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# Creative Differences

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Making Magic  
Monday, February 27, 2006



Welcome to Izzet Week! This is the second of the *Guildpact* guild theme weeks and the sixth of the *Ravnica* block (I've already covered [Selesnya](#), [Golgari](#), [Dimir](#), [Boros](#) and [Gruul](#)). I'll cover Orzhov in a few weeks and then tackle the Rakdos, Simic and Azorius guilds once *Dissension* finally sees the light of day. This ten-part series is based upon a five-part series – six if you count artifacts – that I did several years ago where I explored the philosophy of each of the five colors. (“[It's Not Easy Being Green](#)”, “[The Great White Way](#)”, “[True Blue](#)”, “[In the Black](#)”, and “[Seeing Red](#)”).

As always, I'd like to start this article by reminding all of you that I am focusing on the intersection of the philosophies of Red and Blue, rather than talking about the Izzet guild in specific. (To learn more about the Izzet guild, check in with Matt Cavotta in this week's “[Taste the Magic](#)”). I think you'll find the color philosophy intersections to be more than enough material for an entire column. Mostly because it's such a cool intersection. (This coming, of course, from someone who self identifies themselves as Red/Blue.) For each of these columns, I answer the following 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?



At the end, I'll throw in a few pop culture examples to give the people in the thread something to argue about. Of course, as this is number six, I'm assuming you get the format by now. If not, welcome to the color philosophy columns. You have some back-reading to catch up on. (See above.)

## What do the two colors have in common?



To understand what two enemy colors have in common, we always begin by examining the core conflict between them. For Red and Blue, it's a classic conflict: emotion vs. intellect (a.k.a. the head vs. the heart, thinking vs. feeling, speculative vs. intuitive, the mind vs. the gut). On one side we have Red. Red is the color of impulse. It does what feels right. It lets its emotions be its guide. Blue, on the other hand, is the color of the intellect. Blue likes to think. A lot. About everything. Blue makes its decisions on logic and forethought.

Their styles could not be more different. Red acts impulsively in the moment. Blue waits until it has examined every side of the issue before it gets involved. Red comes out swinging. Blue avoids conflict, if it can. Red acts. Blue reacts. Red is focused on the present. Blue is focused on the future. Each color acts in a way that is the antithesis of the other.

So how does a guild encompass both sides? Easy. By taking aspects of each. Red/Blue is a thinking guild, but unlike other guilds with a Blue element, Red/Blue embraces the tools of emotion. They think, but they think passionately. Their emotion allows them to leap to ideas and thoughts that their logical cousins would never encounter. They find rationality in the heart of irrationality. They make intuitive leaps. They slay sacred cows. They connect things that no one else would think to

connect. In short, they embrace creativity.

You see, creativity mixes elements of logic and emotion. It finds connections in things that most people wouldn't have given a second look. But Red/Blue lives to find those connections. To them, life is about seeking knowledge *and* freedom. And how better than by examining the knowledge that no one else will explore. Thinking things that no one else would dare think. They search for the knowledge that cannot rationally be discovered.

In addition, the two colors find that they have some similar tools. For example, both colors enjoy messing with the opponent. Blue tends to do it more out of trickiness while Red does it out of playfulness, but in the end, Blue and Red are the two colors that most mess with other players' spells. Red/Blue is tricky/playful and creative. As you will see, this is a potent combination.

**Round Three:** The Angel of Wrath vs. the Minotaur Hero; the Clouded Mirror vs.

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

Based on their key conflict, the two colors seek opposite things. Red is focused on following where its emotions can lead, while Blue wants to follow its intellect. Red wants to feel and experience things. Blue wants to learn and understand them.

The internal conflict that arises from this is one of split focus. The Red half of Red/Blue is obsessed with the exploration of the irrational itself. The Blue half wants to make sense of that irrationality. The Red side will never focus on any one task and keep extrapolating forever. The Blue side will latch onto one issue and never move on to the next.

This disconnect makes Red/Blue appear crazy to any outsider. You can't count on them to be rational, yet you can't count on them to be irrational. They randomly (at least to an outsider) seem to switch back and forth between irrationality and rationality. On second thought, do they *appear* crazy or *are* they crazy? No one will ever know.

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

To understand the guild's goals, let's look at the goals of each of the colors. Red seeks freedom. Red is all about Red doing whatever it wants. Red follows its heart wherever that might lead it. Blue seeks knowledge. Blue's solution to life is to completely understand it. With knowledge, as the saying goes, comes power. This means that Red/Blue seeks out knowledge, but in a manner that follows one's heart. Rather than a systematic approach, Red/Blue seeks to learn by jumping around from issue to issue. By doing so, they believe that they will stumble across important information that could not be found by any other approach.

The most interesting thing about how Red/Blue functions is that each individual finds his own path. Every Red/Blue mage is guided by a combination of his own emotions and his own thought process. The jumps, the leaps, the juxtapositions that are made by each one are unique to that mage. That said, as Red/Blue prizes this way of thinking, they do enjoy interacting with other members of the guild. This doesn't mean that two Blue/Red mages will walk away with the same conclusions, but they enjoy the interaction nonetheless.

The tools that Red/Blue uses most are impulse and analysis. The impulse to connect two unlikely things and the analysis to find a connection between the two. By interchanging between these two opposite ends of the spectrum, Red/Blue travels a path that cannot be seen (or most of the time understood) by anyone else.

