

A chance to see how you score on the multiple choice test from the Great Designer Search.

The Great Designer Search Multiple Choice Test Answers

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Now that you've taken the test and had it scored, it's time to take a look at the answers. For each answer, I will not only tell you the correct choice, but I'll explain why it's the correct choice and talk about some of the pitfalls built into the question.

Before I begin, though, I'd like to take a moment to talk about the how the test was created. One of the necessary skills for a **Magic** intern is a decent understanding of current **Magic** design. This includes all sorts of things from the color pie to color philosophies to rarity breakdowns to basic design rules. While much of this can be taught, we didn't want to spend the majority of the six-month internship just getting the intern up to speed.

We also knew going in that we wanted the test to be hard. Having half the audience get all the question correct wouldn't be particularly helpful. Because we knew the test was hard, we decided to allow the test takers to miss a not-insignificant number of questions and still advance. That number, of course, turned out to be 5. A score of 30 or better allowed the applicant to advance.

The test questions were written by fellow designer Devin Low and myself. They were designed to be challenging yet have a definitive correct answer. As we were trying to make it hard, many questions looked for the "more correct" answer. This means that choosing a "correct" answer wasn't always good enough.



Once we had the first pass of the test, we gave it to numerous R&D members. We then looked at their answers and listened to their feedback. We rewrote some questions and changed others whole cloth. Then we gave the test to some more R&D members. This continued for several iterations. What this means is that these answers were agreed upon by the majority of R&D. I know that people in the

thread will argue for questions they disagree with, but Devin and I stand by this test. We are very proud of it.

Blah, blah, blah, you're saying. Let's get to the answers. All right.

The Great Designer Search, Part #2

Mighty Giant

???

Creature - Giant

5/5

Whenever CARDNAME attacks, three target creatures can't block this turn.

#1) What is the most appropriate color for the above card?

- a) white
- b) blue
- c) black
- d) red**
- e) green

The answer is d) red. "Target creature can't block" is a red ability. Black has fear and blue gets "CARDNAME is unblockable." The 5/5 giant also slightly leads towards red. Three of the five power giants in history are red. That said, the other two are white and black, and green has a six power giant. Blue is the only color that hasn't yet had a large giant (and no, the 3/3 [Mistform Ultimius](#) doesn't count.)

#2) What is the most appropriate rarity for the above card?

- a) common
- b) uncommon**
- c) rare

The answer is b) uncommon. This question was one of the three most missed questions on the test. At first I was a bit surprised, as every single R&D person who took the test put down uncommon. On further inspection, I realized that the solution rests on some subtle distinctions – ones that we are used to in The Pit but that might not be as obvious to the outside world.

First, let's eliminate the obvious wrong answer: a). In common, red most often gets a 3/3 and sometimes a 4/4, but never a 5/5. (Green and blue are the only two colors that commonly get a five power common – think Wurms and Serpents.) Next, let's jump up to rare. Is this a rare card? Not really. Why? The biggest reason is hard to quantify. The best I can put it is that it doesn't feel rare, but that is a poor choice for an explanation of the answer, so let's look at some nuts and bolts that better explains why this card doesn't feel rare.

Let's start with the ability: "Whenever CARDNAME attacks, three target creatures can't block this turn." For this ability, you have to have a situation where you might have three or more creatures blocking Mighty Giant. This isn't going to happen all that much in Constructed. In fact, it would happen little enough that if you put this card in rare, you would be inclined to change the text to "Whenever CARDNAME attacks, creatures cannot block this turn." Why? Because affecting all creatures just sounds more impressive than only affecting three. One of the roles of rare cards is that they act as the focus of the pack when its opened. As such, we feel obligated to make them feel as "sexy" as possible.

The other force pulling this card towards uncommon is its role in Limited. Limited is where this card's ability will matter. And as it hasn't been costed yet, we still have the ability to balance it. Design likes to put cards where they fit and where we feel they would shine. This card doesn't fit at common and wouldn't shine nearly as much at rare (where Constructed is where the focus would be) than at uncommon (where Limited is more the focus). Thus, as every member of R&D who took the test answered, Mighty Giant gets assigned as an uncommon.

#3) What change would R&D most likely make to this card?

- a) Change "Whenever CARDNAME attacks" to "Whenever CARDNAME becomes tapped".
- b) Add "up to" before "three target creatures".**
- c) Change "three target creatures" to "three target creatures another player controls".
- d) Change "can't block" to "can't block CARDNAME".
- e) Remove "this turn".

The answer is b) Add "up to" before "three target creatures." With rare exceptions (such as [Hex](#)), we do not try to limit cards to have a set number of multiple targets. The reason is twofold. First, the template confuses players. When they see that an effect can work on a number of creatures, players instinctively assume that it can work on less. (This is why many players thought [Hex](#) was so amazing when they first saw it.) Second, it's just bad design. A creature that can keep a certain number of creatures from blocking it is interesting. A creature that can only keep exactly three creatures from blocking it is restrictive for no real gain. Restrictions are interesting when they create cool choices. Limiting this effect to exactly three does not. It's made even more meaningless when you realize that as written, it can target your creatures. This means that the only scenario where you would be hosed is when you and your opponent each have exactly one creature. Yuck!

Let's examine the other options. "Whenever CARDNAME becomes tapped" is odd when the effect so clearly feels like an attack trigger. Who cares if creatures can't block if this gets tapped any time other than combat? Changing the text to "three target creatures controlled by another player" is what we would do if the intent was to limit you to exactly three, but that's just a less interesting card, as I've outlined above. Changing to "can't block CARDNAME" moves the effect away from red's portion of the pie and into blue's. Blue gets unblockable creatures, not red. Removing "this turn" is not an option, because we shy away from creating effects that last beyond the turn. When they do we make sure that they either mark the permanent change or are significant enough that players will remember. (To fend off some mail, [Moonlace](#) is permanent because it's a throwback to the laces, which were also permanent.)

