

Ranking the best of the best, and that's just the beginning. The Top 50 Artifacts of All Time

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It is only fitting that many of **Magic's** most powerful artifacts were forged early on in the game's history. After all, are not all the best artifacts always ancient and powerful, valuable beyond measure with origins lost in the sands of time? Can you help but wonder what daring powerful demigod dared to craft such power? Are they not so rare and valuable that one can spend their lifetime chasing after them? And do they not give you the things wizards want the most, knowledge and power, for they know they are one in the same? The tour ends in the only place it can, with the card to rule them all, or, if things get desperate, to pay the next few months' rent.



Magic's artifacts have enjoyed three ages when they towered above all else. First there was the artificer's Golden Age when men were real men, women were real women and you couldn't find a booster pack at retail price. The most overpowered and underpriced enchanted rocks history will ever know were traded for large dragons and slices of pizza. An entire expansion devoted to them came out called *Antiquities*, telling the story of a war between brothers Urza and Mishra. A time of legends (and *Legends*), it could not last. They peaked again several years later for the Artificer's Silver Age, with the great Urza's cycle that unleashed upon our world so many powerful weapons as to echo the ancient times. As my review of the set warned, as things have been before so shall they be again. The avalanche those artifacts and a few of their companions unleashed was so powerful that not only did several cards have to be banned, the power level had to be reworked and the game took over a year to readjust.

The third great time to be without a color is right here, right now. The Artificer's Bronze Age is coming to a close, and it's going out with a bang. From the plane of Mirrodin has come the greatest terror **Magic** has seen in many years. Fitting together like the pieces of a puzzle, with even the lands as artifacts and lacking any natural predators to keep it in check, *Mirrodin* Block's Affinity decks have created the type of exponential power that Voltron could only dream of. Prize after prize fell as tournament after tournament and play group after play group learned the domineering power and speed of **Magic's** latest dominant deck. They even banned [Skullclamp](#), but to this day Affinity is the biggest threat not only in Standard but in Extended as well. Only their passage into the depths of time, and their new status as true artifacts, will be able to stop them now. Out of the ashes of this third artifact wave will doubtless come a new **Magic**, particularly given recent hints regarding the upcoming Banned and Restricted announcement.

So keeping that in mind, here are the artifacts that dominated the game. These are the cards that made your opponent shake in his boots and slump in his chair. They did things they had no right to do, and they did them at a mana cost you wouldn't believe. It will likely be years before another card like these will pass our way again, but never forget: The pendulum swings both ways. When the time comes to put the iron in the Iron Age, make sure to know your history.

In making up the primary list, I used a combination of criteria. Historical impact on the game is the most important, especially at the highest levels, along with future impact, but I also considered anything else that makes you the best. Raw power counts, value counts, uniqueness counts - and so does being cool. **Magic** is all about having fun, and you should never forget that while blowing up your friends and beating down your enemies. That's fun too. It's a Spike list, but I tried to keep it balanced. I'm counting down from #50 because as we all know that's more fun. Such drama! Now, before I get into the cards that made the list, I want to make sure and note all the cards that claimed they were unfairly excluded.

There were a lot of cards that were neat and unique, but just weren't good enough to quite make it. I wanted to let in [Horn of Greed](#), but it wasn't going to happen. [Platinum Angel](#) was probably the next card on the list, and it argued that it prevented you from losing the game, but I still say better luck on the next ballot. [Null Rod](#) and even [Imi Statue](#) wanted in, but I reminded them that this was the artifact list and party poopers were not welcome. [Isochron Scepter](#) had a good theoretical case, but has yet to build up a good enough resume. And no matter what Randy says there's no room for [Sands of Time](#). [Draco](#)'s casting cost is high, but in the history of **Magic** it's only been put into play once from a deck that couldn't win a game off of [Battle of Wits](#) and that was on a dare. Then there were the two hard cases. They threatened litigation, but I'm standing firm.

Those two are [Jeweled Bird](#) and [Chaos Orb](#). They're banned. Why didn't they make it? Because they're banned! (People make things harder than they seem sometimes.) They need to deal with their gambling problem and ritual flipping out respectively, clean up their acts and petition for re-entry. If you see these cards, try and give them the love and support that they need. Don't let them down. Now, without further ado, the top fifty (fifty-eight?) artifacts of all time!



#50 [Time Vault](#) - Golden Age

[Banned, and not just in France.](#)

We've come a long way to get to this point. [Time Vault](#) was once considered not just a powerful artifact but the most dangerous one of all cards. You could always play [Black Lotus](#), but for a long time Time Vault wasn't just restricted. It was banned, and while there were a lot of debates about what cards did and did not deserve their fates this was never one of them. Even if it hadn't opened up the possibility of infinite turns before your opponent had finished his second one, the Vault's power was obvious. But times change, and now we have both smarter players and a little gem called [Oracle](#). Looked at another way, Oracle could even be considered the most powerful artifact of all, for it has the power to change what other cards do any time it wants. By forcing players to give up a turn in order to get one, no matter what tricks they use, [Time Vault](#) was no longer a threat to existence itself and was brought back from exile. Now, of course, everyone has forty-seven better things to do without even involving colored mana, and not all of them are restricted, so almost no one goes to the Vault any more. There is no time left.



#49 [Gauntlet of Might](#) - Golden Age

[How the mighty have fallen.](#)

Back in the old days, the most dangerous red card was [Wheel of Fortune](#) and the second was... an artifact? While the idea of tying an artifact to a color may seem fresh and new, like most things it is the old made new again. In a day when the only thing stopping players from seriously considering [Mana Flare](#) was that they were too busy saving up to buy their last Mox and they had enough respect for their red creatures to make sure most of them were tough enough to survive a [Lava Dart](#), even if they didn't even know how good [Lightning Bolt](#) was let alone that they'd be pricking dogs with darts. Red can be a cruel color. To the primitive **Magic** eye, [Gauntlet of Might](#) was a hyperpowerful card. In a modern world, would it even be played let alone worth more than fifty bucks no matter how rare? In casual games yes, but not in serious play. If it wasn't on the reserve list, I suspect it would have made it into *Mirrodon* block.



#48 Jester's Cap - Golden Age

It left a lot of players looking silly.

When you used Jester's Cap, it tended to do one of three things. Sometimes it would devastate your opponent or even end the game. Other times it would greatly improve your long game, taking away your opponents' most threatening cards and giving you lots of insight into what they were planning. Then there are the times it does almost nothing. It won't save you from what is going on right now, just from what is coming ten or twenty turns down the line. I remember fondly those days when you had that kind of time. When you built a deck, one of the questions you had to ask was what your opponent would Cap out of your deck if he had the chance. Some control decks even had a fourth or fifth way to win in them just in case they got Capped.



#47 Scroll Rack - Silver Age

Keep only those you want, cancel any time.

It takes a long time to get the hang of playing [Scroll Rack](#) properly even in a normal deck. With a [Scroll Rack](#), it's very hard for any card you draw to be bad. If you don't like it, send it back and get a new one! You'll draw it again, but that's fine. Send it back again. Scroll Rack turns your cards into a new type of resource. Every time you play a card and it leaves your hand, you've spent a card even if that card wasn't worth anything. Often players forgot this, and ended up with three cards in hand and a library full of cards they already knew were worthless. Better players used [Scroll Rack](#) to dig deeper and deeper into their libraries. Every card that you put into your hand was another card worth having, even if you had no use for it. The most famous use of this was [Land Tax](#): Stay a land behind, and you don't just have unlimited lands. You have unlimited cards, and every turn you can search up the same three Lands... and shuffle your library! When you use [Scroll Rack](#) with shuffling effects you can look at a hand full of brand new cards each turn. With a full hand, the number of cards you could end up seeing skyrockets. If there's something you want, you'll find it. The weirdest part was constantly looking at and putting down three hands - your hand, the cards you need to put back and the cards you're picking up, looking to see what order you want to put the cards back in. It challenged players to think farther ahead than almost any other card.



#46 [Myr Enforcer](#) - Bronze Age

Why monitor [Mirrodin](#) when you can smash its face?

Creatures as large as 4/4 do not tend to be free, but about half the time [Myr Enforcer](#) comes down free of charge. The other half of the time it tends to be on sale cheap. Affinity is a powerful ability, and with your lands counting along with most of the rest of your permanents most players reading this can readily remember how easy it is to turn seven into a far more reasonable number. When Enforcer comes down, it doesn't seem fair. The other player suddenly has an extra fat creature and there is no compensation for it. It's a fair argument which components of the Affinity engine deserve recognition and which do not, but I have a hard time not giving the Enforcer some credit.



