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# In the Black



## Nothing is off limits

Mark Rosewater · Making Magic  
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Welcome to Black Week! This is the fourth in a series of themes weeks dedicated to the five colors of **Magic**. The previous three were "[It's Not Easy Being Green](#)", "[The Great White Way](#)", and "[True Blue](#)". As this series is very structured, anyone who's read any of the other three articles should have sense of how this is going to work.

## There's Always Still Room For Pie

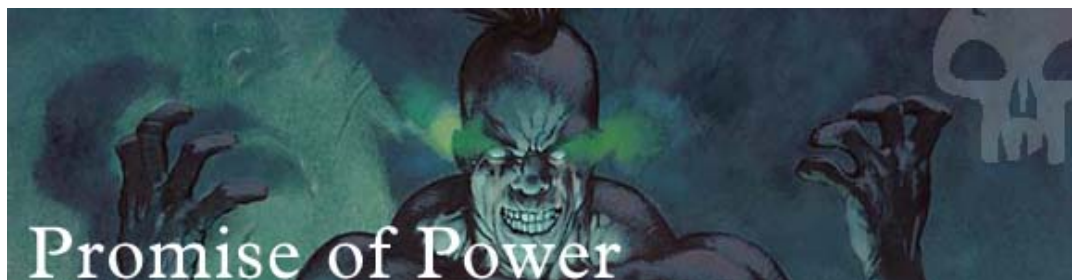
If not, first, welcome to my column. I strongly suggest you check out the [Making Magic archive](#). For each of the color-themed weeks, I am using my column to explain the flavor and philosophy of each color. To do this, I am using a series of questions R&D created while working on fleshing out the color wheel (much as **Magic** has rules gurus, it also has flavor gurus.) The five questions are:

- What does the color care about? What is its end goal?
- What means does the color use to achieve these ends?
- What does the color care about? What does the color represent?
- What does the color despise? What negatively drives the color?
- Why does the color like its allies and hate its enemies?
- What is the color's greatest strength and biggest weakness?

## What does the color care about? What is its end goal?

As I've explained in each segment, a color's philosophy revolves around how that color sees the world. Black's view of the world is quite self-centered. In essence, black defines the world by how it affects him or her. Thus, to black, each individual has their own purpose in life: making their life as good as it can be. And this is fair as far as black is concerned, as everyone has someone looking out for their own best interest (themselves). Now, this way of life has many victims (after all someone has to lose for others to gain), but black feels this is simply the world's way to weed out the weak.

To accomplish its goals, black seeks power. Why? Because unlike all the other colors, black doesn't feel a need to restrict what it's allowed to do. To black, an individual is allowed to use any means necessary to get what it wants. Thus, the *true* measure of success to black is the ability to do whatever you wish. If someone else is keeping you from your wants and desires, then you aren't properly meeting your number one goal.



Black believes that every other color wants to change the world to make it something that it isn't. Black feels it is simply accepting the world as it is. Humans (and humanoids for that matter) are essentially selfish beings. Any other belief is simply denial. Sure, it would be great if the world worked differently, but it doesn't. And if black has to live in this world, then it's going to play by the rules that exist. And those rules are simple: Do what you want until someone more powerful stops you.

Black's philosophy is dirt simple. Black wants what it wants and will use any means necessary to get it. It's ultimate goal? Ultimate power, aka omnipotence.

## What means does the color use to achieve these ends?

This is the area that black feels is its greatest strength. All the other colors put limitations on themselves. Some limitations are physical, some intellectual, others moral. Black doesn't do that. Black uses whatever tools are available. Death, disease, madness. Nothing is off limits to black. Mechanically, this is what makes black king of destruction (of living things) and discard.

Next, black is willing to spend any cost for its magic. Paying life, sacrificing creatures, giving up random body parts. Black is willing to do anything and everything. Mechanically, this is why black is the best at using alternate costs to lower its mana and activation costs. Black can do just about anything if the sacrifice is high enough.

In addition, black is more than willing to leach off others. Why invest energy in something when you can simply siphon it away from someone else? Taking something away from someone else is one way of proving your own power. Mechanically this shows up in effects such as **Consume Spirit** or **Syphon Mind**.

Black's alliances with the dark side allow it to lead a horde of dangerous (and often demented) creatures to battle. It gives it access to risky but powerful spells. Black has access to almost anything but always at a scary price.

Black's willingness to dip into these dark resources make it the most powerful color. Black's greatest dangerous come not from the other colors but from within itself. Black is the color most prone to infight and to allow it own demons (both figuratively and literally) to drag it down.

## What does the color care about? What does the color represent?

Black is about seizing power. Its ongoing goal is to use whatever means necessary to get what it wants. As such black represents numerous elements of the seedier side of life.

Death	Corruption	Machevelian thinking	Fear
Amorality	Impurity (Contamination)	Individualism	Execution
Darkness	Reduction	Destruction (calculated)	Self Absorbtion
Decay	Deceit	Sacrifice of Others	Undead
Disease	Manipulation	Sacrifices Pieces of Self	

## What does the color despise? What negatively drives the color?

Black is all about focusing one one's self. As such, it hates (and to be frank, really doesn't understand) those that put the needs of the group over the individual. How can you motivate individuals that do not care about their own self-being? They're idiots, but very dangerous ones.

Black understands that creatures motivated by false creations such as morality or spirituality can't be reasoned with or properly tortured. As such, black has to strike preemptively and destroy them before they band together and overwhelm black's own forces.