Creature - Beast

8/8

CARDNAME can't be the target of spells or abilities.

Whenever CARDNAME deals damage to a creature, destroy that creature.

#4) What is the most appropriate color for the above card?

- a) white
- b) blue
- c) black
- d) red
- e) green**

The answer is e) green. The card has two abilities: it's untargetable and has the "basilisk" ability. Untargetability is used in blue and green. The "basilisk" ability is used in black and green. As green is the only overlap this card has to be green (or multicolor, but you didn't get that option).

#5) What is the most appropriate rarity for the above card?

- a) common
- b) uncommon
- c) rare**

The answer is c) rare. This creature is too big for common (although green has had 7/6 and 8/4 creatures at common) and a little too brutal in Limited for uncommon. In addition, it has all the earmarks (big stats, multiple sexy abilities, etc.) of a rare.

#6) From a design perspective, what is the biggest problem with this card?

- a) The first ability should only prevent opponent's spells and abilities.
- b) The first ability should have a mana activation.
- c) The second ability is redundant on an 8/8 creature.**
- d) The second ability should destroy the creature at end of combat.
- e) The two abilities have no synergy with one another.

The answer is c) The second ability is redundant on an 8/8 creature. An 8/8 creature essentially has the "basilisk" ability; it destroys pretty much everything it fights. Yes, [Avatar of Hope](#) (a 4/9) would survive, as would a few massive Leviathans and Wurms, but that's about it. Redundancy is a big issue in design, both because elegance is important and text space is such a valuable commodity.

Changing the ability to only affect the opponent's spells is an option that design could explore but is far from the "biggest problem." Green gets both types of untargetability (no one targets me and no one else targets me) so the switch is far from mandatory. Giving an activation to the untargetability is wrong because blue gets that piece according to the color pie. Green's untargetability doesn't require activating. Rewording the "basilisk" ability to "destroy the creature at end of combat" is another option

available to design but not something required. The “basilisk” ability has a number of different flavors, but the one on the card is perfectly acceptable.

Finally, we come to the second best answer, e). The reason it’s not the best answer is that the two abilities do in fact have some synergy (although admittedly not a huge amount). The “basilisk” ability is a combat ability. It works only in combat. The best way to deal with a creature with a combat ability is outside of combat because there it has no inherent advantage. Untargetability mostly removes this option (yes, I know there are untargeted mass removal spells such as [Wrath of God](#)). If you want to destroy this creature, you have to do it in combat where this creature is at its strongest. In the end, what this means is that we would almost never put the “basilisk” ability on an 8/8 creature, but we very well may mix untargetability and the “basilisk” ability.

Card Loving Guy

???

Creature - ???

3/3

First strike

Whenever CARDNAME deals damage to an opponent, draw a card.

#7) Of the following choices, what is the most appropriate color for the above card?

- a) white/black
- b) blue/black
- c) black/green
- d) red/green**
- e) red/white

The answer is d) red/green. This is another question that divided applicants. Why red/green? Let’s walk it through. First strike is a white and red ability. Yes, it has occasionally shown up in other colors, but very infrequently. Let’s talk about black for a second, because this issue will become relevant in a moment. Black has first strike in three instances: knights that mirror white (*a la* [Black Knight](#)), grandfathered iconics (such as [Nekrataal](#) – and trust me, the first strike still bugs us) and cards printed during the first few years of **Magic**. It is *not* a core black ability.

The “magpie” ability (named for [Thieving Magpie](#)) is blue and green. For a long time it was a staple blue ability, but we’ve slowly been adding it to green. This is, for instance, why [Ohran Viper](#) is a Tier 1 card in *Coldsnap*. If you combine the two abilities you get four options: white/blue, green/white, blue/red and red/green. We conveniently didn’t give you the first three options, making the fourth one the correct choice. White/black and red/white have no access to the “magpie” ability, while blue/black and black/green have no access to first strike.

I cannot leave this question without further addressing blue/black. If you look historically at multicolored creatures, blue/black has the lion’s share of the creatures with the “magpie” ability. The reason for this is that this was always what blue brought to the table. In each case the creature was coupled with something else that represented what black brought. In order for this creature to be blue/black, you have to believe that black brought first strike. As I explained above, first strike is not a core black ability. Yes, it has been bled into black on occasion, but multicolor is not where we bleed

things. When we make a multicolor card, we want it to be crystal clear what each color brings to the card.

#8) If you wanted to make this a monocolored card, which of the following changes would not work?

- a) Give the first strike an off-color activation cost.
- b) Change first strike to islandwalk.
- c) Add "and then discard a card." to the end of the second ability.**
- d) Add "if you control an island" after "draw a card" in the second ability.
- e) Replace the second ability with "Whenever CARDNAME deals damage to an opponent, destroy target enchantment."

The answer is c) Add "and then discard a card." to the end of the second ability. For starters I should point out that this is one of the tricky "not" questions where you were looking to find the one answer that wasn't correct. Why does c) work? Because having a creature with the text "Whenever CARDNAME deals damage to an opponent, draw a card and then discard a card" does not make the creature acceptable in either monowhite or monored, the two colors the card would have to be if it had first strike.