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

To understand what an enemy color pair despises, you need to look at the enemies of the two colors and find out what those two have in common. Red's other enemy is White. Blue's other enemy is Green. What do White and Green have in common? Community, a respect for tradition, and a desire to keep the status quo. Red/Blue will have none of that. With an emphasis on how *it* thinks and how *it* feels, Red/Blue is very focused on the individual. Red/Blue is not interested in repeating the past, but instead focused on forging the future. And the status quo is the last thing Red/Blue wants to maintain.

Red/Blue is about change. Red/Blue is constantly reinventing itself and its environment. Thus, anything that Red/Blue sees as barring its path to discovery is a nuisance. If it blocks long enough, it becomes an enemy. Red/Blue wants to discover and to explore. It doesn't want boundaries or limitations, but if need be, boundaries can be broken and limitations can be overcome. Forcefully, if necessary.

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

Red/Blue's greatest strength is its ability to solve problems. With numerous tools in its arsenal, Red/Blue is set up to find answers. Even to the questions that it never asked.

Red/Blue's greatest weakness is its lack of focus. Red/Blue gets so caught up jumping around from idea to idea that often it is hard to get Red/Blue to stop from moving onto the "next big thing". This makes Red/Blue very unreliable. In addition, because Red/Blue doesn't censor its areas of discovery, it has the potential to get involved with some pretty dangerous forces.

## Creative Exercises

For each two-color article, I examine a topic near and dear to the guild in question. For Red/Blue I thought I would look at the concern that the mechanics chosen for the Izzet in *Guildpact* don't reflect the values put forth about Red/Blue. For example, I keep explaining that Red/Blue is all about doing something different and unique yet so much of Red/Blue in





*Guildpact* (with things such as replicate and all the “fork” effects) seems to be about copying things - the antithesis of being unique.

The answer to this is a complex one, but then, I've never shied away from complex answers. In design, there is a big difference between what a spell does in isolation and how it intermingles in the larger picture. Copy spells might seem very unoriginal when looked up close, but when you take a few steps back, you'll see they look very different.

To understand my point, I need to first explain an aspect of design known as variance. Variance talks about how much variety a spell has long term, that is, during the course of many games. For example, let's take **Concentrate** (“Draw three cards.”). **Concentrate** has zero variance. Every time you play the spell, the exact same thing will happen. You, the player playing the spell, will always draw three cards. Now let's examine **Shock** (“Shock deals 2 damage to target creature or player.”). **Shock** has a slightly higher variance, as it is modal. That is, the caster has two choices of effects. Sometimes the **Shock** will deal its damage to a creature and sometimes it will deal damage to a player. In addition, as each game tends to have different creatures played, what the **Shock** gets used on, provided it's being used on a creature, will also have a high variance.

Now, let's go to the other end of the spectrum with a card like a copy spell. A copy spell has so many different options in how it can be played, that it has the ability to be played in a unique way for numerous games. It has a high variance. Why is this important? Because when we sat down to design the Izzet, the designers wanted to create an overall feel that captured the Izzet's desire to constantly do different things. The catch is the fact that the Izzet gets no more cards than any other guild. The constant change we wanted for the Izzet could not be represented by the card pool alone. Thus, to capture this effect, the designers latched on to creating cards for the Izzet that had a high variance. This way, when someone plays the Izzet, the effect of the Izzet always doing different things is achieved over time. By doing this, we made the Izzet experience the least repetitive of any of the guilds.

And that is why the Izzet cards in *Guildpact* were designed that way.

## Passionate Thinkers

Finally, a few pop culture references to add the dash of controversy that I enjoy in many of my columns:

**Doc Brown (from *Back to the Future*)** - Inventors in general (and the absent-minded professor archetype in particular) fall into the Red/Blue camp. Doc Brown shows all the signs of Red/Blue. He's a thinker and a scientist, yet highly prone to emotional outbursts. His greatest invention, the time flux capacitor, was the result of a burst of impulse.

**Indiana Jones** - Indiana Jones is an interesting mix. He's an archeologist because he clearly has a quest for knowledge, yet he has a great passion for what he does. Even more so, he makes many decisions based on emotion. It is this combination of a desire to learn with a need to do things his way that lands him in the Red/Blue camp.

**Fred (from *Angel*)** - Another example I wanted was a passionate thinker. My love of all things *Buffy* led me to the character of Fred from the *Buffy* spinoff *Angel*. Fred is a brainy girl who is obsessed with science. Yet she wears her emotions on her sleeve. She thrives on knowledge yet is incapable of separating her brain from her heart.

**Dr. Seuss** - Yeah, yeah, I know I tend to stick to fictional characters, but I like to think of Dr. Seuss as Theodor Geisel's alter ego. I'm not sure if I could come up with an example of a real person that more embodied the mixing of head and heart. Dr. Seuss's writing is very thoughtful and concise, yet also passionate and impulsive. In each and every book, you can see how much he thought about the topic as well as how much he felt about it. So I'd be remiss talking about Red/Blue without a nod to Sam-I-Am's papa.



## A Think For The Road

And that is what there is to say about Red/Blue. As I stated earlier, the Orzhov column is coming shortly, followed by the last three guilds from *Dissension* (Rakdos, Simic and Azorius). As always, I'm happy to hear your feedback.

Join me next week when my life lessons continue.

Until then, may you know the joy of a little passionate thinking.

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