#45 **Candelabra of Tawnos** - Golden Age

[Revisiting the Library of Alexandria and working overtime in Mishra's Workshops and Factories for eight days and eight nights.](#)

[Candelabra of Tawnos](#) was a product of its times. If it came out today, it's possible no one would notice, but they don't make lands quite like they used to. In those days it was highly sought after, highly expensive and restricted, and no one wondered why. The first two expansions of the game contained three lands that were well worth using twice in a turn. [Library of Alexandria](#) was the most powerful of all, especially without the modern play or draw rule, allowing players to draw an extra card every time they tapped it. Once you started using it three times a turn, saving seven cards in your hand became a breeze. [Mishra's Workshop](#) created effects that in modern terms were even more obscene, letting you drop cards that cost six mana on turn two without spending any cards. Next turn you'd have seven. [Mishra's Factory](#) could pump itself or its friends, then untap in order to attack or pump again. Later on the Candelabra would be used to untap [Tolarian Academy](#) and give you another use while making it produce even more mana. Then you'd use [Voltaic Key](#) to untap the Candelabra, or [Hurkyl's Recall](#) to replay it, and do it again...



#44 **Illusionary Mask** - Golden Age

No one was fooled except the templating team.

For a long time no one knew quite how to deal with [Illusionary Mask](#). We all just sort of mumbled through it, doing things like marking the cards with mana paid to make sure that we were keeping ourselves honest. No one was even thinking about abusing it, just using it to deceive their opponents, and it became the inspiration for the morph mechanic. Eventually, someone figured out something rather powerful to do with the Mask: Cast [Phyrexian Dreadnaught](#). By letting it enter play without its coming into play text taking effect, you could sneak a 12/12 into play for a total of one mana for the Dreadnaught and two for the Mask. There are other similar things to do with other cards, but they pale in comparison to both the Dreadnaught trick and the rest of Vintage. Nowadays, when Rosewater tries to sneak a card like this past those in charge of the rules, all that results is another addition to the future silver bordered card file. Not that there's anything wrong with that.



#43 **Steel Golem** - Silver Age

[Crippled by the secret of steel.](#)

Interesting restrictions are often the key to finding top-level cards. For every benefit you get, you have to pay a cost, so the bigger the cost the bigger the benefits. If you can ignore the restriction, then you've paid a cost for free and get to reap the benefits of more power for less mana. That's what made [Steel Golem](#) so good. If you were playing other creatures, [Steel Golem](#) gave you a good one but it could also cripple you if they could block or otherwise stop it without removing it, and there were several good ways to do that. In the decks where it worked, [Steel Golem](#) was just a Legend: One at a time, please. It also made up for the distinct lack of good black creatures that existed for a time for decks based around the dreaded [skull](#).



#42 **Mox Diamond** - Silver Age

The ultimate fast colored mana answer as underachiever.

Is it one of the top fifty artifacts of all time? Almost anyone who has been around long enough to know would say yes, of course it is. But more than any other card on this list, its placement is a disappointment. We expected more from [Mox Diamond](#). [Mox Diamond](#) was an attempt to print a balanced Mox, and I was as surprised as anyone that it worked. Some people thought that the card loss was too big a drawback, but you don't hear those people drawing first in constructed very often. It's the same trade-off in terms of cards for time, but [Mox Diamond](#)'s Achilles heel turned out to be the mana ratio of the decks it went into. [Mox Diamond](#) doesn't give you more mana, just faster and more colorful mana, so it has to take a slot that would have gone to a spell rather than one that would have been a land. That makes it hard to fit. It's restricted in Vintage anyway, but what isn't restricted in Vintage these days. In the end it was worth it to decks that benefit the most from its presence, especially with [Land Tax](#) or [Tithe](#), and every now and then someone else got to use it. That is how it should be, and the result is a balanced Mox.



#41 [Phyrexian Processor](#) - Silver Age

Another four mana, another 10/10.

There are cards that can come down and single-handedly ruin your day, but [Phyrexian Processor](#) is by far the cheapest one that can do it without an assist. Rather than draw you lots of cards or put other cards into play or provide mana, [Phyrexian Processor](#) does one thing every turn: Produce an obscenely big creature. Why would you bother with anything else? Not many decks can keep pace with a 4/4 every turn for the entire game. When it was around, any deck threatened to slap one of these down on turn three or four and dominate the game. Now think about paying seven life for 7/7s, a kill within three turns, or even 10/10s to kill with just two hits. Often players would use a card like [Tinker](#) to search out any artifact at all, with options that cost far more mana... and choose the Processor, because it was the most reliable way to win. They'd get a creature on the spot, and the threat to make more, forcing their opponent to come up with two answers rather than one. There were a lot of decks that should have sideboarded Processor and didn't think of it - and for a while the top deck in Standard was all about getting one of these out as quickly as possible using whatever means were necessary. And if you think it's good in the fast and furious world of constructed, try it in limited. A

hand of four lands and a [Phyrexian Processor](#), with no further card draws, was better than most sealed decks!



#40 [Juggernaut](#) - Golden Age

[It died so Hypnotic Specter could live.](#)

[Oops.](#)

[Juggernaut](#) started out as nothing but a cool, flavorful and strong artifact creature. It was competitive with the colored four drops, and my second major deck used it as its four drop despite being three colors - and a control deck. [Juggernaut](#) was that much better than its Revised competition, despite it dying to the very popular and far more problematic [Lightning Bolt](#). Eventually of course all this madness had to be stopped, so when the Extended format was created they made sure to put this on the banned list. The banned list? Yes, the banned list, over the above mentioned [Hypnotic Specter](#). The error was eventually fixed, at which point everyone realized that **Magic** had changed its power curves so much that cards like [Ernham Djinn](#) and [Juggernaut](#) were nothing special. Both have been recently reprinted, and neither ended up getting used. That doesn't stop this from being a player favorite to this day, and the number 53 is known to many players as The [Juggernaut](#) in situations that go beyond **Magic**.



#39 **Disrupting Scepter** - Golden Age

[Get him under the Scepter lock.](#)

For a long time [Disrupting Scepter](#) was one of the staple cards of **Magic**. A case could be made that there was no greater skill tester than [Disrupting Scepter](#), but not because it forced your opponent to make hard decisions. It did that, and most players were not used to it. It also wasn't because of whether you decided to use it on any given turn, or whether to cast it. The test was putting it in your deck in the first place. I can't remember a single player from the Scepter's glory days that played it without being both a good player and a good deck designer. These players won because of the Scepter, but even more so because they knew to use it. Considering the speed of the game back then, this was a devastating card. For only three mana per turn you kept the number of cards they had to work with constant unless they emptied their hand. To get a Scepter on the table was death for blue decks everywhere and also victory for them when the Scepter was friendly. That was the primary way that Weissman's famous "The Deck" won. He may have had shiny jewelry and cards like [Moat](#), but removing your hand card by card and forcing you to live off the top both gave him his extra cards and made the world safe for [Serra Angel](#). Often decks that had no business winning long games would beat decks with tons of counters just by sneaking this on to the table. I won more than one old Vintage tournament that way with nothing in my deck more expensive than [Jester's Cap](#), thanks to turn after turn of card advantage.



#38 **Mindslayer** - Bronze Age

Just in time, too!

Mindslayer is deceptively powerful, and has taken its place as one of Vintage's most popular victory conditions when combined with Goblin Welder to control your opponents' turns again and again until he has nothing left. Even taking *one* of your opponent's turns more often than not is devastating. The more powerful and flexible your opponent's deck is, the more damage you can do when you are handed the reins. Everything that can be sacrificed is going in the graveyard, every removal spell is aiming in the wrong direction. The worst is when you turn deck manipulation tricks against them: **Brainstorm** back the best two cards you can't get rid of, then use a **Polluted Delta** to shuffle them back in the deck... and fail to find a land. That's just cold. So is using **Patriarch's Bidding** to bring back all the Goblins, then killing your opponent with his own **Goblin Sharpshooters** and **Siege-Gang Commanders**. Have him sacrifice all his artifacts to his **Arcbound Ravager**, and "forget" to do damage with **Disciple of the Vault**. The best part is that you don't have to worry about a retaliatory strike, so you can generally turn the game around no matter how far behind you looked when you triggered the **Mindslayer**. Also, if you haven't played this card by having the players switch seats, like Mark Zajdner and I did in Pro Tour New Orleans, you really should.