Giving first strike an off-color activation cost (obviously in white or red) could be printed on a monoblue or monogreen creature. Changing first strike to islandwalk allows the creature to be monoblue. Changing the text to "draw a card if you control an island" works as the card can now be monowhite or monored. The island rider makes sure that the deck is playing blue. Changing the ability to "Whenever CARDNAME deals damage to an opponent, destroy target enchantment" works in monowhite, as white is the number-one color at destroying enchantments.

#9) Let's assume we decide to swap out first strike for an ability with more synergy with the second ability. Which swap would be the poorest choice in regards to synergy?

- a) double strike
- b) fear
- c) haste
- d) trample
- e) vigilance**

The answer is e) vigilance. This one is easiest to explain by walking through the other answers. Double strike works well because the "magpie" ability allows you to draw a card each time the creature damages the other player. As double strike lets this creature deal damage twice (hence the name), this means you would get two cards if the creature attacked and was unblocked. Fear is synergistic because it's an evasion ability which makes it easier for the creature to hit the player. Haste works nicely because it allows you to sneak in a hit when the opponent taps out their creatures. Trample works well because as long as one point of damage gets to the player, you get to draw the card. This leaves vigilance as the odd man out. The ability to remain untapped doesn't really give the "magpie" ability any extra help.

Grave Matters

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Enchantment

Whenever a creature is put into a graveyard from play, put two 1/1 NAME creature tokens into play.

Sacrifice a NAME: Target creature gets +2/-2 until end of turn.

#10) Assuming this enchantment could not be black but had to be monocolored, what is the next most likely color that R&D would make it?

- a) white
- b) blue
- c) red**
- d) green

The answer is c) red. This question was another one of the ones that caused a lot of people trouble (and, interestingly, was the only one missed by Randy Buehler). Why red? There are two abilities. The first creates creature tokens when creatures go to the graveyard. The second gives creatures +2/-2. Let's examine what colors can do each of these abilities. The first ability itself breaks into two parts. It's a "creatures go to graveyard" trigger and a token maker. Black and green are kings of the first ability, but all five colors occasionally do it. All five colors also create tokens but green is also king of this area. This means that green is the most likely to do the first effect.

Let's go to the second effect: giving a creature +2/-2. This is primarily a black ability, but red has dabbled in it. White and green occasionally do -X/+X, and blue does -X/-0, but no color other than black or red does +X/-X. This makes red the leading contender for the second ability. But the answer is looking for a monocolored card. The question then becomes, between green and red, which one would most likely have the ability more appropriate to the other. Red does have "goes to graveyard" triggers, and does occasionally make token creatures. Green, though, other than a very narrow window of hate against flying creatures and (on one occasion) enchanted creatures, is very poor at creature removal. Some might point out [Desert Twister](#), but "destroy anything" is very different from straight creature destruction. On top of that, even if you allowed green creature destruction, +X/-X would be odd for green. While this card is a not a great fit for red, it is clearly the color that would most likely step up if black wasn't an option and the decision was forced upon design.

#11) Assuming R&D is going to make four of the following five changes, which of the changes shouldn't be made?

- a) Change "Whenever a creature" to "Whenever a nontoken creature".
- b) Define what color the tokens will be.
- c) Add "you control" after "Whenever a creature".
- d) Make the creature type unique (something not used anywhere else in Magic).**
- e) Add a mana cost to the activation cost.

The answer is d) Make the creature type unique (something not used anywhere else in Magic). This is also a toughie, in addition to being another question where you have to find the

incorrect answer. Let's walk through why the other four are the correct answers. You have to change it to "Whenever a nontoken creature", because otherwise the card can go infinite. You could keep sacrificing a token to create the effect and then replace it with another token. Wrathing everyone else's board would be, in R&D-speak, "bah-roken". The reason you would define the tokens' color is because we always define the tokens color. It's just one of those things we always do.

The reason to change it to "Whenever a creature you control" is twofold. First, the flavor of the card is a little weird if you're making guys off of your opponent's creatures dying. Second, you're overpowering a card that doesn't need it. Capitalizing off your own creatures dying creates plenty of interesting play opportunities. Making the card also effect your opponent's creatures means the card has to be costed higher to match its power and just makes it less likely that the card will get played. The reason design would probably add mana to the activation cost is that the card will play better (note that I'm not saying it would be more powerful) with an activation cost. Forcing players to have to think about how to use their resources makes for better game play. It's also lets us lower the cost of the card, making it more likely to see play.

So why wouldn't we give the tokens a unique creature type? The answer rests in the change from "creature" to "nontoken creature". As I explained above, without the nontoken addition, the card goes infinite. If we add nontoken, making the creature type unique would keep the two abilities from interconnecting in both directions. For example, let's say the card made lemming tokens. When a creature went to the graveyard, you would get two lemming tokens that you could sacrifice to the second effect. But the second effect will never trigger the first effect, because the only lemmings that exist (barring Mistform creatures) are all tokens. One of the neat parts of the design was the fact that each half of the card could work with the other half. Taking away half the interactions is not something design would do. The sole exception would be if development came back to design looking for a limitation to keep the power level in check. And even then, restricting interconnectivity would not be my first choice. In addition, design is very conscious of backward compatibility. That is, we like it when new cards can interact with old cards. By making this token type unique, you don't allow players to have fun mixing this card with older cards that have the right creature type. So a), b), c), and e) are something we'd do, and d) is something we most likely wouldn't.

#12) Assuming the four above changes are made, which player psychographic is most likely to enjoy this card?

- a) Timmy
- b) Johnny**
- c) Spike

The answer is b) Johnny. This card is very much a quirky, build-around-me card (a.k.a. a Johnny card). While it has some Spike qualities (Spike likes cards that convert resources), it is by design more of a Johnny card.

