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# Tests of Endurance

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Making Magic  
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PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

Welcome to Suspend Week! Join me next week when the column actually begins...

While we wait for the time counters to come off, I had another fun excursion for this week. A little over a month ago, I let you all in on our plan to hire one of you to be the new design intern. I said that ten to twelve applicants would be chosen for an online version of a reality show a la "The Apprentice" called The Great Designer Search where we put designers through their paces each week slowly eliminating people until we got down to a final three that would all then get formal interviews. In the end, one of the three would get a PAID, SIX MONTH DESIGN INTERNSHIP! (I'm still too excited not to capitalize it.)



The problem was a lot of people wanted to be one of those "ten to twelve". This meant that we had to narrow down the field. To do this, we created three tests. Each would test a different set of skills and would progressively narrow down the field. Today I'm going to walk you through the three tests. Actually, just two of them as the third is [this week's feature article](#). Not only will I show you the test, I'll let you in on what we were looking for, give some behind-the-scenes glimpses on the tests themselves, and even share an answer or two of my own.

For those of you that couldn't care less about The Great Designer Search, I promise that today's column is full of all sorts of interesting nuggets about design. If nothing else you'll get to hear me sound off on a few topics. Sound good? Then let's get to the first test.

## Test #1 - The Exam Round

The first test [was posted publicly](#) so the contents shouldn't be much of a surprise. Here's what it said.

**To apply, you need to write a 250-350 word essay for each of the ten questions below. If any question is under or over the required length, the entire test may be discarded.**

1. Introduce yourself and explain why you are a good fit for this internship.
2. Explain three positive ways "mana screw" affects **Magic**.
3. Name a popular, existing mechanic and explain how you would make it better.
4. From a design standpoint, what was the best thing about the *Champions of Kamigawa* block?
5. From a design standpoint, what was the worst thing about the *Ravnica* block?
6. We design cards for three player psychographics: Timmy, Johnny and Spike. In the average set, who should the most cards be designed for? Why? Who should the fewest cards be designed for? Why?
7. Imagine you must eliminate a card type (artifact, creature, enchantment, instant, land or sorcery) from **Magic**. Which one would you choose and why?
8. You stumble upon a time machine and travel back to the early 90's. What is the one change you would recommend Richard Garfield make with Alpha? (You must recommend a change.)
9. You are forced to move counterspelling out of blue. What color do you move it to and why?
10. What is **Magic** design currently doing wrong? How would you do it right?

When you are ready, click below to launch the web form to enter your answers. Because of the amount of writing involved, we recommend using a word processor to prepare your answers and to save frequently. Then, when you're all set, you can open up the web form below and paste in your answers.

When you are done with your answers, click here to launch the web form. Those that advance to the next round will be notified at the email address they provided in the form.

Good luck!

I'm going to go through each of the essay questions and both talk about what I wanted to hear and explain my opinion on the topic. I will not be limiting myself to 350 words though. (And have no fear about me saying more than 250.) Before I get into the specifics though, here's what I was and was not looking for in the essays.

### Do's:

**#1 - Be Bold** - The point of an essay test is to give the taker a chance to stand out. I like to see people that take a firm stand on whatever it is they feel. Commit to what you believe. Show me you have some passion. And yes, that means no waffling. (Hello, Great Designer Search thread.)

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**#2 – Defend Your Answers** – People seemed so worried about giving the “right” answer. I don’t care if someone gave me the absolute worst answer if they could defend their reasons. So much of design is about figuring out what you believe in and defending it to the rest of R&D. I’m not looking for someone that agrees with everything I believe. I’m looking for someone with their own point of view. But if they cannot defend that view then it becomes much less valuable to the department.

**#3 – Engage the Reader** – An important part of design is selling your ideas. These essays are a chance to sell yourself. If you’re technically accurate but do nothing to make me interested in what you have to say, you’ve already lost half the battle. Note that there are many ways to engage the reader. I’m not saying to do something that doesn’t feel natural to you. Just find a way to make the reader care about what you’re saying.

**Don’ts:**

**#1 – Not Following Instructions** – We didn’t ask for 250-350 words for no reason. We wanted to see how you adapted to restraints. A design intern has to be able to follow instructions. Failing the very first instruction given to you isn’t a good start. I’m not saying that no one who writes below 250 or above 350 doesn’t have a chance, but man you raised the bar on yourself for absolutely no reason.

