

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Magic Arcana



# Context is Everything

Magic Arcana  
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**M**agic is a game of context.

Over the years Magic Arcana has touched on the concepts of "functionally identical" (a card that, while not a strict reprint of another card, differs from it only in irrelevant characteristics) and "strictly better" (a card that does more than another card for the exact same cost). But as **Magic** grows, context changes, and so do these concepts.

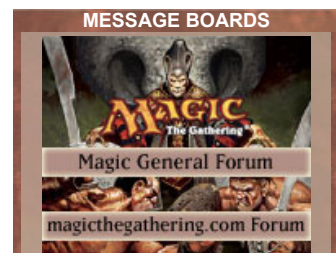
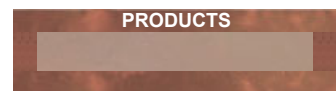
Emphasis on creature type in *Onslaught* block, and spiritcraft in Kamigawa block, is one way that **Magic** has expanded its context. During the *Odyssey* days, the difference between *Dusk Imp* (Creature—Imp) and *Mirage's Feral Shadow* (Creature—Nightstalker) was almost nil.

However, some recent near-reprints have made quite a bit of difference. Consider:



- **Uktabi Orangutan** -> **Viridian Shaman**: Both Elf and Shaman are useful creature types nowadays
- **Merfolk Looter** -> **Thought Courier**: The Courier has the more useful Wizard creature type nowadays, since Merfolk are in decline
- **Suntail Hawk** -> **Lantern Kami**: The kami works with spiritcraft; and interestingly, these cards are both in Standard right now, allowing you to play 8 1-mana flyers in White Weenie decks
- **Horned Turtle** -> **River Kaijin**: Only one of these triggers *Sire of the Storm*
- **Merfolk of the Pearl Trident** -> **Fugitive Wizard** -> **Wandering Ones**: Blue always seems to have a 1/1 vanilla creature for hanging around, but it matters a lot which you play, depending on whether you have *Lord of Atlantis*, *Voidmage Prodigy*, or *Soul of Magma* already on the board!

*Unhinged* further expanded that context when it introduced "name matters," "flavor text matters" and "artist matters" cards. *Ekundu Griffin* and *Razorfoot Griffin* may be functionally identical to a *Callous Oppressor*, but only one gets +2/+2 and trample after you cast *Graphic Violence* naming David A. Cherry!



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