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Magic Arcana

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Reprints with a Purpose

When “the past returns,” it isn’t always for a Core Set or for past-matters sets like *Time Spiral*. Reprinted cards may appear to repeat similar themes, but in fact they often serve as a way to highlight how Magic themes *change* over time.

Shatter, for example, was a rather clunky utility spell in *Ice Age* or *Tempest*. But in the environment of *Mirrodin*, it was a brutal, all-purpose dream-crusher. In contrast, *Terror* was very powerful creature kill *except* on that artifact-heavy plane. Those strategic reprints served to highlight the shift in importance of artifacts.

Consider *Dark Heart of the Wood* or *Savage Twister* in *Ravnica* Block—powerful gold spells of old brought to a new multicolored home. *Elves of Deep Shadow* (welcome to the Golgari!) and *Goblin Spelunkers* (now with Sacred Foundry-walk!) also gain new talents in *Ravnica*, showing off the new value of their color-specific focus.

Cards like *Lay Waste*, *Disciple of Grace*, and *Swat* rode the “cycling renaissance” from *Urza’s Saga* on *Onslaught*, and *Frozen Solid* boarded a rather drafty flavor train from its origins in *Scourge* to the icy wastes of *Coldsnap*.



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Back in *Odyssey*, the “gravedigger cycle” of *Scrivener*, *Archivist* and *Cartographer* joined the newly-minted *Auramancer* to highlight the graveyard-matters theme of that block. Reprints like *Patchwork Gnomes* and cheap cantrips like *Guided Strike* also drove home that graveyard theme. It’s all a matter of context.

So the next time you see a reprinted card, think about the context of the set it’s in; it may be an old card, but it’s sure to have new significance.



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