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# Group Think

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Making Magic  
Monday, October 3, 2005



Welcome to Selesnya Week! During *Ravnica* block, we are planning ten different theme weeks each dedicated to a different guild (aka color pair). We are starting with green/white. My plans for these weeks is to do a series of articles that are an extension of the color pie philosophy articles that I did during our cycle of mono-color weeks ("[It's Not Easy Being Green](#)", "[The Great White Way](#)", "[True Blue](#)", "[In the Black](#)" and "[Seeing Red](#)"). Though many of the writers will be talking about the Selesnya Guild and *Ravnica*, pretty much anything green/white fits under the umbrella of the theme week, so you can expect some historical looks at the various color combinations as well as we do these.



For this series of color pie philosophy articles, I am going to talk about the relationship of the two colors in question. And by doing so, explain the philosophy of that color pie intersection. Note that I'm not going to be talking about Selesnya (or any *Ravnica* block guild) in specific as I'll leave that to Matt Cavotta (in his column "[Taste the Magic](#) on **Magic** creative). Instead I'll be talking about how the color philosophies interact.

## Slicing Pie

During my previous color pie columns, I answered the following questions about each color:

- 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?

Two-color combinations (which I will now refer to as guilds) require a little tweaking of the questions:

- What do the two colors have in common?
- How do the two colors differ? What is the guild's internal conflict?
- What does the guild care about? What is its end goal? What means does the guild use to achieve these ends?
- What does the guild despise? What negatively drives the guild?
- What is the color's greatest strength and biggest weakness?

Sound good? Then away we go.

## What do the two colors have in common?

For allied colors, there's an easy way to figure this out. Look at the shared enemy of the two colors. See what that color represents. The guild represents the opposite of that. As it's green/white week I guess I should use green/white as my example. Black is all about selfishness, doing whatever it takes to advance oneself. Green/white therefore is the opposite. It is the guild that is selfless. The guild that puts the needs of the group ahead of those of the individual. All decisions made by members of the green/white guild are made with the welfare of the group in mind.

This emphasis on the larger group stems from different places in each color. White is all about a structured society. It wants to make a safe environment for all its people. As such, it creates a complex series of rules/laws to protect its weakest citizen. Green, on the other hand, is focused on the natural order. The group it cares about is that which naturally exists in any eco-system. As such, green spends its energy to keep outside forces from affecting the natural growth of nature.

In addition to its dedication to community, green and white have a few other aspects in common. First, both are very creature-centric as each color sees its creatures as an important resource. Second, both colors have a sense of a higher power. This is played out as religion in white and spiritualism in green. Third, both colors feel responsibility for the welfare of their creatures and as such have abilities that can be used to protect them.



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## How do the two colors differ? What is the guild's internal conflict?

With allied color pairs, there's an easy trick to figuring out the latter. Take a look at the enemy color combination that pits one color's ally against the other's. Once again, I'll use green/white as an example. Other than each other, white's ally is blue while green's is red. This means we want to focus on the blue/red conflict. It is this conflict that forces the two colors to choose different sides.

The blue/red conflict is that of intellect versus emotion. Of thinking versus feeling. Of action versus reaction. Of nurture versus nature. Blue is cool and calculating. Red is passionate and impulsive. Blue thinks before it acts. Red acts before it thinks. White takes blue's side in this conflict, choosing to use its brain to plan ahead and strategize. Green takes red's side, acting on its gut and instinct.

What this means is that while white and green share a common goal, the protection and nurturing of the group, the means by which they achieve this goal vary significantly (more on this in a moment). This difference in philosophy of execution is the guild's internal conflict.

## What does the guild care about? What is its end goal? What means does the guild use to achieve these ends?



The key to understanding a guild's goal is to understand the overlap of the goals of its two colors. White wants peace. It wants to create a safe haven for everyone, a place where the group can thrive. Green, on the other hand, seeks growth. It wants the natural order to proceed unhindered by outside forces. It wants the cycle of life to do its thing without interference. Both colors are focused on the bigger picture of community. They dislike outside interference and as such seek to protect those that they feel fall within their purview.

To achieve their goals, each color has a different tool. White makes use of structure, creating rules, laws, and/or covenants that protect the greater good through tight restraints. Green, on the other hand, taps into the power of nature, unleashing its fury on those forces causing it concern. White is subtle and nuanced in its execution. It plans ahead and carefully orchestrates a structure that will allow it to shape the environment to its will. White strategizes and plans. Green has a much more direct approach. It attacks anything it sees as a threat. That attack is not always brute force. Nature has a wide arsenal of weapons. Some are in your face while others are, in their own way, as subtle as white.