See How You Like It

???

Sorcery

Target creature an opponent controls that dealt damage to you deals damage to itself equal to its toughness.

#13) What is the most appropriate color for the above card?

- a) white
- b) blue
- c) black
- d) red
- e) green

The answer is a) white. Barring the rare throwback timeshifted card, blue doesn't do direct damage. Green's direct damage doesn't hit non-fliers. This leaves white, black and red. Red doesn't mess with direct damage as subtle as this. Both white and black have made creatures damage themselves but the "hurt me first" rider has white written all over it. Black doesn't feel a need to justify it when it attacks something. White though is the color of retribution, or as R&D likes to call it, "don't mess with me and my boys," making the flavor of this card a perfect fit.

#14) Which two colors are the least appropriate colors for the above card?

- a) white and blue
- b) blue and green**
- c) black and red
- d) red and white
- e) green and black

The answer is b) blue and green. I explained this one why answering the question above. The short answer is that blue and green (with a few exceptions such as fliers for green) just don't do damage based creature removal.

#15) Four of the following five changes are ones R&D would make on this card. The fifth change we might make but might equally not make. Which is this fifth change?

- a) Change from sorcery to instant.
- b) Remove "an opponent controls".
- c) Change the first mention of "damage" to "combat damage".**
- d) Add "this turn" after "that dealt damage".
- e) Change "toughness" to "power".

The answer is c) Change the first mention of "damage" to "combat damage." This is another question where you're looking for the one thing we wouldn't do. Let's walk through the other four answers. Having this spell be a sorcery is almost pointless. When exactly have your opponent's creatures damaged you when you're able to play a sorcery? The change to instant is a must. The reason we would remove "an opponent controls" is that it's unnecessary text. The nature of the spell already tells you how to use it. Being able to target your own creatures does very little to raise the

overall power level of the card. Plus, we like to leave things open, allowing players to find the moments when you would do something like kill your own creature. We would write “that dealt damage this turn” because otherwise it becomes too much of a memory issue. Even worse, it forces you to remember something that at the time you weren’t even aware you should be paying attention to. The change of “toughness” to “power” is important because we don’t like to make cards that don’t naturally make sense. Power represents a creature’s damage capabilities. Because of this, players will instinctively use power. There is little gain that would force you to fight this inertia.

There’s nothing about the card or design’s rules that says that “combat damage” is better than “damage” on this card. In fact, I think the natural flavor of this card wants it to be any type of damage. Why would white avenge the creature that attacked me and not the creature that poked me with an activated ability? There is an argument to be made for “combat damage,” but it is by far the change least needed.

#16) Which of the following is usually *not* a reason for keywording a new mechanic?

- a) It makes it easier for players to talk about the mechanic
- b) It opens up design space
- c) It lessens text on the card**
- d) It helps market the set
- e) It helps ease understanding of other cards that have the same mechanic

The answer is c) It lessens text on the card. This is another one of the most missed questions. Rightfully so, because it’s a hard question. You see, all five things listed are reasons why we might use a keyword. But four of them are true the majority of the time while one is true a minority of the time. This is why the word “usually” is in the question. Sneaky, yes, but then this test was designed to be hard.

Let’s walk through the “correct” answers. Communication is a key reason to keyword mechanics. Discussion is hard without language to connect the ideas in question. This is true of just about every keyword. Keywords are also important because they open up design space. How? By providing a term that other cards can talk about. It makes it easier to grant the ability to other cards or to make cards that react in some way with that ability. This is true for just about every keyword. Further, *Mercadian Masques* taught us the lesson that a set without keywords is perceived as a set without mechanics. And mechanics have become a key way to explain to the consumer what’s new about a set. This means that yes, keywords help market a set. Finally, keywords allow players to shorthand later cards that share the keyword. Once you understand what the keyword does, every future card with the keyword gets to move to the front of the comprehension line.

But wait, doesn’t keywording lessen text? It can sometimes, when the idea the keyword represents is complicated enough that actually spelling it out would take longer than user-friendly reminder text (such as suspend), but most of the time it actually lengthens text. How? Let’s take defender. Without a keyword, the card needs to say “CARDNAME cannot attack.” With keywording, it says “Defender(*This creature cannot attack.*)” No words are removed with keywording. In fact, the keyword itself gets added. What it does is remove virtual word length. Italicized reminder text is easily ignored,

making the card feel like it has less text. To avoid an issue that I know will get raised, yes, we drop reminder text after a year. We only use it for the first year of the keyword's existence (or when we bring it back after a long time such as in *Time Spiral*). This is why the question specifies a "new mechanic."

#17) You have the following sorcery: "Target player draws five cards, then discards four cards." What is the most appropriate color for this ability?

- a) white
- b) blue**
- c) black
- d) red
- e) green

The answer is b) blue. This is what we refer to as a card manipulation spell. It helps you sift through your library to get access to better cards. This is a blue ability. Yes, the word "discard" appears on it but for this to be a discard spell it would have to create a net card loss for the person targeted by the spell.

#18) R&D makes sure that each limited environment has one or more mechanics that help gameplay to ensure better consistency and/or smooth mana bases. Which of the following mechanics least meets this need?