#37 **Solemn Simulacrum** - Bronze Age

They had to alter the picture to make it look alive.

Solemn Simulacrum doesn't look like much at first glance, but the combination of his effects creates a large swing in your favor, netting an extra land, a smoothing of colored mana, an extra land play, and replacing the card when it dies. In the meantime, you get a free 2/2 to work with. When you play a **Solemn Simulacrum** and the game is not a race against time, your opponent winces for he knows how much harder his job just became. Things are better with Jens on your side, and there are not many cards that can create that wince without being very good. He is so solid that the temptation is strong to put him where he doesn't belong for reasons of speed or otherwise.



#36 **Seat of the Synod** and friends - Bronze Age

When in doubt, blame it on the lands.

They are lands that count as artifacts, and they cause no end of trouble. [Seat of the Synod](#) is the king of the colored lands, because blue is the color that works best with artifacts, and [Vault of Whispers](#) is second because of [Disciple of the Vault](#), but all of them have joined the fun at one point or another. Affinity becomes too powerful an ability when you get to count most of your lands, as do [Arcbound Ravager](#) and [Disciple of the Vault](#), and there are also older effects like [Goblin Welder](#) that can make the situation even worse. It took a while to realize it, but these were probably the mistake that turned Affinity from a curiosity into the breaker of formats. They make you more vulnerable, letting opponents kill your lands, but modern mass removal spells were designed to avoid killing artifact lands, rendering the drawback far less dangerous than it would otherwise have been. In worlds with older cards like [Energy Flux](#) and [Pernicious Deed](#), these become a true double-edged sword.



#35 [Voltaic Key](#) - Silver Age

[It opens doors that should never be opened.](#)

[Voltaic Key](#) looks harmless, but it is one of **Magic's** greatest enablers. Untapping [Grim Monolith](#) and [Thran Dynamo](#), and occasionally even [Mana Vault](#), it grants extra mana even the turn you put it into play and turns what was supposed to be a one time boost of mana into a bigger continuous boost of mana while having additional side uses untapping other things, with the traditional creature worth untapping being [Phyrexian Colossus](#). On its own it is nothing, but there are a ton of ways for it to prove worthwhile and it got so bad that Wizards was forced to strike it down in some formats rather than ban other cards that served a more balanced purpose. Key also created all-or-nothing situations, because you can strand the Key without anything worth untapping. If even one useful target comes out, mana production explodes. [Voltaic Key](#) is one of those cards that makes broken things even more broken at a cost that you can't afford to pay unless you're abusing broken cards. If you're using [Voltaic Key](#), chances are the deck it's involved in is trying to do something abusive.



#34 **Tangle Wire** - Silver Age

We will return you to this game of **Magic** after these messages.

On their turn, they have to tap four permanents, which will often tap them out and cost them their whole turn. Then you tap three, one of which is **Tangle Wire**, so this ends up netting you a lot of tempo if it comes down before they can find permanents to tap other than lands, especially if you have one and two drops that you can tap. The artifact decks were often the best at this, because they brought out their mana so fast that they could shrug off losing two lands while they crippled their opponent's development, and decks with green mana creatures like **Birds of Paradise** often used the same plan. There were even top-level decks that tried to combine it with **Static Orb** to tie down opponents for the entire game. **Tangle Wire** looks harmless, and the first instinct always seems to be to try and ride out the effect to net an extra card. Later on in the game, this becomes easy, so **Tangle Wire** decks need to finish off their opponents fast or get enough advantage that having a few dead cards doesn't matter. There's also always the risk of not having enough follow-up to the Wire, or facing opponents who can cast their spells during upkeep, but often that is worth the risk. For some opponents, this card coming down will all but end the game all on its own.



#33 **Millstone** - Golden Age

Driving people insane is fun!

Antiquities took the concept of decking your opponent and elevated it from a happy accident or bizarre alternate game plan into a genuine road to victory by introducing **Millstone**, perhaps the most misunderstood card in **Magic's** history. Most players spent years having no idea how **Millstone** impacted the game. As long as neither player is manipulating their library or using their graveyard, using a **Millstone** does nothing but reveal information until the player being milled runs out of cards, but it took more explanation than you can possibly imagine to make players understand this. Players constantly complained about the cards they had "lost", and others played **Millstone** because it was "card advantage" - completely missing what that term actually means. After a while, it became a staple of the tournament scene because it allows control decks to reliably kill without playing any creatures at all, turning lots of their opponents' cards useless by denying them targets. What did **Millstone** in was a combination of two things. The speed of the game makes it hard to find the time for a card that doesn't directly impact the game, but the real problem was that a lot of cards started using their graveyards for fun and profit, much more so than in the past. When you might turn over **Roar of the Wurm** or **Genesis**, this is not a good way to try and grind out a win.



#32 Darksteel Colossus - Bronze Age

If you're going to do something, do it right.

There's something to be said for being the best at something. Darksteel Colossus is the best at what he does: Having no drawbacks, being very big and very hard to stop. The only restriction on him is that he can't get to a graveyard, which can even turn into an advantage but is necessary to guard against reanimation. For all the obscene things about Tinker, this is the card that did it in. When the Colossus comes out, there aren't many answers. It's not just huge, it doesn't just not have an upkeep and not have a restriction on untapping. It's also flat out indestructible. It costs a lot of mana, but it's worth every penny. If you don't have to pay for it, say because of Tooth and Nail, that's even better.



#31 Chimeric Idol - Bronze Age

[http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=mtgcom/daily/aa10Worship the ideal, but watch out for the idol.](http://www.wizards.com/default.asp?x=mtgcom/daily/aa10Worship%20the%20ideal,%20but%20watch%20out%20for%20the%20idol)

[Chimeric Idol](#) was the best three drop in the game for two years on pure efficiency terms, and it is an artifact. No one is quite sure how that happened, but you could get a 3/3 for three mana with a minimal drawback and the ability to hide from removal. Sligh decks used it in Extended. Green decks used it as a free way to hedge against [Wrath of God](#). White Weenie decks used it. Hell, [Rising Waters](#) decks used it, even though they restricted your ability to untap lands and activating the Idol taps them all! That's a good man, and anyone who couldn't afford to tap their lands on their own turn was at a disadvantage when building their creature base.



#30 [Serrated Arrows](#) - Golden Age

[Welcome to Aqincourt.](#)

For the first Pro Tour, Wizards gave the players a strange rule to follow when building their Standard decks. At least five of the cards in their deck and sideboard had to come from each of the legal sets, and those legal sets included *Homelands*. In this case, the term set is being used loosely, because *Homelands* was not exactly your source for quality tournament cards. *Homelands* made *Fallen Empires* look like *Arabian Nights*, and time has proven *Fallen Empires* not to be all that bad. It has not been kind to *Homelands*, and suddenly players were forced to dig for something useful. The alternative was to burn five sideboard slots on useless cards, and that obviously was not a good answer. While the set also hid [Memory Lapse](#) and [Merchant Scroll](#), a lot of players found the hidden gem in the set: [Serrated Arrows](#). At the time, there were two functionally identical versions of the "pump knights" for both white and black. They were 2/1 for or , had protection from the opposite color and could be pumped or given first strike. They were some of the most popular creatures around, and with good reason. [Serrated Arrows](#) killed them, and did it out of decks that otherwise would be unable to touch the other color's best man. That combined with plenty of other low toughness creatures to make [Serrated Arrows](#) an amazing card, and often the other player would have no choice but to lose three otherwise fine creatures to the Arrows. There were a lot of match-ups where anything less than three-for-one would be considered a waste.



#29 Ensnaring Bridge - Silver Age

No hand, no problem.

Ensnaring Bridge can outright defeat many decks on its own, because it can shut down the attack step. If you can empty your hand, which with many decks is not a problem and some even have cards like Grafted Skullcap to help out, only zero power creatures can attack you. While this can be a threat, and you should watch out for growing Ornithopters, most of the time that means that you will take no combat damage and more than half of all decks rely on combat damage to win the game. There are not that many answers to this problem for decks not designed to handle it. Sometimes they'll be down to a handful of cards that can do damage to you directly, or they'll have to go look for a small number of removal spells. Others have to use tricks like casting Deep Analysis to force you to draw cards and would otherwise have no game at all. Often decks that were based on creatures in game one can spring this card on their unsuspecting opponents in game two and ride their direct damage to victory against a player who suddenly has no way to win.