**#2 – Not Answering The Question** – Many of these questions ask about things we’ll never actually do. That doesn’t matter. If we say we’re doing something crazy and ask you to justify it, that’s what we’re looking for. Not answering the question, in my mind, is as bad as leaving it blank.

**#3 – Not Following Design’s Constraints** – You have to talk about **Magic** as it is, not as you want it to be (well, except for question #10 – it was okay there). The answers have to keep in mind how design currently functions. Ignoring that is basically thumbing your nose at design. Not the strongest way to start an interview.

With that out of the way, let’s get to the questions.

## 1. Introduce yourself and explain why you are a good fit for this internship.

The point of this question was to let us get a sense of who you are. Half of getting the job is proving you have the skills. The other half is proving that you’re someone we want to spend eight-plus hours a day interacting with. This was also a chance to let us know what skills and past experience you have that would help you as a designer. If I had written this when I was applying, I would have stressed my writing and communications background. I would have talked about my fascination with puzzles and my insight into story structure. I probably would have talked about some of the games I’d designed and my history as a gamer. I’d also point out my extensive background in comedy. I would have spelled out everything that I brought to the table. Finally, I would have stressed my enthusiasm. The number one rule in sales is to communicate how good you feel about the product. If you don’t like it, why would anyone else want to buy it?

## 2. Explain three positive ways “mana screw” affects Magic.

I’m sure one day I’ll write an entire column about this question. For today I’ll just hit the highlights. The reason for this question was that I wanted to see people defend something that they probably didn’t believe in. If you’re not the Head Designer (and sometimes even then), you don’t always get to decide what is the right and wrong thing to do. Sometimes you have to design for something you don’t believe in. The only way to do this well is to be able to see the issue from the other vantage points. Find a reason why something you don’t like has value. That’s why this question is here. Although for the record, I’m one of four guys on the planet that sees “mana screw” as a net positive. (What are the chances that one of the four of us would be running **Magic** design?)

Here are some (but not all – I do have a column to write someday) of the possible answers:

- **It allows anyone the chance to win** – I’ve never really gotten into chess. Why? Because I suck. And I know that if I play anyone better than me, I’m going to get crushed. Every time. Now, many people work past this point, but lots of others like me never do. One of the good things about **Magic** is that anyone can walk into a game with a least a little optimism. Even if you’re up against a hybrid clone of Jon Finkel and Kai Budde, there’s at least a chance that the game will handicap in your favor. A little hope goes a long way.
- **It allows anyone the chance to lose** – Poor little egos, so fragile. (That’s why I have my ego do weights.) One of the problems of playing games is that someone has to lose. Oftentimes, the loss hurts. This is where mana screw comes to save the day. It’s a great scapegoat. If you don’t feel like owning up to the loss, mana screw will gladly take the hit. Mana screw doesn’t mind. It’s glad it could be of service. Seriously, in a game where ego investment is so high (because you spend so much time building your deck, the win and/or loss feels more personal), having a built-in relief valve is actually very important. Perhaps you’ve heard a player or two do this?
- **Gameplay variance** – One of **Magic’s** biggest selling points is that no two games play the same. Mana screw plays a key role in this. Games where you consistently get your mana (or whatever resource the



game uses) have much less variance because you can rely on how the resource management will play out. But the inconsistency of the mana creates a much wider swing.

- **Allows For More Dramatic Comebacks** – I've talked in my column before about how having your back to the wall makes games more exciting. While it's fun to trounce someone, the highest highs in the game tend to come from constantly skating on the jaws of defeat into victory. I can tell you twenty stories about games I won where I was at 1 and my opponent was at 20. The reverse, not so much. This is how mana screw works. The losses blend together into a vague fuzziness, but the games where mana screw *almost* cost you the game become legendary.
- **Adds Skill To Deck Construction** – Good players understand that there are ways to minimize the threat of mana screw. As such, they take these steps when building their decks. One need only look at the deck of a beginner to see how valuable this knowledge is.

### 3. Name a popular, existing mechanic and explain how you would make it better.

Each question of this test was carefully picked to explore different parts of the design process. This question examined the applicant's ability to see potential. How could you take something that's popular and make it better? This is a hard question for me to answer but not because I don't know what to say. Rather it is because I have spent a great deal of time thinking about this kind of thing and have come to a number of important conclusions about what neat things we can do to improve upon existing mechanics.

The problem is that I can't talk about this topic without giving away many of the things I'm planning on doing. I promise to answer the rest of the questions but I have to take the Fifth on this one (referring to the Fifth Amendment of the US Constitution for our non-American readers – it's an amendment that allows you to not self-incriminate yourself) as I don't think it prudent to tell you what I'm planning on improving.