- a) cantrips
- b) cycling
- c) kicker
- d) imprint**
- e) morph

The answer is d) imprint. Yes, another question asking for the one that doesn't belong. This one is a little more technical, so I'll spend a little extra time walking you through the other answers. Cantrips (cheap ones at least, and as the majority of cantrips have a converted mana cost of three or less I'm willing to think of this as a overall quality of cantrips) allow you to draw extra cards during the early turns of the game. This helps even out your mana base, as increased draws make it more likely that you will draw the land you need. Increased card flow also increases a deck's consistency in general. Cycling is like cantrips in that it allows you spend small amounts of mana in the early part of the game to help balance your land draws. Mid to late game it helps with your overall deck consistency.

Kicker helps consistency by creating utility at different costs. If you get a slow land draw, most kicker spells still have utility by allowing you to play them without kicker. It also helps your mana base, because it allows you to play a heavier mana percentage as it gives you something to do late game with extra mana. Morph, like kicker, gives you an alternative at lower mana. In addition morph spreads out costs, allowing you to play a bigger creature in two chunks and get out larger creatures with less land in play. Also, as the face-down morph creatures use generic mana, they punish you less for having color issues.

Unlike the other listed mechanics, imprint doesn't particularly help you with either mana or overall deck consistency. The one exception would be imprint cards that imprint lands, which would let you play a heavier mana base. As very few imprint cards imprint lands, it's not a quality I would attribute to the overall mechanic.

#19) You have a common monocolored spell with the following first line: "CARDNAME deals 2 damage to target creature." Which of the following is most likely to be the second sentence?

- a) Untap target creature and you gain control of that creature until end of turn.
- b) If that creature is put into a graveyard this turn, remove it from the game and remove from the game all cards in that graveyard with the same name as that card.
- c) Then deal 4 additional damage to that creature if it's a legendary artifact.
- d) You gain 2 life.**
- e) None of the above answers is acceptable.

The answer is d) You gain 2 life. This question is probably the sneakiest one in the test (it was written by Devin – he likes making sneaky questions). The trap of this question is that the first three answers send you down the path of thinking of this as a red card. The trick is that the card in question is actually a black card (called [Vicious Hunger](#)). Why do the other answers not work? Temporarily stealing creatures isn't done at common. Removing numerous cards out of the graveyard is also not a common ability, especially as a rider to a direct damage spell. Dealing additional damage if it's a legendary artifact is way too specific, probably for any rarity. And "none of the above" isn't correct as d) can be done in common.

#20) Which of the following is not an example of a linear mechanic?

- a) Slivers
- b) buyback**
- c) affinity
- d) threshold
- e) amplify

The answer is b) buyback. This question was checking if you understand and apply design lingo. I define and talk about linear mechanics in my column "[Come Together](#)." A linear mechanic is one that encourages you to play certain other cards most often other cards of the same mechanic. As this question was looking for the one nonlinear mechanic, let's begin by examining why the other mechanics are linear.

Slivers help out other Slivers. This means that any one Sliver card begs you to add more Slivers to your deck. Very linear. Affinity requires you to play a certain amount of cards that match that card's affinity. While it's true that the mechanic gets less linear as the subset of cards that feed it gets larger, it is still a linear mechanic. Threshold is linear, but in a slightly different way. In order to play a threshold card, your deck has to make sure that it can reach threshold. Once your deck is able to do this, other threshold cards become very attractive. Thus, threshold begets more threshold. In order for you to maximize amplify, you have to play with a large number of the cards that match the creature type of the card with amplify. Quite linear.

Buyback, on the other hand, does nothing that encourages you to play with any particular set of cards, not even other buyback cards. Buyback is very modular, as any one buyback card can work well in many different decks. It doesn't need a certain mix of cards to thrive.

#21) Which of the following statements about Magic colors is incorrect?

- a) White believes the good of the group outweighs the good of the individual.
- b) Blue believes that everything is born as a blank slate to be shaped by its environment.
- c) Black believes that power should be in the hands of those that can take it.
- d) Red believes that emotions are more important than intellect.
- e) Green believes that it is up to the individual to change the world.**

The answer is e) Green believes that it is up to the individual to change the world. This is wrong on two counts. One, green is not focused on the individual (that would be black, one of green's enemies), and two, green doesn't want to change the world (that would be blue, green's other enemy). Green very much believes in the larger ecosystem and wants the world to stay as it is – not to change it. The other four statements are all true.

#22) Which of the following five descriptions is the most acceptable at common?

- a) The card is excessively complicated
- b) The card is a "flavor bleed" (it is a flavor stretch for that color)
- c) The card is "tier one" (among the highest powered cards in the set)**
- d) The card has to drop font size because it has so many lines of text.
- e) The card is too swingy in limited.

The answer is c) The card is "tier one" (among the highest powered cards in the set). The most interesting thing about this question is that it was the best indicator of whether you'd advance to the next round. Almost all of the applicants who advanced got this question right, and the vast majority of the people who got this question wrong didn't advance. The reason c) is the right answer is that all three rarities are given "Tier 1" (i.e., powerful) cards, including common. Common "Tier 1" cards tend to be the basic utility cards (such as [Naturalize](#) or [Shock](#)).

The other four answers are all reasons we would move a card from common. Common is meant to be simple, thus we move off complicated cards. Common is supposed to set examples, thus we rarely do color bleeds in it. Having to drop a font size is one of the signs of complexity, and thus commons avoid it. Finally, because common cards show up the most and thus have the biggest impact on limited, we try to keep swingy limited cards out of common.

#23) From a design standpoint, which set would [Vampire Hounds](#) be most at home in?

