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Hallmark Cards, Part 2

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Uncommon Knowledge
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Before we examine the white, red, and artifact hallmark creatures, let's see who won at the [polls](#) for black, blue and green.

Which black creature more typifies sacrifice?

Lord of the Pit	3567	68%
Phyrexian Plaguelord	1655	32%
Total	5222	100%

Which blue creature more typifies trickery?

Vesuvan Doppelganger	1064	25%
Morphling	3230	75%
Total	4294	100%

Which green creature more typifies nature?

River Boa	3033	78%
Uktabi Orangutan	835	22%
Total	3868	100%

I received many interesting comments in my email. One reader had this to say:

"Hmm... wait... something seems to be missing... I think it was a certain djinn... and if I remember correctly, it's been in 3 different sets, most recently Judgment... oh yeah, it's ERHNAME DJINN!! How could you not have mentioned this guy? Especially considering he's creating a stir by coming back to Type 2. He doesn't fit really well into your categories, but that doesn't mean he isn't a hallmark creature for green. No, maybe THE hallmark creature for green."

I concede his point entirely: **Erhnam Djinn** remains one of the most popular green creatures ever printed. I couldn't fit him into the categories I made for green, because he would most likely fit under **fattie**, and **Force of Nature** and **Verdant Force** spring to mind as much 'larger' monsters which have also enjoyed widespread popularity. So Erhnam got the cut, but gets a mention here as a consolation prize.

As one last side note: my email had been broken for the past month before the previous Hallmark Cards installment. At this time it works again, but I'm afraid that if you wrote before then, I did not get your emails. I read and respond to as many emails as I can each week, so if you wrote to me and didn't get a response, it was because of faulty computers rather than a lack of interest in what you had to say.

The Hallmark Creatures, Part Two

RED

The color of unbridled emotions, fire and wanton destruction. Red doesn't ask nicely, it demands. Red doesn't use finesse, it uses a **hammer**. It's also the color which has the most disparity between its races, as it centers around not only the mighty dragons, but also the mischievously brain-dead goblins.

Emotion

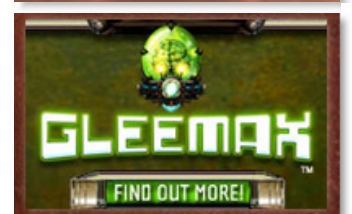
From the viewpoint of flavor, red gets most of the haste creatures in magic because it is the color of rushing into things, without forethought. This tendency to be headstrong manifests through creatures which can attack the turn they come into play. No other haste creature has been as beloved as the elemental manifestation of anger, **Ball Lightning**. It costs **3** to cast, possesses the abilities of haste and trample, and then sputters out and fades away at the end of the turn. In short, the red mage gets really damn irritated, summons an impressive creature which is patented after a weather pattern, and uses his fury to beat his opponent down in one impressive blow.

Dragons

Papa **Shivan Dragon** instantly captures this spot. Every color has dragons, but red by and far has the most quantity and quality dragons in all of **Magic**. Of all these wyrms, **Shivan Dragon** is instantly the most



Update on Rain Delay



recognizable. In my experiences, players hoped to open this creature in early packs more than any other, since he immediately dominated the air and spelled certain doom for their opponents. If you'd like more information about dragons in **Magic**, see my [previous article](#) about **Fledgling Dragon**.

Small Races

Green might have its elves, blue its merfolk, and white a whole slew of soldiers, but when it comes to weenies the most memorable ones belong to red's goblin race. From a design standpoint, red has both goblins and dwarves: the former are used for cards which have levity, while the latter are used for smaller creatures which are a bit more serious in flavor. It's been the goblins which have won over the hearts of **Magic** players across the globe, whether they are the lunk-headed **Squee, Goblin Nabob** the brutishly mutated Moggs of Rath, or the ultra-intelligent strain found in Mercadia.

Speaking of Squee, is he the most identifiable of all Goblins, with his ability to defeat death? Or is it the suicidal **Mogg Fanatic**, a mainstay in Sligh decks for as long as it's been around?



Which is the quintessential Goblin?

Mogg Fanatic

Squee, Goblin Nabob

Submit my Vote

WHITE

Soldiers, angels, and people working together: these are the hallmarks of white, the color of order and purity. White's creatures tend to work well together, aiding one another in combat so that the sum of their parts adds up to a greater whole.