### 4. From a design standpoint, what was the best thing about the *Champions of Kamigawa* block?

This question examined the applicants' ability to find success among failure. While this block was far from **Magic's** all-time low point, it's not up to the design level of the sets you've seen since then. So what did *Champions of Kamigawa* do right?



There a number of good answers. Here are my top ones (in no particular order other than what popped into my head).

- **Splice** – I think this was one of the more innovative mechanics of the block. It wasn't too derivative. It played well and forced players into thinking about the game in different ways than they had before. It had an impact in both Limited and Constructed. (My biggest regret? I wish it had been "Splice onto instants".)
- **Ninjas** – I feel that the match-up between flavor and mechanics was not as fluid in much of the set as I would have liked, but ninjas hit on all cylinders. Ninjutsu was both an interesting mechanic and a perfect fit for the flavor of ninjas. (My biggest regret? I wish there had been ninjas in *Saviors of Kamigawa*.)
- **The Champions dragons (Jugan, the Rising Star, Keiga, the Tide Star, Kokusho, the Evening Star, Ryusei, the Falling Star, and Yosei, the Morning Star)** – When we were redesigning this cycle during development there was a lot of discussion about whether the leaves-play effects would be popular with the public. I argued yes, and clearly time has proven me correct. I really like this cycle as it is both sleek and elegant yet fun and splashy. (My biggest regret? I don't have one, I really like these guys as is.)
- **The Spirit War** – This one didn't really live up to its potential but I did like how it stretched design into a different place than normal. During an average set, **Magic** is anchored in a circle. But by focusing on one key conflict, *Kamigawa* block was able to create a more polar structure. Believe it or not, it was my appreciation of this different sub-structure that made me enthusiastic that *Ravnica's* guild structure would work.

### 5. From a design standpoint, what was the worst thing about the *Ravnica* block?

If the last question was about finding success in failure, this question was about finding failure in success. *Ravnica* block might just be the best block we've ever designed (and if not the best, at least fighting for a top spot). Where were the mistakes that we can learn from? Again, my top choices (and again in no particular order).

- **Radiance** – This was by far the weakest of the guild mechanics. It failed for several reasons. One, to be blunt, it just wasn't that exciting. Two, it wasn't as integrated into its guild philosophy as the other keywords were. And three, we tried hard in *Ravnica* to avoid the "color matters" theme as we didn't want it to feel like *Invasion II*. Radiance also failed in this goal.
- **Complexity of Haunt** – While I like this mechanic, I think it needed more gelling time. The current version is a little too complicated for my taste. I think we could have distilled it a bit to capture the essence but in a way that was simpler and more intuitive.
- **The Nephilim** – The idea of making four-color cards in a set built around a guild theme and not have them connect was not well thought out. The idea at the time was to have something that players might like that didn't fall within the guild structure, but I think that showed us not having enough faith in the guild system. Four-color cards could easily have been created as a joining between two guilds. This would have given them more flavor and identity.
- **Guild Balance** – It bugs me that we didn't perfectly balance the guilds in overall size. We're so careful so much of the time to balance color that it seems odd that we didn't take the extra steps (which probably involved adding cards to *Guildpact*) to keep all the guilds on an even keel.

### 6. We design cards for three player psychographics: Timmy, Johnny and Spike. In the average set, who should the most cards be designed for? Why? Who should the fewest cards be designed for? Why?

This question was both examining the applicants' understanding of the three psychographics and getting a sense of their ability to gauge their role in the big picture. Note that I've never touched upon the second issue so the question was really trying to see if the applicants could reason their way to an answer.

Let me start by stressing that many applicants answered a question other than what we asked. The question is not which psychographic exists in the largest number; it's which one should we be designing the most cards for. Those are actually two very different questions. For today I'm going to answer what we asked. Perhaps I'll broach the other one in a column one of these days.

Okay, in the average set, who are the most cards designed for? The answer is Spike. Why? Because the largest number of cards are designed with Limited in mind and the majority of Limited cards are aimed at Spike. Why? Because Spike is the one most interested in Limited. Yes, Timmy and Johnny also play Limited but not in the same way Spike does. Timmy and Johnny just search for things they'll like to play. Spike has to take in all the cards, especially the commons, because Spike wants to understand the environment.