#28 [Howling Mine](#) - Golden Age

[Beware wizards bearing gifts.](#)

A good rule to keep in mind when playing **Magic** is that your opponent is playing his cards for a reason. [Howling Mine](#) looks like a gift, granting you at least as many cards as it gives to the person who played it. In multiplayer it's the ultimate old school friendly card along with [Mana Flare](#). It was so nice of your opponent to let you draw two or even three cards a turn, but he had a reason. Some people just wanted more cards, not realizing that this was not to their advantage, but others realized that most decks were not designed to be able to take full advantage of a second draw every turn. They would run into [Black Vise](#), which you would pack and they would not. Perhaps you could power your [Ivory Tower](#). You had cheap spells like [Lightning Bolt](#), they didn't, and often they would end up discarding. In the meantime, most opponents wouldn't understand the source of their misery and wouldn't kill the [Howling Mine](#) even if they could. It was also one of the defenses against [Necropotence](#) decks, since you could shrug off discard and if they played [Necropotence](#) they wouldn't get the Mine card. The fullest exploitation of [Howling Mine](#) was implemented in the first Pro Tour by Mark Justice. He came packing a deck based around [Howling Mine](#), [Icy Manipulator](#) and [Winter Orb](#). When he wasn't busy grabbing the entire untap step for himself and denying it to you, or tapping down the land you untapped, he would tap his own [Howling Mine](#) after drawing the extra card. He'd get the card, and you would be left out in the cold. Meanwhile, he had lots of mass removal in case you overextended and cheap removal to trade for your expensive threats. It was a brilliant design, and only well after the tournament did most players realize how to beat it. As Preston Poulter figured out in the elimination rounds right before he knocked Justice out, you killed [Howling Mine](#), and the deck no longer flowed properly.



#27 Ivory Tower - Golden Age

The absent-minded professor forgets to cast his spells again.

Control decks loved Ivory Tower before the game got too fast for it. Without the play/draw rule, a first turn Tower is all but guaranteed to give you a decent amount of life when you're running a deck without a steady curve and it was your best defense against the antithesis of the Tower, Black Vise. With Jayemdae Tome, a slower pace and mass removal cards like Wrath of God or even Balance, which was unrestricted for an unbelievable amount of time, you could sit in the Tower and all but dare your opponent to try and do significant damage to you without overextending while the game swung inevitably towards one in which your deck would dominate. In other games you could jump out to 30, 40 or even more life. It was also part of a card drawing and holding complex with Library of Alexandria and was reinforced by several cards that would refill hands to seven cards, putting the Tower's ability back in play. Later it was part of an even better card drawing engine known as Necropotence. When you have Necropotence and Ivory Tower, you're effectively drawing three cards a turn at no life cost. If you can't win with that working for you, you need to work on your deck design.



#26 **Mirror Universe** - Golden Age

Legends: They looked like good ideas at the time.

Mirror Universe wasn't just a way to turn your opponent's weapons against you. It could outright kill your opponent, and many of the best decks used that as their primary way to win, trading life totals while they were at zero due to **City of Brass**. It doesn't seem like it should work, and nowadays you would be right. It doesn't, but back then it did. The card also was tricky enough to use with respect to the rules that some people didn't believe it and others didn't trust you to do it right. I remember Darwin Kastle not trusting me to kill him properly with **Mirror Universe** in a Vintage tournament.



#25 **Jayemdae Tome** - Golden Age

Ah, the good book.

The Tome holds answers to all of life's important questions. Just draw more cards. You like drawing cards, don't you? To someone trying to fight a card advantage war there is little more terrifying than a [Jayemdae Tome](#). There is little that makes you more confident that you will win than being able to draw an extra card every turn. A lot of players used all the most expensive and underpriced cards and then effectively won the game with [Jayemdae Tome](#). It was good, it was solid, it was a star, and it has been completely outclassed since then. The problem with Tome is that it requires a rather large investment of twelve mana before it yields a net profit in cards. That's a lot of mana, particularly without the help of the older cards to help facilitate your plans.



#24 [Icy Manipulator](#) - Golden Age

[Your last chance on the list for good, solid fun. From here on in it gets ugly.](#)

[Icy Manipulator](#) isn't broken or unfair, it's just a good solid card. These days that will never do. Early on it did a lot more, and it had the time to do a lot more. You could use it to shut off effects that stopped you from untapping. You can use it to lock down your opponents' creatures, forcing him to walk into [Wrath of God](#) or other mass removal cards. If you've got nothing else to do you can lock down your opponents' lands. What made Icy even better was that before *Sixth Edition* rules you could use this to tap blockers and they would not do damage. That has changed, but with that rule beating an Icy in limited was often an impossible task. If you block you won't do damage, and if you don't then I'll just lock down someone else on your turn.



#23 **Cranial Plating** - Bronze Age

Just when it looked like the nightmare might be over.

Cranial Plating was the replacement for **Skullclamp** in Affinity, and the deck may have gotten worse but it wasn't that big a blow. **Cranial Plating** turns any creature in Affinity into a wrecking ball that will take players out in two or three shots. If you deal with that creature, Plating can do it again, and if you have ☛☛ you can even move it around as an instant. Packing both **Ravager** and Plating, you can be confident that no artifact you draw will go to waste. Suddenly a Plating comes out of nowhere, and what was a contained opponent is attacking with a 9/2 on the third turn.



#22 **Mana Crypt** - Rogue

Reading doesn't just make you smart, it makes you mana.

If you wanted a [Mana Crypt](#), you had to get it by mailing in a form you got when you purchased a book. It's possible that more people bought the book just for the Crypt, because the Crypt was well worth the price. [Mana Crypt](#) is a two mana boost on the spot, a fine addition to any combination deck, but its drawback is very real. Taking one and a half damage a turn is a serious problem for anyone who intends to allow his opponent to live for several turns. I don't approve of that sort of thing, but it does happen. Needless to say, the Crypt was restricted. Early on the Crypt was even better, because abilities of artifacts didn't work when they were tapped. That meant that if you tapped [Mana Crypt](#) on your upkeep you didn't take any damage, so decks that could use the mana then could get two mana per turn for free.



#21 [Arcbound Ravager](#) - Bronze Age

All right, perhaps mistakes were made.

In Affinity, there's little question [Arcbound Ravager](#) is amazing, but will it ever go in anything else? Ravager depends on the artifact lands and the general overabundance of artifacts in Affinity for its absurd level of power. Without them, it's just another creature that doesn't have much appeal. Without Ravager, Affinity would survive, although it would probably just be one deck among many. The pure power of [Arcbound Ravager](#) in Affinity and the amount to which it warped the **Magic** world for a year are enough to get it this high.



#20 Lion's Eye Diamond - Silver Age

It didn't look like much.

But three mana of any color is still going to get you in the end.

This card was created to be unplayable, and most people who look at it think that the design was a rousing success. It takes a lot of work to get good use out of this Diamond, but there are several tricks that allowed the mana to end up being used for spells that have no business being cast on the turn in question. Eventually it was too good even for Vintage and it proves that no matter what there are some abilities that are just not meant for this game we like to play. Just say no.



#19 Aether Vial - Bronze Age

He who laughs last laughs best.

When I called it one of the top cards in *Darksteel* in my review, they laughed at me. When I said it belonged in Affinity and probably other decks as well, they laughed at me. It became a key component of the version that ruled block, the best version now in Standard and now it is reaching out in Extended not just to Affinity but to other decks as well. Life, Goblins and Cephalid Breakfast have all answered the call and no one is laughing now. Most of Affinity's cards were designed primarily to work with other similar cards but [Aether Vial](#) is strong enough to make the jump to other decks and will be with us for years. It lets you play an entire curve of creatures without having to pay for them or find colored mana, and it lets you do it as an instant through any amount of counter magic. It was the sleeper card of *Mirrodin* block.



#18 [Zuran Orb](#) - Golden Age

[Why aren't you dead yet?](#)

When games go long and players have more lands than they need to operate, this little artifact dramatically expands your effective life total even if you aren't using it to pull off anything tricky. It could suddenly take forty or more damage to kill you, and until you get close to dead you won't be in that much trouble. Two life for a card isn't the best deal, but for otherwise bad ones it's wonderful and back then it was even better. [Zuran Orb](#) was so good at stalling out games that it was restricted in large part to make sure tournament matches finished. That decision also kept the [Black Vise](#) type strategies strong, and kept four copies out of the hands of those who wanted to do more than just stay alive when they were about to die. [Zuran Orb](#) combined with [Armageddon](#) or opposed land destruction to flat out give you a giant life swing on cards already headed for the graveyard, and [Balance](#) and [Land Tax](#) are even better. Now you're actively rewarded for getting rid of your lands at exactly the right time. It also powered [Necropotence](#) decks whether or not they needed any help.