## Why does the color like its allies and hate its enemies?

In white, black sees a color driven to idiocy. Life is hard enough without forcing stupid restrictions upon oneself. But then the white mage has the gall to try and impose his stupid rules on everyone else. Adding insult to injury, his rules protect the weak at the

***“How can you motivate individuals that do not care about their own self-***

expense of the strong. Such ideas need to be expunged before they can spread.

***being? They're idiots, but very dangerous ones."***

In blue, black sees a color that understands the big picture. It's a color that sees the importance of keeping a position of dominance. If only blue spent more time with action and less time analyzing everything.

In red, black sees a color that is not afraid to act in its own best interest. It's a color that embraces the need for the strong to cull the weak. Unfortunately, red is far too haphazard in his execution.



In green, black sees a color incapable of taking the steps necessary to get the job done. Like white, green puts far too much value in qualities that are meaningless. Green's greatest weakness is its blind faith in the value of life. Sure, life is useful (a lot of powerful spells do require a sacrifice after all), but green takes it way, way too far.

## **What is the color's greatest strength and biggest weakness?**

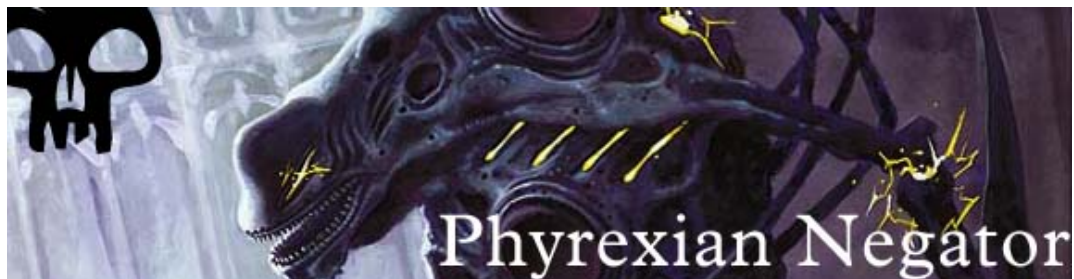
Black's greatest strength is its willingness to use any resource that will help it advance its cause. Black does not shut off any avenue or turn away any opportunity. The downside of this course of action is that black often meddles with things that perhaps shouldn't be meddled with. Black is the color that will most often destroy itself (although red is a close second). In addition, black's focus on the individual make it poor at connecting with others. As such, black is the most isolated color. When trouble comes its way, black often has no one else to turn to for help.

## **Touch of Evil**

I can't talk about black without discussing the touchy issue. Is black synonymous with evil? I believe no. Sure, people associated with black can be evil. It's clearly the color most prone to becoming evil. Most traditional evil fantasy villains fall into black. And early **Magic** flavor clearly played up the evilness of black. But having a high predisposition towards evil is not the same as being evil. Let me explain.

The color wheel is a tool used to give structure to the game's flavor. Each point (aka color) on the wheel represents a different philosophy. When a color embodies a sentiment, it's unique to that color. Allies of that color might be sympathetic to the sentiment but they do not embody it outright. Thus, the first reason black cannot be synonymous with evil is that it's not limited to black.

Every color on the color wheel is capable of committing evil acts in the name of that color's philosophy. White will create fascism. Red will commit manslaughter. Green will violently destroy things and blue will wantonly steal them. *Evil is not about beliefs but actions.* And all five colors are capable of doing evil things.



Second, many of the things black embodies can be used for good. For example, black is the color that stresses the importance of the individual. This is a fundamental part of things like capitalism

and the American Constitution. Selfishness has its good uses. Sometimes, people really should put themselves first.

Third, people often confuse amorality with immorality. Black isn't against morality. It simply doesn't believe it means anything. An amoral person is just as likely to commit moral acts as immoral ones.

So yes, black mages often *can* be evil. But black as a color is not inherently evil. Being influenced by black's philosophies does not necessarily mean that one will commit an evil act. That being the case, we cannot say that black represents evil. More closely aligned with evil than the other colors? Fine. More ripe with potential for evil? Sure. Evil? No. And that's a very important distinction.

## Men In Black

And now I continue what has proven to be the most controversial part of my color philosophy articles. As an exercise, R&D put a giant color wheel on the wall and everyone was encouraged to put up pictures of people or characters we felt fit that color's flavor. Here are some of the characters we considered to be black:

**Lex Luthor** – As a comic book fan I felt I had to include a super villain. I chose Lex because no other villain better epitomizes pure unadulterated greed and hunger for power.

**Bart Simpson** – I've included a Simpson in every column, so no reason to end the practice now. Bart is the literal black sheep of the family as his motives are purely self-motivated.

**Daffy Duck** – Daffy makes it very clear that his priorities are about himself. He is as greedy and self-centered as cartoon characters get. (Note that Donald Duck would be here as well if his uncontrolled anger didn't make him black/red.) I included Daffy because I'm often asked how one can get a likable black protagonist. Daffy has been the lead in numerous cartoons. As you can see, it is possible.

**George Costanza** – As any fan of *Seinfeld* will attest, every action George takes is about George. Whether it's causing the inadvertent death of his fiancée out of stinginess or creating a fake charity to avoid buying gifts, George will stoop to great depths in the name of advancing his own cause: himself.

## Fade to Black

And we are now four fifths of the way towards completing the color weeks. (Note that red week should have a gap slightly smaller than the one between blue and black.)

Join me next week when I fuel the "Maro is insane" threads found across the Internet.

Until then, may you learn that putting yourself first is occasionally a good idea.

Mark Rosewater

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