Spike is also the player most attuned to nuance. Each new tweak has to be processed because Spike has to understand the play relevance of each card. To Timmy and Johnny, a Terror variant, especially a simple common one, is mostly just another Terror. To Spike, each variant has to be examined for its own merits and understood within its own environment. In essence, all the minute busy work which is the backbone of a set is much more designed with Spike in mind than Timmy and Johnny. Timmy and Johnny get lots of icing, but it's Spike who appreciates the cake.

Who should the fewest cards be designed for? Johnny. Why? Because Johnny likes open-ended modular cards. Johnny is attracted to cards that open themselves up to worlds of possibility. What this means is that the average Johnny card makes a higher percentage of Johnnies happy. Thus, we need less of them overall. Please note that none of this means we don't bend over backwards to give all three groups more than enough cards to make them happy. I'm just explaining in proportion how many cards that is.

### **7. Imagine you must eliminate a card type (artifact, creature, enchantment, instant, land or sorcery) from Magic. Which one would you choose and why?**

This question was testing applicants' ability to make the hard choices. In every design there comes a time where you have to cut down the set and all that's left is things you like. In addition, this question examined the applicants' understanding of how the game functions at a basic level.

So what is the correct answer? I think there is a reasonable argument to be made about any of the six with the exception of creatures. As Bill Rose joked with me when we talked about this question, "Maybe we should just throw anyone who said creature in the reject pile."

Why is creature such a poor answer? Because more than any other card type, creatures are what make **Magic Magic**. Yes, you could technically work around it by using only tokens made by the other card types but you would be losing so much flavor and gameplay that it just wouldn't be worth it.

The two best choices from a design perspective, in my opinion, are artifact and enchantment. Don't tell anyone but the two card types are basically the same thing. The only difference between them is that they are destroyed by a different subset of cards. My answer, if I had to choose, is that I would keep artifacts and then jettison enchantments to the void. I choose artifacts because I think the flavor of artifacts is just more solid and splashy. Once enchantments were gone, I would allow artifacts to exist in colored and generic versions. The colored versions would act like enchantments and the generic ones would act like current artifacts. The big change would be with the flavor of enchantments. Under my system, the game would have the conceit that wanting to create an enchantment-like effect would require that you have something to center the magic around. Want to give all your creatures +1/+1, for instance? You need to make a doll out of the hair of your warriors. Finally, I would have to rejigger what colors could destroy what to make sure that there is a balance between what each color can and cannot destroy. My off-the-cuff guess is to let white and green destroy artifacts and keep red and black from doing so. I say this because I think black and red having issues with enchantment-like effects is important for the game.

The instant and sorcery argument boil down to using one to represent them both. The best version of this, from Mark Gottlieb, is to turn instant into a supertype and make sorcery the default for all non-permanent spells. The way to eradicate sorceries is to make instants with timing restrictions on them. The land answer is to argue for a **Duel Masters** type mana base where any spell can double as a mana resource. Lastly, for those that seemed worried, no we're not planning on dropping below six card types.

### **8. You stumble upon a time machine and travel back to the early 90's. What is the one change you would recommend Richard Garfield make with Alpha? (You must recommend a change.)**

As a time traveler buff, I know this: don't make any suggestions that would threaten **Magic's** existence. For example, I wouldn't mess with the power level of Alpha as clearly having crazy broken cards was part of what helped the game build to where it did. No, the answers I would look at are more about fixing things that make a better game without taking away any excitement. Here are a few possible choices:

- **The stack** – The early days of **Magic** were very painful because no one (not even Richard himself) really knew how all the interactions worked. In addition, the structure wasn't there yet to help people who were confused. No official judging program, no Orcale, no rules databases. There weren't even complete rules. If I were traveling back to the early days, I might clue Richard in to the idea of the stack. I think it would add a little structure while still keeping some of the chaos of the early days.

- **Rarity symbols** – In the beginning, **Magic** was created to be mysterious. So mysterious that the players didn't even know things like rarity. This is another example of early confusion that I don't think helped the game, thus a good choice for a time travel tip.
- **Organized Play** – Having lived through early **Magic** I can say it was quite painful in the early days to find a game. I think this is another thing that **Magic** overcame, not something that helped it grow. If I could talk to young Richard, I might encourage him to embrace the organized play system closer to the game's release.
- **Printing technology** – Most of you didn't have the joy of playing during the first year of **Magic**, but watching Wizards learn how to print cards was painful. Every set up through *Legends* had an exchange program because they messed up the packs in some way. *Arabian Nights* had two different versions of the same card. *Antiquities* gave you copies of the same card in a pack. And *Legends* managed to leave half of the uncommons out of each box. I'm pretty sure walking through with Richard what exactly he needs to explain to Carta Mundi would have saved everyone a lot of grief.