- a) *The Dark*
- b) *Judgment***
- c) *Nemesis*
- d) *Planeshift*
- e) *Urza's Legacy*






The answer is b) *Judgment*. I was surprised how many people missed this question, as I thought it was one of the easier ones on the test. I think a lot of people simply overthought this question. [Vampire Hounds](#) is a card with a discard cost as an activation. *Judgment* is part of the *Odyssey* block, which revolved around the graveyard. This block greatly rewarded you for both getting things in your graveyard (for stuff like threshold) and for discarding cards (for stuff like madness). From a design standpoint, caring about the interconnectivity of the mechanics, *Judgment* is the best answer.



#24) Which of the following cards is *not* a Timmy card?

- a) [Shivan Dragon](#)
- b) [Mana Clash](#)
- c) [Spirit Link](#)
- d) **[Mind slicer](#)**
- e) [Coat of Arms](#)

The answer is d) [Mind slicer](#). This was another of the big three missed by the majority of the applicants. This question was testing your understanding of the Timmy psychographic. A great resource for this question was my column earlier this year, "[Timmy, Johnny and Spike Revisited](#)" As this is another pick-the-incorrect-answer type of question, I'm going to explain why all the other answers are Timmy cards. Before I do that, though, I need to stress that there are a number of different types of Timmies. Many of these cards hit different aspects of the Timmy psychographic. [Shivan Dragon](#) is a stereotypical Timmy card: big, splashy, and iconic. Timmy is also the psychographic that enjoys exciting moments of drama such as coin flipping, making [Mana Clash](#) a Timmy pleaser. Both life gain and creature enchantments play into the Timmy mindset (having your life total go up and building a big monster are both fun experiences), making [Spirit Link](#) a favorite. Finally, [Coat of Arms](#) was designed to pump up tribal decks, a Timmy staple since Alpha. This leaves [Mind slicer](#) the odd card out. [Mind slicer](#)'s biggest strike is that it balances out a cheaper cost by having a negative "when put into graveyard" effect. Spike's the psychographic that likes trading drawbacks for mana savings, not Timmy. Timmy is willing to pay the extra mana to avoid the threat of an unhappy occurrence.

#25) Which of the following abilities is most likely to appear on a common red 3/4 Giant?

- a) : Target creature you control with power less than this creature's toughness gains flying until end of turn. Sacrifice that creature at end of turn.
- b) Sacrifice a mountain: Target Goblin you control gets +1/+0 and gains flying until end of turn.
- c) , Sacrifice a Giant: Destroy target land.
- d) *, , Sacrifice a creature: Destroy target enchantment unless its controller has CARDNAME deal 4 damage to target creature of his or her choice.
- e) : **CARDNAME gets +1/+0 until end of turn.**

The answer is e) : CARDNAME gets +1/+0 until end of turn. This is another question that threw a number of people for a loop. I think it stemmed from two problems: 1) focusing too much on the fact that the card was a Giant, and 2) misunderstanding the flavor of ": CARDNAME gets +1/+0 until end of turn". In short, I feel people talked themselves out of e) because it didn't seem enough like a Giant.

Before we examine that issue, though, let's walk through why the other answers were not correct. The problem with a) is that red granting flying is a color bleed and we seldom do color bleeds at common. The same issue takes b) out of consideration. The ability is also a bit convoluted for common. Option c) is out, as we do not put repeatable land destruction at common. First and foremost, d) is not a common card. In addition, there are a number of issues like the fact that red just doesn't do enchantment destruction (although I do realize that the card is a punisher variant).

Now let's get back to e). Obviously, it's a basic effect that we put at common all the time. Just because the aura that grants the "🔥: CARDNAME gets +1/+0 until end of turn" ability is called Firebreathing (and thus this is the unofficial nickname for this ability), that does not mean that it always has to be represented conceptually by the creature breathing fire. Yes, it often is, but power pumping can represent other things. For instance, it makes perfect sense on a creature that has the ability to enrage itself and put itself into a frenzy, thus temporarily increasing its power. Finally, there is no reason that a giant couldn't be conceptualized to breath fire. There are actual examples of this in real mythologies. Plus, we're allowed to make stuff up.

#26) According to modern design rules, which of the following is allowed? (Not counting silver-bordered sets.)

- a) A player putting another player's card into his or her hand
- b) A card with an activated ability that works while in the library
- c) A card on which graveyard order matters
- d) An effect that searches the library but does not shuffle it
- e) A card having a static ability in any zone other than in play**

The answer is e) A card having a static ability in any zone other than in play. This one was relatively easy to solve. Just find the one "rule" that we've broken. Because **Magic** is a collectible game, we've made a conscious effort to make sure you know where your cards are at all times. One of the ways to do this is to never put them into zones you can't see. This includes your opponent's hand and library (although as the question hinted at, the *Un*-sets do break this rule, with [Mirror](#), [Mirror](#) and [Letter Bomb](#)).

There is no way for a card in a library to have an activated ability. (And before you ask, [Panglacial Wurm](#) is a triggered ability.) There is one card in existence – and not a "real" one at that – that has an activated ability in the library: 1996 World Champion, a promotional card encased in the trophy of the winner of the 1996 World Championships, an Australian named Tom Chanpheng. When I made it I was told it didn't actually work, which was okay only because the only copy of the card in existence was embedded in a foot of plastic. While there are cards from *Tempest* block and back that care about graveyard order, since that time we have banned them in design. Without such cards, it no longer matters (casually at least) if players want to rearrange their graveyard to better observe what's in it. Lastly, every effect that searches the library shuffles it. Otherwise all sorts of shenanigans might occur. Finally, we come to cards with static abilities in any zone other than in play. The Incarnations of *Judgment* ([Anger](#), [Wonder](#), etc.) are but one example (okay, five) of cards that break this rule.

#27) Which of the following is true according to the modern day color pie?