#17 Chrome Mox - Bronze Age

Balanced at last!

Mox Diamond's big problem was that it cost you slots that would have gone to spells. Chrome Mox can take over slots that would have gone to lands, because you throw away a spell instead of a mana source. Early on, you're happy to throw something away to get the mana, and later on you hopefully don't need the Chrome Mox anymore. It is win-win. Chrome Mox needs a deck with the right colored mana situation and a sufficient need for speed in order to make it worthwhile, but a decent percentage of decks will end up wanting it. While this offers fast mana, it guards against that by requiring color (since most of the most broken decks use a lot of artifacts) and by eating up a spell. If you use Chrome Mox to try and win quickly, it is hard to avoid running out of cards in your hand.



#16 Lotus Petal - Silver Age

Greed is good.

At one point, I jokingly defined a broken combo deck as one that would run [Lotus Petal](#) if given the choice. That definition isn't perfect, but it's closer than it might seem. [Lotus Petal](#) is a horrendously bad way to get extra mana, forcing you to give up a card just to get one mana, and not giving you any other choices if you don't need the mana. Drawing a [Lotus Petal](#) can feel a lot like a mulligan if you get it at the wrong time, but fast mana is just that good. [Lotus Petal](#) was banned to prevent turn one and two kills from rising again. At the extreme, this can become one of the best cards around, as with Brian Hacker's deck at Pro Tour Rome. There comes a point in the design of many decks when the thought comes "if only I had [Lotus Petal](#)" and at that moment you know that what you have on your hands is dangerous. Meanwhile, the words Lotus and Mox get to keep their esteemed track record.



#15 [Powder Keg](#) - Silver Age

Careful putting those ducks in a row.

[Powder Keg](#) has a very quirky feature: The tighter your deck is, the less you want to see your opponent play [Powder Keg](#). Opponents with decks whose curves extend to seven and play cards at random don't fear the Keg, they just respect it. You can use the Keg to kill a four or five mana card for two mana given time, but that's all you can do. The fact that this qualifies as "all you can do" shows just how good [Powder Keg](#) is. For decks full of one or two drops, this card can be a nightmare for which they will happily trade multiple cards, as the Keg amounts to a two mana one-sided [Wrath of God](#) or sometimes even worse by killing artifacts like [Cursed Scroll](#), [Winter Orb](#) or [Ankh of Mishra](#). The casting cost makes Keg available to everyone and gives otherwise slow strategies a fighting chance against rushes without having to sacrifice.



#14 **Metalworker** - Silver Age

Here's what I'm about to do with the twelve mana I just got. On turn two.

You need to be playing the right deck to take advantage of [Metalworker](#), which is probably the reason his power dawned on all of us so slowly. It was only when alternate mana acceleration like [Mana Vault](#) got taken away that players finally noticed how good [Metalworker](#) was and started tuning their decks with [Metalworker](#) in mind. The problem with [Metalworker](#) is the same as all three-mana creatures, and it was enough to sink all the others. You need to get three mana to play it with, it is vulnerable to removal, and you have to expose it for a turn before you can use it. That's all well and good, but if you can hang on to that [Metalworker](#) you often end up with eight, ten or even more mana by showing your opponent most or all of your hand. With other complementary artifact mana sources like [Thran Dynamo](#) and [Grim Monolith](#), decks could count on being able to get the kind of mana you'd need to justify packing the cards that would let you use the mana from [Metalworker](#) to deliver the knockout blow, and their presence lets you turn that [Metalworker](#) mana into permanent giant amounts of mana rather than just a one shot deal. [Metalworker](#)'s status as a 1/2 creature kept it alive longer than it should have been, but eventually it had to get the ax.



#13 Sapphire Medallion - Silver Age


Not the Medallion cycle, just the good one.

The Medallion cycle was a good idea, and four of the five have proved harmless. To make the discount worthwhile, you need to have this apply to almost all your other cards and then cast a flurry of spells in the same turn. The first to do this was none other than Jon Finkel, using the Medallion to cast spells in his Ophidian deck at 1998 US Nationals while keeping counter magic available. Since then several Extended decks have fit the bill, and they were all far more abusive and dangerous. When cards like Accumulated Knowledge and Intuition come cheap, lots of cards get drawn and soon after that games tend to end quickly. Sometimes they end with Donate and Illusions of Grandeur, other times they use other methods. The form of death doesn't matter as much as people think.



#12 Winter Orb - Golden Age

[Welcome to prison, enjoy your stay.](#)

For a long time [Winter Orb](#) and [Armageddon](#) were considered standard tools of the trade in **Magic**, but the only reason they seemed normal was because they had always been around. If either one showed up now, no one would believe them. [Winter Orb](#) creates a completely different game, restricting players who rely on lands for mana to a maximum of two per turn even if they always play one. When this card was brought back as [Rising Waters](#), it was a competitive card at . [Winter Orb](#) was used most abusively in actual Prison decks that used [Icy Manipulator](#) and other tap effects to deny you even the one untap that [Winter Orb](#) gives you. Your opponent is then unable to cast spells, while you use artifact mana and low casting costs to slowly escape from jail and take control of the game while keeping your opponent locked down. [Rising Waters](#) was the core of the last top level Prison deck, using overpriced versions of several components to gain favorable or even match-ups against everything else in the format. The other mode with [Winter Orb](#) is not to bother locking down your opponent fully, just to operate far better than he can and win the game in a fight with efficient creatures. Under a [Winter Orb](#), whoever plays better under a [Winter Orb](#) wins and that player is often not the same player who would have won otherwise. It becomes normal for players to end up discarding half or more of their spells to the power of this card.



#11 [Nevinyrral's Disk](#) - Golden Age

[No, not Wonka Wash...](#)

How do you slice up a color pie when everyone can kill anything? With great difficulty, if you can do it at all. [Nevinyrral's Disk](#) wasn't just too cheap, it was a giant step out of character. Until its removal, defining who could and could not do what was mostly a theoretical exercise. If it was a card in any of the five colors, the pie would cry bloody murder. Blue decks used it to clear the board and then sit behind a counter wall. Black decks used it to leave you without a hand thanks to cards like [Hymn to Torach](#) while they had a full one thanks to [Necropotence](#). Others used it to break up obscene board positions and just because it was that good. The Disk kills virtually everything, and it does it for a total of five mana. It later came back as [Oblivion Stone](#), which costs a bunch more mana and can't take out exotic lands. It wasn't just that the Stone costs more mana total, it's that you have to work hard to keep the mana up to use Stone at any time. Keeping Disk mana up in case of emergency is easy.



#10 **Mana Vault** - Golden Age

I'm confused, but for this amount of mana it's worth it.

The only miracle here is that this card didn't end up higher on the list, which is a product of the cards around it. Early on, **Magic** had few ways to turn a quick mana boost into anything like what you can do with it these days. The best you could do was bring out a [Serra Angel](#) or [Shivan Dragon](#). All of that is great, but back then there were answer cards like [Swords to Plowshares](#) that could render that moot and stick you with a rather annoying bill. You also had to worry about running into [Icy Manipulator](#). It should have been played a lot more than it was, but players hated taking damage back then even more than they do now. There were some people who used Vaults to do the obvious things like put out quick large men, and they did well. When the tools came out to make proper use of the mana from the Vault, it became far better, especially when it briefly coexisted with [Grim Monolith](#) and when it was a part of the dreaded Trix. [Mana Vault](#) left Extended just in time, but don't underestimate the importance of the drawbacks of Vault against [Monolith](#) - you have to untap it on your upkeep, and it does damage if you don't. They may not look like much, but if you're not trying for a quick kill they can add up fast.



#9 **Masticore** - Silver Age

It's him against your world.

