colors and see what we come up with. Keep in mind, this is entirely a popularity contest!

*Disclaimer: All opinions expressed from this point down are my opinion and mine alone. I would love to hear any sort of debate about this subject, on both the message boards and through e-mail! None of this information contains any inside information about the future of Magic, for the rumor-mongers out there ;)*

## BLACK

The color of evil, death, and the undead. From day one this color was painted as the villainous one, from horrific pit-beings to the sacrifice of innocents to further dastardly goals. To describe these themes that typify black as a color, I'd break it down into three branches: Pure Evil, Sacrifice, and the Dead/Undead.

### Pure Evil

Pure evil, the kind that comes from those willing to sell their souls, corrupts the innocent and commits unspeakable acts of horrific torture. While I certainly wouldn't condone such behavior, you can't have a hero without a villain. *Juzam Djinn* fits this bill perfectly. Just look at him! He's getting ready to eat a hapless victim, grinning devilishly all the while.

### Sacrifice

You can't make an omelet without breaking some eggs, and you can't keep a powerful creature fed without throwing some bodies on the fire. The original sacrificial bad boy of black was *Lord of the Pit*, who needed to eat all sorts of lesser minions in order to keep from turning on his master. It seems like the Lord is a nigh-uncontrollable entity bent on destroying everything in his path. Compare him to *Phyrexian Plaguelord*, the fourth stage of plague who will gladly sacrifice his followers in order to achieve his goals.

Which black creature more typifies sacrifice?

Lord of the Pit

Phyrexian Plaguelord



Update on Rain Delay



Submit my Vote

## The Dead/Undead

Now here's where things get interesting. The undead cover a huge amount of territory in Magic, from skeletons to ghouls to wraiths to vampires to specters. There are two likely contenders for this crown: There's ethereal **Hypnotic Specter**, looming ominously while it waits to strip its victim of all memories. Also we must consider **Sengir Vampire**, the bloodthirsty flyer who thirsts for the blood of his victims to grow ever more powerful.

While other Vampires have duplicated Sengir's +1/+1 ability, the children of Hyppie -- **Abyssal Specter** and **Chilling Apparition** -- seem to push the idea that undead spirits rob you of your resources. Edge to **Hypnotic Specter**.

## BLUE

Theft, trickery, wizardry, intellectualism, and altering other magics: these are the hallmarks of the blue mage. The blue pantheon of creature therefore include Wizards, Flyers, and Tricksters.

## Wizards

Hands down the most recognizable wizard in **Magic** still remains **Prodigal Sorcerer**. Affectionately known as "Tim" (from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* for the two people out there who don't know), this sorcerer has been pinging other creatures for one damage for years, and has inspired an entire host of imitators in every single other color in **Magic**. But none have matched the elegance and simplicity of tap: deal one damage to target creature or player.

Will this remain a blue ability? **Arcane Teachings** and **Jesska, Warrior Adept** from *Judgment* seem to hint otherwise.

## Flyers


It may seem like a lot of cards on this list come from the Alpha edition, but that's because they have been around the longest and have had the most opportunity to burn into the collective psyche of **Magic** players across the world. It should come therefore as no surprise that the embodiment of blue flyers is **Mahamoti Djinn**, the "Fat Moti". Large and in charge of the skies, the Moti dominates the airways once he hits the board and never gives up his stranglehold as

lord of above.

## Tricksters

Tricksters are those creatures which aren't exactly as they seem. **Clone**, **Vesuvan Doppelganger**, **Shifty Doppelganger**, and **Volrath's Shapeshifter** all fit into this category. But, perhaps, the most wildly popular (and hated!) blue creature in **Magic** history fits snugly as the epitome of trickery. He might fly. He might get tougher. He might get more powerful. He might untap. He might not even be targetable. Ah, **Morphling**. So, what is "trickery" really about? Becoming another creature, or having the ability to survive anything thrown at you?



Which blue creature more typifies trickery? 

Vesuvan Doppelganger

Morphling

Submit my Vote

## GREEN

Here's where the most debate will take place. Green contains the best fatties in **Magic**, all the while using nature and mana production to support them.

## Fatties

The original fatty was, of course, the **Force of Nature**. And while he was all good and fine, the crown of King of Fatties belongs to Jamie Wakefield's pet - **Verdant Force**. As a 7/7 monstrosity, **Verdant Force** not only came to bring it, he brought friends... lots of small friends who grew off of him, looking to overwhelm the enemy.

## Mana Producers

The Birds or the Elves? Even all those years ago, players debated whether the flying and color versatility of **Birds of Paradise** gave it more reason to be played than **Llanowar Elves**, who were capable of actually dealing damage on their own. Traditionally the Elves have been used in one and two color decks, while the Birds supplement the Elves in two color decks and outright replace them in three to five color decks. I'm going to leave this one as the only tie in this article.

## Nature

Animals come from nature, and green's got more animals than any other color. Bears, snakes, monkeys, tigers, worms, spiders, elephants(?), they're all here in the forests. Accordingly, there have been many very popular green creatures (in the literal sense of creature!), but none have been as played as **River Boa** and **Uktabi Orangutan**. These two *Visions* creatures have vied against each other for deck space for years. One has been the constant source of frustration for blue mages, while the other has been gleefully destroying artifacts.

**Which green creature more typifies nature?**

River Boa

Uktabi Orangutan

Stay tuned next week for Commons Week. In two weeks, we'll revisit this topic when we look at red, white, and artifact creatures, as well as discuss the choices I've made above.

And for those wondering, last week's poll snuck in a little question about which green token creature really typified green tokens. Here's how that voting turned out:

### Which is the king of token creature sets?

<i>Fallen Empires</i>	1648	40%
<i>Odyssey</i>	2522	60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4170</b>	<b>100%</b>

Ben may be reached at [bleiweiss1@cox.net](mailto:bleiweiss1@cox.net).



*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](http://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.*



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