- a) White is not allowed to sacrifice creatures.
- b) Blue is not allowed to draw multiple cards at instant speed.
- c) Black is not allowed to gain life.

d) Red is not allowed to destroy enchantments.

e) Green is not allowed to destroy creatures.

The answer is d) Red is not allowed to destroy enchantments. This was another question that was easily solved by eliminating the correct answers. White often sacrifices creatures. Usually the creatures sacrifice themselves and have some effect that affect the group at large, the idea being of one sacrificing itself for the good of the group. While we have cut back on blue drawing multiple cards at instant speed, it is still something we do from time to time (a recent example being [Gifts Ungiven](#)). And if you want to get nit-picky, the reason we don't often do it is not a color pie issue but a color balancing issue.

Black is allowed to gain life. It just has to be doing damage at the same life (a la [Drain Life](#) – yes, forgetting about [Drain Life](#) cost you two questions on this test). While green is normally bad at creature destruction, the color pie does allow green to kill a small subset of creatures, flying creatures being the most obvious example. This leaves red. Barring the occasional [Apocalypse](#) that blows up absolutely everything including enchantments, red has a very hard time getting rid of enchantments.

#28) Which of the following types of spells is more often done at instant speed?

a) creature removal

b) discard

c) land searching

d) land destruction

e) returning creatures from graveyard to hand

The answer is a) creature removal. While b), c), d), and e) all will be instants on rare exception, only a) can be found in instant form in just about every set.

#29) Which of the following is *not* a reason for having a variety of formats supported in organized play?

a) It shapes the game to different playing needs

b) It makes it easier to find an opponent with an appropriate deck.

c) It enhances design space

d) It makes more cards matter

e) It challenges players

The answer is b) It makes it easier to find an opponent with an appropriate deck. As normal, let's start by talking about why the other four answers are correct. One of the most basic reasons to have different formats is cater to different types of players. If everyone liked playing the same way, the game would just support one format. The reason formats enhance design space is that each format has different parameters. The more formats that exist, the more different environments there are to design for. Which leads into another effect of formats. As each format has different cards that are relevant to it, each new format increases the cards that are game-relevant somewhere. Finally, more formats means more to learn and thus more challenge for the players.

How does having a large number of formats hurt finding playing partners? Think of it this way. If everyone played the same format, as soon as you met another **Magic** player who had a deck you would be assured that you could play. Add another format into the mix, and all of sudden you can't be sure. Add a third format and the assurance goes down further. A diversity of formats is wonderful, but too many formats can lower the prospective pool of people you're able to play with. This is why Wizards doesn't support every format under the sun that someone has come up with.

#30) If we had chosen to use buyback as the keyword mechanic for one of the *Ravnica* guilds, which of the following guilds would have been the most appropriate?

- a) Boros
- b) Izzet**
- c) Orzhov
- d) Rakdos
- e) Simic

The answer is b) Izzet. The important thing to understand for this question is that you have to look at how the guild's flavor plays out in game mechanics. The Boros are focused on aggressively attacking. Buyback would work poorly in a guild that never gets to the turn that you'd start buy back the card. Mechanically, the Orzhov are about tying up the game and slowly bleeding out the opponent. While buyback isn't a complete misfit here, it fails to capture the essence of the Orzhov guild.

The Rakdos are all about short-term sacrifices for long term gain. Buyback would stick out like a sore thumb. The Simic are focused on evolution and are very creature-based. Buyback is an odd fit. Which leaves us with the Izzet, a guild focused on instants and sorceries (which all cards with buyback are). The Izzet like manipulating their own spells. One only need look at the similarity between buyback and replicate to see that buyback would be a perfect fit.

#31) Which of the following statements is not actually a modern design rule? (Note that *Coldsnap* for "retro" reasons broke one of the four rules.)

- a) Artifacts never have colored mana in their mana cost.
- b) Creatures must always have a power and toughness. (Having a variable power or toughness does count.)
- c) Enchantments never tap as a cost.
- d) Lands always produce mana.
- e) A sorcery can never affect a turn other than the one on which it's played.**

The answer is e) A sorcery can never affect a turn other than the one on which it's played. This is another question where the key is figuring a card that breaks one of the "rules." The *Coldsnap* exception makes it a little trickier, but not too much so. While artifacts have been colored ([Transguild Courier](#)), have had colored activations (the *Mirrodin* shards), and have produced colored mana (Alpha's Moxes), there has yet to be an artifact that has colored mana in its mana cost. We've never had a creature that didn't have both a power and a toughness. There has never been an enchantment with a tap in its activation cost.

Lands not producing mana was the sneaky answer, as *Coldsnap* has [Dark Depths](#). It is true that some lands don't tap for mana, but they produce it by being able to get lands that can. This rule wasn't always true, and thus the words "modern design" were added to the question. This leaves us with sorceries that affect a turn other than the one they're played. Some examples of cards that do this: [Conjurer's Ban](#), [Exhaustion](#), [Fatigue](#), [Mana Vapors](#), and [Suppress](#).

#32) Of the following *Ninth Edition* cards, which one do we least often make a variant each block?

- a) [Confiscate](#)
- b) [Diabolic Tutor](#)
- c) **[Furnace of Rath](#)**
- d) [Wrath of God](#)
- e) [Zombify](#)

The answer is c) [Furnace of Rath](#). The key to this question is understanding what each card represented in *Ninth Edition* and then thinking how often that thing is represented in expert expansions. [Confiscate](#) is the blue stealing card from *Ninth*. Not only is this represented every block, it's almost represented every set. [Diabolic Tutor](#) is the black tutor of *Ninth*. This is also an effect we make sure to do at least once a block. Wrath is white's mass creature removal spell. [Wrath of God](#) variants are a block staple. [Zombify](#) is *Ninth's* black reanimation spell. This is another ability that shows up almost every set and is always present every block. This leaves [Furnace of Rath](#), *Ninth's* red damage-doubling card. While we do variants of it once in a while, it is the only one above that we do not make a conscious effort to make a variant of each block.