### 9. You are forced to move counterspelling out of blue. What color do you move it to and why?

This question was both a look at the applicant's understanding of the color pie (especially color philosophy) and their flexibility to make something fit somewhere new. There is an argument for any of the four colors although some have an easier case than others. Here's how I think you would approach each of the four colors (and for once this is actually in order from best choice to worst).



- **White** – White is the most obvious choice for counterspelling as it's not too far away from white's "stall and protect" mindset. To give white counterspelling would be a refocus from white as reactive to becoming proactive. White would also want to have more enchantments like **Presence of the Master** that created this feeling that it took away options from the opponent. In order to make this shift, there are two things you would have to do. First, you need to move some of the core aggro elements out of white, as counterspelling and efficient aggro are a potent combination. Second, you would need to find a home for the reactive spells that you are shifting out of white. I'm not sure who picks up the first baton (maybe red), but blue seems the definite candidate for the second.
- **Red** – Putting counterspelling in red requires a closer embracing of the trickster quality that R&D has been pushing the last few years. (This is where temporary stealing and spell redirection come from.) The counterspells would need to have a more Gotcha approach. Probably this would entail giving red a lot of conditional counterspells rather than a glut of hard counters. This would help to keep the chaos feeling that red wants. The net result would be that permission strategies would be much less consistent.
- **Green** – The way to sell counterspelling in green would be to play up green's hatred of unnatural things. Define magic as unnatural and you could create a feel of a magic-resistant color. This would play nicely with things like untargetability and regeneration. Moving counterspells into green would most likely mean that green would have to give up being the aggressively-costed fatty color. Green could keep some bigger creatures but would have to pay a lot more for them, as aggressively-costed big creatures and counterspells can get scary together. As blue would have a vacancy, it might pick up the slack for efficient large creatures (more serpents and such).
- **Black** – Black's twist would be to play up its corruption theme and use counterspelling as a way to mess with the opponent. This would most likely result in discard moving to blue, as counterspelling and discard are too similar to both sit in the same color.

### 10. What is Magic design currently doing wrong? How would you do it right?

This question was just looking for the ability to be blunt. Often in design you have to tell someone that their idea just isn't as good as they think. This is where diplomacy is important. Much like you would need if you had to tell the person hiring you how they suck.

Unlike question three where I knew the answer and refused to tell you, this question I have to keep quiet on because I don't know. I mean, if I knew what I was doing wrong I would already be fixing it. That said, this is a very important essay question as it tells us a lot about the applicant and, who knows, maybe even the game.

When the Great Designer Search starts, you'll get a chance to see how the finalists tackled their essays.

## Test #2 - "The Test" (aka The Multiple Choice Test)

I'm not going to spend much time talking about this test in my column because the test is the feature article for this week. On Monday and Tuesday, you'll be able to take the test and score yourself. Then on Wednesday there is an article by yours truly giving the answers and explaining each one in detail. Definitely [check it out](#) if you're at all interested in design, as there's a *lot* of info there waiting for you.

## Test #3 – The Card Design Test

We couldn't test for a design intern without actually making them design cards, could we? This last test was a chance for the applicants that remained to show off their design skills. So what did they have to do? Here's the test exactly as I mailed it to the 136 applicants still in the running.

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For this assignment you need to design exactly six cards. Sound easy so far? Now comes the not-so-easy part. The six cards must meet the following constraints.

1. All five colors must be represented.
2. All six card types must be represented.
3. Converted mana costs one through five must be represented. (One spell should cost one, another two, etc.)
4. Two of the cards must be appropriate for common; two for uncommon and two for rare. (Make sure to label the rarity – put it in parenthesis after the title.)

In addition, you must also do the following:

**a) The six cards should seem as if they came from six different blocks.** They should represent as much diversity as possible.

**b) Every card must be laid out as follows:**

Name, w/ rarity in parenthesis (the card must have a name; make it as flavorful to the mechanic as you can)

Mana Cost (the card must have a cost which should be realistic)

Card Type – Sub Type (if applicable)

Power/Toughness (leave blank if no power and toughness such as non-creature cards)

Rules Text (look at existing **Magic** cards for order and templating)

For example:

Naturalize (common)

1G

Instant

Destroy target artifact or enchantment.

Or

Ball Lightning (rare)

RRR

Creature – Ball-Lightning

6/1

Trample, haste

At end of turn, sacrifice Ball Lightning.