The means that the two colors overlap on is the potency of raw numbers. Both white and green work towards building their community because they understand that enlarging it gives them power. This makes recruitment green/white's number one goal.

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

With an ally color pair, there's always an easy answer. What does the shared enemy do? Black has the audacity to value the individual over the group. Black makes decisions that help itself at the sake of its own community. Black undermines the group. Black thrives at the expense of those that helped shape him/her. There is nothing more reprehensible to green/white.

It is this disgust that drives green/white to wipe out any and all traces of individuality. It is fundamental for the health of the group for each member to prioritize the group's welfare. Any trace of wavering is met with punishment, but punishment designed to teach the perpetrator the error of his or her ways. This is tough love as green/white always seeks to bring everyone back into the fold.

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

Green/white's strength is its ability to withstand temptation. Expunging individual wants and desires grants resolve. In addition, the guild has the most focused group as each member works together to create the strongest whole entity. No energy is wasted on any external motivation. As a side effect, this makes the members of the guild rather happy as they have a goal that is much easier to accomplish than most individual desires.

Green/white's greatest weakness is its inability to innovate. As its members are always working towards the same goal, there is no diversity of thought or experience. There are significant barriers to any kind of change and as such green/white evolves very slowly. Much slower than the other nine guilds.

## Final Thought

With each guild, I want to take the chance to discuss a facet that I feel is misunderstood. For green/white I'd like to touch upon what I call the "cult factor". For some reason in this day and age saying that a person is looking out for something greater than himself meets with a lot of skepticism. What kind of person wouldn't attend to his or her own needs? The answer is many people, all the time. For example, I have a family. I definitely put their welfare ahead of my own. I do things on a daily basis that personally suck for me but are done because it benefits my family, which I greatly value.

Green/white isn't crazy. It's not a cult. It's a group that values the whole greater than the individuals. Any ideal taken to the extreme has its issues and you'll find that all the guilds, pushed to their limit, are a bit on the extreme side. So yes, green/white probably takes the whole "benefit of the group" thing farther than the average person will (I, for instance, while loving my family, do occasionally do things for myself). But the general idea of green/white's philosophy isn't really that far out of the mainstream.

## All For One and One For All

As with my columns on mono-color philosophies, I plan to end each column by giving some examples from pop culture. Experience has shown me that this is where most of my mail will be generated.

**The Ewoks** – *Star Wars* is filled with very self-centered characters. But these little guys? Not so much. The Ewoks are very tribal by nature, yet have a structured society. Most importantly, it is clear that each and every ewok is willing to do what is in the best interest of the ewoks. Otherwise, wouldn't they all have just fled when they were told they had to take on the Empire? I mean really, even the ewoks didn't think they were going to win.

**Oompa Loompas** – These are the little guys that work in Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. Several things are clear from the movie (the original, not-so-dark one). One, they have no need for individuality. (Come on, can you tell them apart?) Two, they seem to have a similar motivation. And three, they have a strong moral center that they feel compelled to sing about.

**The Body Snatchers (from "The Invasion of the Body Snatchers")** – Some people might want to make a claim that these guys are either black because they have a desire to take over the world or blue because they're control freaks. But I see these guys as more of aliens on a mission. They've come to Earth on a recruitment drive. They're emotionless (but intelligent) drones that seem focused on a single task, working together to grow their numbers. And hey, they're even plants. Green/white to me.

**Menudo** – I believe my reaction to include this reference is either a) Boy, Rosewater loves his out-there references or b) Who is Menudo? Menudo was (maybe still is, I don't know) a Latin American Pop Sensation. The gimmick was this. The group always had five boys. Whenever a boy got old enough that his voice changed, they would replace him with a new boy. For modern-day pop relevance, Ricky Martin was once in Menudo. This group was very green/white as the individuals in question were far less important than the whole of the group. It even allowed nature to dictate when it was time for someone to leave the group.

## Group Hug

And so ends the first of ten columns on the guilds. When building *Ravnica*, the designers thought of the block as having ten colors. I hope today's column gave you some idea how different each of the ten two-color combinations is from the single mono-colors.

Join me next week when I interview myself. (No, really. Man, I seem to have to say that a lot.)

Until then, may you know the peace of being part of the group.

Mark Rosewater

*Mark Rosewater is Head **Magic** Designer. What this fancy title means is that he's in charge of **Magic** design. This gets him a lot of mail (which he actually reads). When not alternatively destroying and saving **Magic**, he likes to spend time with his family, do stereotypically geeky things (play games, read comics, watch a lot of science fiction, etc.) and write about himself in third person.*



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