Masticore is stronger than the majority of decks out there if he is not dealt with. In a sense he has to be, because once you play **Masticore** you no longer have a deck. Instead you have a **Masticore**, which will eat up every card you draw. There are ways around that, using cards like **Squee**, **Goblin Nabob** to discard meaningless cards or using other tricks like **Stroke of Genius** to draw extra cards that you can use to pay, but most people who played the **Masticore** played it fairly. They just didn't care. Who needs cards when you're using all your mana to protect your **Masticore** and using it to kill every man your opponent plays? In Limited very few decks could defeat a **Masticore** even if it had no backup at all, and despite a huge portion of the cost of this card being something you need to pay continuously often players who used **Tinker** would go get a **Masticore**.



#8 Cursed Scroll - Silver Age

It bluffed being a bluffing card.

Cursed Scroll is a means of doing continuous damage to players and/or killing creatures at no card cost. All it asks is that you empty your hand, and it is fast enough that it can go into those decks that try to empty their hands as quickly as possible. It is set up to be usable exactly when it will be most worth using. If you have cards in hand, stop wasting time with your Cursed Scroll and use those cards! The sad part of Cursed Scroll is that often every activation of the Scroll was as good as casting any of half the cards in the deck it was a part of, and often it would net you a card on every activation in half of your match-ups. You would use your hand quickly to get your opponent on the ropes, then hammer them with the Scroll now that your mana wasn't busy. Like Masticore, a Cursed Scroll with an empty hand is enough to beat quite a few decks over the long term, as you get to Shock them every turn while they run into lands. It's nowhere near as powerful as the Masticore, but it only costs 1 and in the meantime you're bound to draw some spells along the way. There were a lot of match-ups that come down to who gets their Cursed Scroll or gets to activate it continuously, as two decks full of cheap creatures face off. It dominated the Pro Tour in its block before being banned there, at which point things returned to normal. You could also win some control match-ups by playing the Scroll on turn one and killing them with it fifteen turns later. As long as the game doesn't end in four or five turns, it's hard for this card to be anything but amazing for a deck that doesn't like holding cards.



#7 Skullclamp - Bronze Age

"Bonesplitter is always great, but the surprise gem of the deck is Skullclamp..."

Skullclamp may have the distinction of being the only card that by getting worse turned itself from a solid card into a breaker of formats. As Aaron explains, by the time Skullclamp was banned in Standard it was everywhere. It wasn't just in one deck, it was causing a diverse set of designs all of which existed largely to make use of it. Extended would have suffered a similar if less dramatic fate if Skullclamp had not been taken out in advance, allowing players to combine the card with such ideas as Cabal Therapy. The card advantage gained from a Skullclamp is obscene, as every equip nets you a card even if the creature dies for no effect. Start double clamping and things get even sillier. Games were coming down to who drew their Skullclamp or could keep it on the table, as that player would

quickly have twice as many cards. If there was one bright spot to [Skullclamp](#), it was its role as an amazing skill tester. No matter how obscene it is, how skilled you were with it was often the difference between drawing six cards and drawing ten, or the difference between a kill and an empty board with an overflowing hand. Of course, the sad half of that is that most of those incorrect plays end up winning anyway, because this card is so overpowered. It's crazy the number of times I saw players miss card draws, use Clamps when they should have waited, or killed off men too early.



#6 [Grim Monolith](#) - Silver Age

[The last puzzle piece at exactly the wrong time.](#)

It's not quite as good as [Mana Vault](#), but the places it has been legal make it a far more significant card. When I first saw [Grim Monolith](#) at the *Urza's Legacy* prerelease, my eyes almost fell out of their sockets. I took a step back, confirmed that it did what I thought it did, and I just cracked up. I don't remember how long I was laughing for, but it was an evil laugh of DOOM and it lasted for quite a while. For a while, I had been working on several artifact decks to abuse a little card called [Tolarian Academy](#), including several that played [Voltaic Key](#) just to have another artifact that occasionally came in handy. I knew they were interesting, but they were missing just one thing. They needed a [Mana Vault](#), and there it was staring me in the face: The exact card I would have asked for, if I thought I had a chance in hell of getting it. It cost two mana instead of one, but it never crossed my mind that this card was remotely fair. By the next day, I was killing on turn three and the deck survived the loss of several other cards prior to a Pro Tour that was dominated by a combination of [Grim Monolith](#) and [Tolarian Academy](#). With the loss of [Voltaic Key](#) and [Tolarian Academy](#), the Monolith went on to just be an amazing card that powered a lot of different artifact decks over the next few years. There was Accelerated Blue and the German Dragon in Standard, Suicide Brown and Iron Giant in Extended, good old [Yawgmoth's Bargain](#) in just about everything that allowed it, and then a lot of descendants of those initial [Tinker](#) decks that continued to get refined and grow in power until they took over Extended in New Orleans. A boost of three mana, or one mana on the turn you play the Monolith, is far too dangerous to be allowed to survive. You get to break the mana curve without paying any large costs, as the Monolith is actually far better than a land in the endgame. You can't let that live.



#5 **Black Vise** - Golden Age

The devil guarding the gates of hell.

Black Vise pissed a lot of players off, and was one of the big luck factors in early **Magic**. Back then, decks weren't packed with one drops and two drops and there was no play/draw rule, so if this came out on turn one then you considered yourself lucky to get away with only six damage. Opening the game with more than one could land someone in easy burn range before the game even started, and it also made lopsided games even worse. The slower your draw, the more damage **Black Vise** does. The harder it's going to be for your opponent to stand up to the rest of your deck, the more damage **Black Vise** will do. Control decks or anyone else who wanted to keep a full hand had no choice but to deal with it, or they couldn't play their game. It also combined with that dreaded phrase "all players draw seven cards" or even **Howling Mine** to do even more damage later in the game, making broken things even more broken. There were even decks that played Vise largely so they'd have a one drop they could get out of their hand...and get out from under an opponent's Vise! When the Pro Tour was created, the decision was finally made to restrict **Black Vise**.

What few people realized was that there were two even bigger threats that **Black Vise** was keeping down. The first was **Land Tax**, and the second was **Necropotence**. Either of these cards blows all semblance of card parity out the window, granting the user so many extra cards and so much card selection as to make it almost impossible for them to lose if they are not killed quickly. **Black Vise** is a major thorn in both strategies, because using **Land Tax** means having a full hand and so does using **Necropotence**. **Necropotence** has an especially hard time because they're paying life to draw cards and the three damage a turn is likely to kill them. With Vise restricted, both cards and the decks that resulted caused even more trouble than the Vise had in the past. Vise has returned with higher casting costs, which cripples the card since you can't hit their initial seven card hand, and the wake of the restriction has served as a cautionary tale ever since.



#4 Memory Jar - Silver Age

[Giving players ranting for emergency bans hope since 1999.](#)

Due to the timing, we'll never know what would have happened if Memory Jar had been allowed to survive for the usual month or two before being banned. It was taken out with the biggest hammer of all, the emergency ban, and we should all be thankful that the timing enabled Wizards to make that decision. Did someone say draw seven cards? I thought I heard someone say to draw seven cards. When you draw seven new cards, players have a tendency to do obscene things that often end with effects along the lines of "win the game". Several cards on this list helped matters get to that point so quickly, but seven cards will almost always equal trouble. Being colorless and the ability to get this with Tinker made it even worse than most similar threats, and the only thing that kept it from taking over the world completely for the week or so it was legal was that there was a second combination deck built around High Tide running around that was just as bad. This card even made Megrim playable. If you ever see seven new cards these days, you can expect it to cost something like eight mana. If not, try not to get too attached.



#3 Mox Sapphire, Mox Jet, Mox Ruby, Mox Pearl and Mox Emerald - Golden Age *Better lists through cheating.*

While together they're obviously bigger than any individual card, this is where they would fall separately so this is the slot they get. The arguments for the five Moxen are easy, and you don't need to even mention their price tags. How many colored mana sources regularly make it into decks that don't have any spells of their color? How many would be considered broken even as colorless cards? I can only think of six, the other possibly being Dark Ritual - and if you think Ritual is a problem remember what's coming at the end of this list. The Moxen originally didn't seem like anything special to the first players, just lands that happened to be artifacts. It took a while to become clear how powerful playing multiple lands on the first turn was. Consider that players regularly are happy to give up a card to take the first turn, and a Mox all but takes that first turn back. If you added an extra mana to the casting cost of these cards, they might drop one slot on the list, but they also might not. With that done, all that is left is to choose the order these five pieces of expensive jewelry would have gone in if I'd instead placed them in separate slots. As everyone knows, in the decks that made best use of the five Moxen blue was always the most sought after color due to cards like Time Walk and Ancestral Recall, so the Sapphire wins easily. Mox Jet is next because of Mind Twist and Demonic Tutor, as well as actual black decks. Mox Ruby is third for Wheel of Fortune, Red Elemental Blast (due to blue being that good when you unleash the ancient weapons) and occasionally a deck of little red men and several variations on doing three damage for one or two mana. Mox Pearl was fourth because of Balance and sometimes Swords to Plowshares, leaving the Mox Emerald for last.