**c) Be careful not to turn in cards that already exist.**

**d) Be true to the color pie.** For this assignment, color bleeding is bad.

**e) Keep aesthetics and elegance in mind.**

**f) Be innovative.** Do not feel constrained by what **Magic** has done in the past. At the same time, do feel constrained by what **Magic** might be willing to do in the future. In short, innovation is looked highly upon if it's something we would choose to do and poorly upon if it's something we wouldn't. This is the toughest requirement as it forces you to gauge what is and is not acceptable. Here's a tip. We're willing to try anything that doesn't cause problems with other aspects of the game (rules, flavor, etc.) as long as it's worth the time and attention it requires.

**g) After the six cards, write one paragraph (no longer than 150 words) about the design of your cards.** Exceeding the word limit may cause removal from the contest. I cannot stress enough that this paragraph should be about the design itself. What do you want me to know about how or why you designed the cards you did.

I believe the above test will be very difficult. Please allocate enough time to work on it. As with the other tests, here are the rules: (Breaking any of them is grounds for being removed from the contest.)

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So what were the pitfalls of this test?

- **The "Numbers Problem"** – The applicants had to design six cards using all five colors and all six card types. Think about that for a second. Do you see the problem? Yes, the numbers don't add up. Artifacts and lands are colorless. That leaves you with four cards to use five colors. This problem was solved in a couple ways.

**#1 – Use a multicolored card** – This was the simplest solution and the one used by the vast majority of the applicants. Note that some used traditional multicolored cards, some used hybrid cards, and a few used split cards.

**#2 – Make a colored land or artifact** – A few people used this solution. **Transguild Courier** already broke this boundary for artifacts.

**#3 – Make an artifact land** – This works because it frees you up to have five cards dedicated to color. No one did this (as far as I remember) but it's another answer that pre-exists in **Magic**.

**#4 – Do something that's never been done in Magic** – I was hoping for a number of these but once again, (to the best of my recollection) no one took the bait.

- **The “Innovation Problem”** – In the test I stressed that being innovative in a way we would do was a positive, and being innovative in a way we wouldn't was a negative. This left the applicants trying to gauge how best to be innovative. From reading the message boards, interpretation of this line seemed to vary greatly. Some felt that they shouldn't use new keywords while others felt it was essential (new keywords were not only acceptable but mostly smiled upon). Some felt they had to stay with tournament-legal cards while a few turned in *Un*-cards (I wouldn't have turned in six *Un*-cards but one was fine). Some kept within existing rules; some went where no card has gone before (some rules bending was okay but you had to be careful that what you wanted to do was possible). In the end, the risk-takers fared better than the ones who played it safe.
- **The “Puzzle Problem”** - This test was designed to do two things. One, I wanted to see what designers would turn in given free reign and I wanted to see how they handled restrictions. I liked the format of this test because it allowed a designer to show off a few cards he or she was really proud of but also didn't just let someone turn in a batch of cards that have been waiting in a drawer for years. We were very interested to see how the applicants solved the design restrictions. The two cards I was most interested were the first and last cards made. What was the card the applicant chose to show off of everything they had done? And what was the card they made with their back to the wall and tons of restrictions guiding every decision? The applicants that did the best were the ones who looked over all six cards as a single unit and made choices that were cross-card rather than just on a card-by-card basis. In short, these were the designers that didn't give me six cards that got crammed in together. These were the designers who created six cards that naturally fit together.
- **The “Diversity Problem”** – I was interested in seeing a wide variety of cards. To accomplish this I asked the applicants to make it such that each card felt like it was from a different block. How the designers approached this problem was very interesting. A minority thought I wanted the cards to be designed as if they were from six past blocks. While this wasn't what I meant I was intrigued by the people who tackled the problem in this manner. Some designers just tried hard to make the six cards feel as different as possible. Other designers went way out of their way to make each card give a sense of the environment around it. I was quite impressed with some of these submissions. The neatest thing about this problem was how many different ways applicants solved it.



## Close Your Test Books

And that is what the applicants have gone through so far, and the show itself hasn't even started yet. The finalists (the ten to twelve people who make the “reality show”) are going to have a test like this every week!

By the way, since the third test has been turned in, we've gone through several different passes. The first pass shaved the 136 applicants down to 69. The second pass cut it further to around 30. The third and final pass will get us down to our finalists. Stay tuned for information on who our finalists are.

Join me next week when I take the last time counter off Suspend Week!

Until then, may you know the joy of testing yourself.

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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