#33) Which of the following statements is *not* true?

- a) Timmy by definition is a less experienced player.**
- b) Johnny wants to express something.
- c) There are cards specifically designed for Spike.
- d) Timmy wants to experience something.
- e) Johnny can be happy winning less than half his games.
- f) Spike wants to prove something.

The answer is a) Timmy by definition is a less experienced player. All of the other statements are true. I chose this question because a lot of people misunderstand what the psychographics represent. They are based around the motivations that make people play. Each category has novice and experienced players. There is this false belief that everyone starts as a Timmy and advances to a Spike. What makes people change psychographics is not experience but a change in how they look at the game.

Just to quickly run through the other answers: Johnny is all about self-expression, so yes, he wants to express something. Next, there is this ongoing rumor that design doesn't have to make cards for Spike because Spike will just play the best cards. This is blatantly false (and I've said this in my column on more than one occasion). Spike, for instance, is interested in things like resource management and drawbacks that result in more efficient cards, things that neither Timmy nor Johnny show great interest in. So yes, we do design cards for Spike.

Timmy is focused on creating positive visceral experiences. He likes having his adrenaline pumped so yes he wants to experience something. Johnny is all about showing off what he's up to. Yes, he wants to win but he knows that often he comes up with challenges for himself that are hard enough to win once forget doing better than 50/50. Finally, Spike likes using the game as a way to test himself, so yes he does want to prove something. Once again, all of this was discussed in great detail in my "[Timmy, Johnny, and Spike Revisited](#)" column.

#34) You're designing a common monocolored 6/6 creature for a new set. Which of the following abilities is most likely to be used?

- a) When this creature comes into play, sacrifice it unless you sacrifice two Forests.
- b) At the beginning of your upkeep, if a player has more life than any other, that player gains control of this creature.
- c) At the beginning of your upkeep, you lose 2 life.
- d) This creature can't attack unless defending player controls an Island.**
- e) Blue and black creatures have protection from this creature.

The answer is d) This creature can't attack unless defending player controls an Island. This is another patented Devin Low sneaky question. The question plays into the fact that people think of blue as being a weak creature color in limited. While this is somewhat true, in Alpha Richard Garfield set up a serpent flavor that continues to this day. Only blue and green ever have 6/6 creatures at common, and blue's creature is more consistently the same as it's the only fatty allowed to blue at common.

#35) A designer on the design team turns in the following card:

```
Aura Fiend
5B
Creature - Horror
4/3
Flying
Sacrifice an enchantment: Regenerate target creature
```

What is the biggest design problem with it?

- a) Black always requires mana to activate regeneration.
- b) Black is not supposed to easily be able to sacrifice its own enchantments.**
- c) Black fliers with 4 or more power are always Vampires.
- d) Black only gives bonuses to itself; it never helps others.
- e) Sacrificing enchantments to regenerate creatures doesn't make any sense from a flavor perspective.

The answer is b) Black is not supposed to easily be able to sacrifice its own enchantments. This question is another tough one, in that many of the answers have some validity to them. The test is figuring out the "biggest design problem." Let's walk through the other answers. Black does not always require mana to regenerate. In the past it has spent life ([Deepwood](#)

[Ghoul](#) and [Mischievous Poltergeist](#)), it has removed creature cards from the graveyard ([Zombie Scavengers](#)), it has simply tapped ([Baron Sengir](#)), and it has even used counters built up from creatures dying ([Scavenging Ghoul](#)). There are plenty of black flying creatures with power 4 or greater that have creature types other than vampire, such as: angel, demon, dragon, gorgon, horror, lemure, mercenary, nightmare, specter, spirit, and zombie knight.

While it is true that black prefers giving itself bonuses, it does occasional help out others on its own team, with such examples as [Ascendant Evincar](#), [Bad Moon](#), [Dirge of Dread](#) and [Nocturnal Raid](#). Finally, while design tries to create links between mechanics and flavor, the rule is that if something is needed for an important mechanical reason, creative will find a way to flavor it. While sacrificing enchantments to regenerate a creature might not be an easy sell, our creative team has had to solve problems far more difficult (and done it so well, I might add, that I don't think the public is aware of the ones that cause them the most trouble).

This leaves us with the correct answer. Because black is king of powerful enchantments that may come back to bite you in the behind, design doesn't like to make it easy for black to get rid of them. If this card was turned in during a design, b) would be my first response hands down.

This Has Been a Test

I hope this test was as enjoyable for you to take as it was for me to create. I'm very happy with how the test turned out. It was hard, but I believe that each question has a clear-cut correct answer (although my spidey sense says there might be disagreement with this point in the thread). I hope that my question-by-question analysis has shown you a thing or two about design that perhaps you hadn't thought about before. If you haven't checked it out yet, I suggest that you click over to this week's "[Making Magic](#)" column where I talk about the two other tests given to the applicants. Last but not least, please keep your eye out for The Great Designer Search, which will begin in just a few weeks. This will be a reality show (*a la* "The Apprentice") where I will put a small pool of applicants through weekly tests, slowly eliminating them week by week. While we are not completely done choosing our final candidates, I can say that from our current short list I have high hopes for our future intern. Thanks for taking the test.