#2 [Sol Ring](#) - Golden Age

[You don't know what you got until it's gone.](#)

[Sol Ring](#) better than [Mox Sapphire](#)? It's shocking but true. Hear me out, because [Sol Ring](#) is far more obscene than [Mox Sapphire](#) could ever hope to be. The reason is simple: Two mana is better than one mana. Let's try some comparisons. First, consider two lands. The first land says "As an additional cost to play CARDNAME, pay 1. ☉: Add 2 to your mana pool." That's a land that would cause no end of trouble, and it would go in almost every deck with a respectable land count that could afford to run colorless land. Then there is Island. There have been calls to ban it, but I don't think it was ever the real problem. Next, let's consider how much more mana you should have to pay to get these two cards. [Adarkar Wastes](#) is the same power level as Island, so it's safe to say that the Sapphire would have to cost what [Talisman of Progress](#) does: 2. What about [Sol Ring](#)? When Sisay got her greedy little hands on it, she had to charge [four mana](#). If she'd charged three, it would clearly have been off of the curve, although you can just barely get away with [Worn Powerstone](#). Thus [Sol Ring](#) is more undercosted in numerical terms than [Mox Sapphire](#), especially if you consider that one to three is a far bigger jump than zero to two. Next come two obvious questions. Which would you rather start with, a Mox or [Sol Ring](#)? Unless I needed the color, I would rather start with [Sol Ring](#), so most of the time the Ring wins. Later in the game, which would you rather draw? You hopefully already have your color, making [Sol Ring](#) far better. The one [Sol Ring](#) swung games a lot more than one Mox would have in its place. The only reason we talk about the Power Nine and not the Power Ten is that [Sol Ring](#) wasn't rare.



#1 **Black Lotus**

Pure Gold. It's not a mana source, it's a retirement plan.

Was there ever a doubt? You can argue about every other placement on this list, and I'm confident that in a vote I would be in the minority on what deserves the two slot, but no one thinks this is anything but **Black Lotus**. This is a card so obscene that they had to ban a card that does exactly *one third* of what it does. They had to deal with a card that does the same thing, with the little drawback that you have to discard your hand. That's how good **Black Lotus** is even before you start abusing it. **Black Lotus** was created to be something special, and things went just a little bit overboard. There has never been a deck in the history of **Magic** that would not have loved to get its hand on one of these, and that's a statement that cannot be made for any other card. If you're starting up a game, you want a **Black Lotus**. There are no conditions on that statement. As a result of that, there continue every day to be the same number (or even less due to accidents) of Loti for an ever growing number of players all of which want one. No matter how hard you think it is to get one of these now, it's only going to get harder. When they created what was originally called the **Black Lotus** Pro Tour, little did they know.

That's a lot of great artifacts, but there's more than one way to judge things. What if they were looked at with different eyes? And are some themes as important as they might look? **Magic's** artifacts have something for everyone. Whatever, you want, you got it! Therefore, to round things out...

Alternate Lists

The Top Artifact By Set

- *Alpha:* **Black Lotus**
- *Arabian Nights:* **Dancing Scimitar**
- *Antiquities:* **Ivory Tower**
- *Legends:* **Relic Barrier**
- *The Dark:* **Fellwar Stone**
- *Fallen Empires:* **Aeolipile**
- *Ice Age:* **Zuran Orb**

- *Homelands:* [Serrated Arrows](#)
- *Alliances:* [Shield Sphere](#)
- *Mirage:* [Lion's Eye Diamond](#)
- *Visions:* [Sands of Time](#)
- *Weatherlight:* [Steel Golem](#)
- *Tempest:* [Cursed Scroll](#)
- *Stronghold:* [Ensnaring Bridge](#)
- *Exodus:* [Null Brooch](#)
- *Urza's Saga:* [Voltaic Key](#)
- *Urza's Legacy:* [Memory Jar](#)
- *Urza's Destiny:* [Masticore](#)
- *Mercadian Masques:* [Crumbling Sanctuary](#)
- *Nemesis:* [Tangle Wire](#)
- *Prophecy:* [Chimeric Idol](#)
- *Invasion:* [Tsabo's Web](#)
- *Planeshift:* [Draco](#)
- *Apocalypse:* [Dodecapod](#)
- *Odyssey:* [Mirari](#)
- *Torment:* [Waste Away](#)
- *Judgment:* [Lost in Thought](#)
- *Onslaught:* [Riptide Replicator](#)
- *Legions:* [Mistform Ultimus](#)
- *Scourge:* [Stabilizer](#)
- *Mirrodin:* [Chrome Mox](#)
- *Darksteel:* [Skullclamp](#)
- *Fifth Dawn:* [Cranial Plating](#)
- *Champions of Kawigawa:* [Imi Statue](#)
- *Betrayers of Kawigawa:* [Umezawa's Jitte](#)

The Top 27 0/0 Artifacts

1. [Arcbound Ravager](#)
2. [Arcbound Worker](#)
3. [Clockwork Dragon](#)
4. [Arcbound Stinger](#)
5. [Pentavus](#)
6. [Mindless Automaton](#)
7. [Arcbound Slith](#)
8. [Workhorse](#)
9. [Arcbound Crusher](#)
10. [Etched Oracle](#)
11. [Skyreach Manta](#)
12. [Phyrexian Marauder](#)
13. [Suntouched Myr](#)
14. [Clockwork Vorrac](#)
15. [Arcbound Reclaimer](#)
16. [Clockwork Condor](#)

17. [Clockwork Beetle](#)
18. [Shifting Wall](#)
19. [Thopter Squadron](#)
20. [Arcbound Bruiser](#)
21. [Arcbound Overseer](#)
22. [Arcbound Fiend](#)
23. [Arcbound Lancer](#)
24. [Arcbound Hybrid](#)
25. [Arcbound Wanderer](#)
26. [Solarian](#)
27. [Junk Golem](#)

The Top 50 Biggest Artifact Creatures (assuming best reasonable conditions, but no additional costs paid)

1. [Draco](#)
2. [Phyrexian Dreadnaught](#)
3. [Darksteel Colossus](#)
4. [Colossus of Sardia](#)
5. [Eater of Days](#)
6. [Sundering Titan](#)
7. [Phyrexian Colossus](#)
8. [Suncrusher](#)
9. [Lunar Avenger](#)
10. [Bosh, Iron Golem](#)
11. [Clockwork Dragon](#)
12. [Arcbound Overseer](#)
13. [Clockwork Beast](#)
14. [Stratadon](#)
15. [Teeka's Dragon](#)
16. [Death-Mask Duplicant](#)
17. [Mishra's War Machine](#)
18. [Pentavus](#)
19. [Solarion](#)
20. [Arcbound Wanderer](#)
21. [Grid Monitor](#)
22. [Obsianus Golem](#)
23. [Phyrexian Hulk](#)
24. [Tangle Golem](#)
25. [Mycosyth Golem](#)
26. [Memnarch](#)
27. [Ebony Rhino](#)
28. [Bronze Horse](#)
29. [Diabolic Machine](#)
30. [Juggernaut](#)
31. [Flowstone Thopter](#)
32. [Lotus Guardian](#)

33. [Myr Enforcer](#)
34. [Platinum Angel](#)
35. [Alloy Golem](#)
36. [Composite Golem](#)
37. [Flowstone Sculpture](#)
38. [Goblin Dirigible](#)
39. [Malachite Golem](#)
40. [Tetravus](#)
41. [Tribal Golem](#)
42. [Triskelion](#)
43. [Urza's Avenger](#)
44. [Workhorse](#)
45. [Clockwork Avian](#)
46. [Clockwork Vorrac](#)
47. [Karn, Silver Golem](#)
48. [Masticore](#)
49. [Tek](#)
50. [Etched Oracle](#)