Pure Good

Just as black contained creatures of pure evil, white's arsenal maintains a bevy of angelic forces of pure light. And no other angel has enjoyed as much popularity over the years as **Serra Angel**, **Magic**'s first "does not tap to attack" creature. From her introduction in Alpha to her triumphant return in *Seventh Edition*, **Serra Angel** has been the hallmark creature for white, and will hopefully see a little more play once *Invasion* block and **Flametongue Kavu** rotate out.

Military

Encompassing all the creatures of rank and order, the military aspect of white's creatures range from **Benalish Hero** to **Seasoned Marshal** to the three legendary avens of the *Odyssey* block (**Lieutenant Kirtar**, **Major Teroh**, and **Commander Eesha**). The soldiers which traditionally have been most popular are those which have protection from black, since they set up the strongest contrast between white's purity (a knight on a crusade) against black's corruption. But which knight to choose? Is it **White Knight**, the original favorite? Or would it be **Order of Leitbur**, the often-used clerics from *Fallen Empires* which have the ability to far surpass the Knight in power -- for a price?



Which white creature more typifies rank and order?

White Knight

Order of Leitbur

Submit my Vote

Helpers

While green expresses creatures helping other creatures through natural symbiosis for most of the time, white does the same but through the idea of community and civilization. These are the creatures which work to help other creatures, and don't necessarily play a starring role on their own. The effect doesn't have to be large (think **Samite Healer**), but sometimes it can be (**Atalya, Samite Master**). White creatures have been known to prevent damage to one another, pump up attackers or blockers in combat, deal damage to attacking or blocking creatures the opponent controls, band, and of course give protection from other colors. It's this last ability which the hallmark white helper possesses, on no other than *Urza Legacy's* **Mother of Runes**. She performs the duties of many of these abilities all at once, protecting creatures from damage, targeted removal, and aiding during combat all at once.

Artifacts

People build artifacts. Whether it was the warring brothers Urza and Mishra, or any other number of artificers in Dominaria (and beyond!), these mechanical creatures aren't born, they are made. They serve diverse purposes, being able to basically do anything from produce mana to play defense and offense. Of the artifact creatures, we're going to look at three themes: Clockwork Mechanisms, Monstrosities, and Powerables.

Powerables

Imagine that you have an inanimate object which requires energy to power it each time it needs to be used. These are the powerable artifacts, which began with **Jade Statue** and have seen print in many incarnations since. **Chimeric Idol** from *Prophecy* is by and far the most popular of these types of artifact creatures, weighing in at a hefty 3/3 for three mana. Thematically he makes a great deal of sense, as you can imagine this immense structure absorbing the energies of the land (tapping all lands you control) in order to power itself each turn.

Clockwork Mechanisms

While some artifacts require a charge each turn in order to use, others work constantly but require maintenance over time. In **Magic** this can be expressed in several ways: some creatures come into play with counters and lose them each time they attack or block (e.g. **Clockwork Beast**). Others cannot naturally untap (**Soldevi Golem**), while others have an upkeep cost in mana (**Colossus of Sardia**). Not surprisingly, the hallmark clockwork artifact creature is **Masticore**, with his hefty cost of losing a card a turn offset by his huge frame, ability to machine gun down other creatures, and tendency to regenerate from even the most seemingly lethal of damage.

Monstrosities

And then there are those artifacts which are built solely as instruments of destruction. They have no subtlety, but instead perform acts of termination with extreme prejudice. When you cast one of these big boys, you're not playing defense or finesse: you're playing to smash the face of your opponent straight into the ground. **Juggernaut** fits this bill perfectly, since it isn't built to play defense and ignore all those namby-pamby walls which might try to get in its way. On the other hand, the **Phyrexian Dreadnought** weighs in as the largest naturally occurring creature in **Magic**, at a hefty combined power and toughness of 24! On top of that, it tramples both the people on the side that he's brought into play, and then those who it's unleashed against. I'm still a little undecided whether the sheer offensive nature of **Juggernaut** or the gargantuan size of the Dreadnought give either one the title of the hallmark artifact monstrosity. Why not vote and help decide?



Which artifact creature is the better monstrosity?

- Phyrexian Dreadnought**
- Juggernaut**

Submit my Vote

And so concludes the two part series on the hallmark creatures in **Magic**. Next week join me for an article I call, "Who's the Lifegain?"

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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.



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