Top 50 Highest Casting Cost Artifacts

1. [Draco](#)
2. [Darksteel Colossus](#)
3. [Mycosynth Golem](#)
4. [Alladin's Lamp](#)
5. [Stratadon](#)
6. [Colossus of Sardia](#)
7. [Darksteel Forge](#)
8. [Suncrusher](#)
9. [Teeka's Dragon](#)
10. [Alladin's Ring](#)
11. [Arcbound Overseer](#)
12. [Bosh, Iron Golem](#)
13. [Possessed Portal](#)
14. [Sundering Titan](#)
15. [Xanthic Statue](#)
16. [Alter of Shadows](#)
17. [Arcbound Lancer](#)
18. [Bronze Horse](#)
19. [Clockwork Dragon](#)
20. [Darksteel Gargoyle](#)
21. [Death-Mask Duplicant](#)
22. [Diabolic Machine](#)
23. [Ebony Rhino](#)
24. [Flowstone Thopter](#)
25. [Legacy Weapon](#)
26. [Lotus Guardian](#)

27. [Lunar Avenger](#)
28. [Memnarch](#)
29. [Mishra's War Machine](#)
30. [Myr Enforcer](#)
31. [Pentavus](#)
32. [Phyrexian Colossus](#)
33. [Platinum Angel](#)
34. [Solarion](#)
35. [Summoning Station](#)
36. [Tangle Golem](#)
37. [Alloy Golem](#)
38. [Amulet of Quoz](#)
39. [Arachnoid](#)
40. [Arcbound Fiend](#)
41. [Arcbound Wanderer](#)
42. [Armageddon Clock](#)
43. [Auriok Shield Sled](#)
44. [Beast of Burden](#)
45. [Booby Trap](#)
46. [Book of Rass](#)
47. [Brass Herald](#)
48. [Bronze Tablet](#)
49. [Celestial Sword](#)
50. [Clockwork Beast](#)

Top 16 Artifact Related Personalities

1. Urza
2. Mishra
3. Ashnod
4. Tawnos
5. Rawmos
6. Yawgmoth
7. Kaldra
8. Gix
9. Delif
10. [Bosh](#)
11. [Karn](#)
12. Nevinyrral
13. [Memnarch](#)
14. [Konda](#)
15. Barl
16. The Last Kappa

Top 10 Would-Be Artifacts

1. [Tinker](#)

2. [Mishra's Factory](#)
3. [Copy Artifact](#)
4. [Acquire](#)
5. [Blinkmoth Nexus](#)
6. [Transmute Artifact](#)
7. [Reshape](#)
8. [Stalking Stones](#)
9. [Trash for Treasure](#)
10. [Steal Artifact](#)

Top 10 Rings

1. [Sol Ring](#)
2. [Ring of Gix](#)
3. [Ring of Ma'ruf](#)
4. [Ring of Renewal](#)
5. [Alladin's Ring](#)
6. [Jandor's Ring](#)
7. [Ring of Immortals](#)
8. [Sisay's Ring](#)
9. [Nine-Ringed Bo](#)
10. [Jinxed Ring](#)

Top 10 Books

1. [Jayemade Tome](#)
2. [Spellbook](#)
3. [Jalum Tome](#)
4. [Emmessi Tome](#)
5. [Fool's Tome](#)
6. [Mangara's Tome](#)
7. [Book of Raas](#)
8. [Thran Tome](#)
9. [Barrin's Codex](#)
10. [Geth's Grimore](#)

Top 10 Artifacts by Urza, who might not be all he's cracked up to be

1. [Urza's Bauble](#)
2. [Urza's Blueprints](#)
3. [Glasses of Urza](#)
4. [Urza's Armor](#)
5. [Urza's Avenger](#)
6. [Urza's Incubator](#)
7. [Urza's Filter](#)
8. [Sunglasses of Urza](#)
9. [Urza's Chalice](#)

10. [Urza's Miter](#)

Top 4 Artifacts by Mishra, who needs to spend more time in his factories and workshop

1. [Ankh of Mishra](#)
2. [Mishra's Helix](#)
3. [Mishra's Groundbreaker](#)
4. [Mishra's War Machine](#)

Top 16 Staffs, Wands, Rods and Shards

1. [Null Rod](#)
2. [Proteus Staff](#)
3. [Crystal Shard](#)
4. [Thunderstaff](#)
5. [Wand of the Elements](#)
6. [Wand of Denial](#)
7. [Granite Shard](#)
8. [Skeleton Shard](#)
9. [Rod of Ruin](#)
10. [Wand of Ith](#)
11. [Dingus Staff](#)
12. [Staff of Domination](#)
13. [Staff of the Ages](#)
14. [Crystal Rod](#)
15. [Tawnos's Wand](#)
16. [Pearl Shard](#)

Top 10 Swords

1. [Sword of Fire and Ice](#)
2. [Sword of Light and Shadow](#)
3. [Sword of the Ages](#)
4. [Dancing Scimitar](#)
5. [Ensouled Scimitar](#)
6. [Sword of Kaldra](#)
7. [Runesword](#)
8. [Thran Weaponry](#)
9. [Scythe of the Wretched](#)
10. [Sword of the Chosen](#)

Top 7 Shields

1. [Shield Sphere](#)
2. [Shield of the Ages](#)

3. [Mourner's Shield](#)
4. [Shield of Kaldra](#)
5. [Wall of Shields](#)
6. [Spirit Shield](#)
7. [Kry Shield](#)

Top 10 Armors

1. [Cranial Plating](#)
2. [Coat of Arms](#)
3. [Empyrial Plate](#)
4. [Grafted Wargear](#)
5. [Living Armor](#)
6. [Urza's Armor](#)
7. [Power Armor](#)
8. [Flowstone Armor](#)
9. [Belbe's Armor](#)
10. [Slagwurm Armor](#)

Top 16 Head Gears

1. [Illusionary Mask](#)
2. [Jester's Cap](#)
3. [Grafted Skullcap](#)
4. [Mask of Memory](#)
5. [Helm of Obedience](#)
6. [Helm of Awakening](#)
7. [Helm of Possession](#)
8. [Jester's Mask](#)
9. [Bone Mask](#)
10. [Mindstorm Crown](#)
11. [Mask of Intolerance](#)
12. [Crown of the Ages](#)
13. [Helm of Kaldra](#)
14. [Uba Mask](#)
15. [Coral Helm](#)
16. [Helm of Chatzuk](#)

Top 5 Orbs

1. [Winter Orb](#)
2. [Zuran Orb](#)
3. [Static Orb](#)
4. [Mesmeric Orb](#)
5. [Orb of Insight](#)

Top 7 Matrices

1. [Damping Matrix](#)
2. [Myr Matrix](#)
3. [Bubble Matrix](#)
4. [Storage Matrix](#)
5. [Power Matrix](#)
6. [Mana Matrix](#)
7. [Life Matrix](#)

The Top 50 Golems

1. [Steel Golem](#)
2. [Bosh, Iron Golem](#)
3. [Karn, Silver Golem](#)
4. [Sand Golem](#)
5. [Dross Golem](#)
6. [Oxidda Golem](#)
7. [Emblazoned Golem](#)
8. [Razor Golem](#)
9. [Spire Golem](#)
10. [Straw Golem](#)
11. [Tangle Golem](#)
12. [Mirror Golem](#)
13. [Thran Golem](#)
14. [Mycosynth Golem](#)
15. [Hermitite Golem](#)
16. [Tribal Golem](#)
17. [Soldevi Golem](#)
18. [Battered Golem](#)
19. [Petwar Golem](#)
20. [Matopi Golem](#)
21. [Obsianus Golem](#)
22. [Sparring Golem](#)
23. [Rusting Golem](#)
24. [Junk Golem](#)
25. [Composite Golem](#)
26. [Malachite Golem](#)
27. [Alloy Golem](#)
28. [Limestone Golem](#)
29. [Crystal Golem](#)
30. [Titanium Golem](#)
31. [Igneous Golem](#)
32. [Coal Golem](#)
33. [Cobalt Golem](#)
34. [Patagia Golem](#)
35. [Lead Golem](#)

36. [Flint Golem](#)
37. [Basalt Golem](#)
38. [Golem-Skin Gauntlets](#)
39. [Ur-Golem's Eye](#)
40. Ur-Golem's Other Eye
41. Ur-Golem's Ear
42. Ur-Golem's Nose
43. Ur-Golem's Totem
44. Ur-Golem's Saddlebags
45. Ur-Golem's Tomb
46. Ur-Golem's Take-Out Menu
47. Ur-Golem's Spiked Helmet
48. Ur-Golem's Chainmail Bikini
49. Ur-Golem's Ring
50. Gollem

Happy artifact week, everyone!