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# Ask Wizards - August, 2007

Ask Wizards  
Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Do you have a question about **Magic: The Gathering** or *Wizards of the Coast*? Send it, along with your name and location, to us via this [email form](#). We'll post a new question and answer each day.

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## August 31, 2007

**Q:** Are there any plans to change the play vs. draw rule? It seems to me that every player, every time chooses to play. This being the case, is the play/draw rule balanced?  
—Jacob, Montreal, QC, Canada

**A:** From **Mike Turian**, Magic R&D:

Hi Jacob,

At this time there are no plans to change the play-or-draw rule. We do keep an eye on these sort of issues. Recently, we altered the Two-Headed Giant play-or-draw rule because we felt there was too big of an imbalance between the two (previously one player on the team that played first got to draw a card, but now neither one does). Also, we have kept track of whether playing or drawing is better at both the Pro Tour and Grand Prix level. Amazingly, at both the Grand Prix and Pro Tour level, drawing actually was better by a few percent.

Both our feeling and our data suggest that choosing to play or draw is a real decision. Just because most people decide that playing first is the way to go doesn't mean that we should change the rule.

## August 30, 2007

**Q:** Some of the first strikers in *Tenth*, most notably *Mirri*, *Cat Warrior*, *Anaba Bodyguard*, and *Skyhunter Patrol*, have higher toughness than power. As a first strike creature, don't you want to be aggressive and hence have higher power?  
—Johan, Åtvidaberg, Sweden

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, Magic head designer:

Johan,

Why do we make first strikers with high toughness? There's a variety of reasons. Here's a few (but not a complete list).

1. Toughness does matter on first strikers, as they often get hit back in combat and it matters for things like direct damage.
2. Variety is important. Having every keyword put on the exact same kind of creature would get boring.
3. Often when costing a creature, we add a toughness to help "even out" the cost. (This happened with *Mirri*, for instance.)
4. White creatures by design have higher average toughness than power. As white is the number one color for first strike (red's second), that means that high toughness and first strike sometimes overlap.
5. Sometimes to express the flavor of a certain type of creature being tough (like say a minotaur), we give it a higher toughness.

I hope this gives you an insight into the many reasons why cards like *Skyhunter Patrol* or *Mirri* get printed as-is.

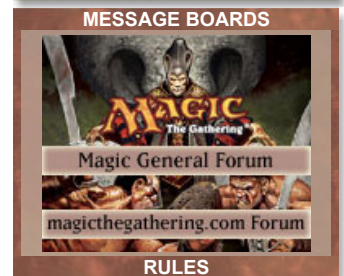
## August 29, 2007

**Q:** I've never seen *Portal: Three Kingdoms* cards outside of this website. My local card shop doesn't carry it and the owner says he never heard of the set. Is it just an extremely rare set or was it never released in America?  
—Alex, Black Lick, PA, USA

**A:** From **Kelly Digges**, editor of [magicthegathering.com](#):

Now that you mention it, Alex, I've never seen a real live *Portal Three Kingdoms* card, either. The answer to your question is **yes**; the set is quite rare, particularly in English, and it was never sold in North America. This sets it more than a bit apart from the rest of the **Magic** product line.

*Portal Three Kingdoms* was printed primarily in Japanese, Chinese Simplified, and Chinese Traditional, but there was also an English printing, sold mostly in Australia and New Zealand.



The reason for this unusual distribution pattern is that the set was never intended for American and European markets. The storyline is based around a Chinese epic, [The Romance of the Three Kingdoms](#), which in turn is based on events during the [Three Kingdoms era](#) of Chinese history. The story is, I'm told, as familiar in Asian countries as tales of King Arthur are in the West, but in Europe and America it's not nearly as well known.

All that said, the cards are out there. Asian-language versions of *Portal Three Kingdoms* cards are probably going to be easier to find than English ones, but the neat thing about the English cards is that you can start to piece together the story of the Three Kingdoms from the many quotes on the cards (assuming you don't read Japanese or Chinese).

For more about *Portal Three Kingdoms*, check out the [product page](#) (a bit out-of-date, but it still has some neat stuff) and the [complete card list in Gatherer](#).

August 28, 2007



**Q:** Magicthegathering.com's front page has a "feature article" slot, along with 4 "most recent" article slots. On days where a new feature is posted, that one obviously takes the main slot, but how do you determine who gets it the rest of the time?

—Jeremy, Clemson, SC, USA

**A:** From **Kelly Digges**, editor of **magicthegathering.com**:

Well, Jeremy, I'd love to tell you about a huge, sordid conspiracy at work here, but the article in the main slot—known around here by the technical term "big box"—is chosen on a few simple criteria that I'd be happy to share.

### 1. Feature Articles

As you noticed, we use the big box for the feature article on Monday. We also keep the feature article in the box through Tuesday in case people missed it. That's the one real rule of assigning the big box, and even it is broken on occasion—for instance, two weeks ago, when Mark Rosewater got that honor because we were saving the feature article—the [Planeswalkers Minisite](#)—for that Thursday).

### 2. Theme Weeks

If one article is on-theme during a theme week and the other isn't, we're likelier to put the on-theme article in the big box. However, there are other factors that can outweigh this one pretty easily.

### 3. Relevance

New PTQ decks? Metagame analysis of the latest round of tournaments? Inside info on the set that just came out? Articles with timely and exciting information are good candidates for the big box.

### 4. Quotability

The big box is usually an excerpt from the article, and some articles just don't excerpt well. "Grab bag" articles are especially prone to this, because a simple excerpt won't capture what the article as a whole is up to. If I can't find a good, snappy quote from the article, it probably doesn't get the big box.

### 5. Editor's Choice

All other things being equal—with no feature article, no theme week, and roughly equivalent relevance and quotability—I pick one of the articles and put it in the big box. It seldom comes to that, though, because the other things are almost never equal, even if the margin is very slight. I mean, if it's left entirely to my whim, that would leave things open for some kind of huge, sordid conspiracy, wouldn't it? And we certainly can't have that.

Thanks for your question, and keep 'em coming.

August 27, 2007



**Q:** I was very happy to hear that you would be continuing *Tenth Edition*'s tokens and "tips & tricks" cards in *Lorwyn* and beyond. I was wondering whether you will also continue to remove reminder text from premium (foil) cards as well.

—Josh, Gaithersburg, Maryland, USA

**A:** From **Del Laugel**, Senior **Magic** editor:

In a word, no. The *Tenth Edition* core set was a unique opportunity for us to try something new, but it's simply not feasible to expand this treatment to all sets.

*The workflow problem:* The *Tenth Edition* core set is an all-reprint set, and most of the art is picked up from older cards. Those factors make the core set more stable through the editing and typesetting process than a typical set. The cards are also typeset earlier than normal so that regular (nonpremium) card images are available for the insert in the starter game and the rulebook. On a set like *Lorwyn*, on the other hand, R&D needs to work as close to the release date as possible.

*The casual player problem:* Only a third of booster packs for an expert-level set have a Tips & Tricks card at all (the rest are tokens). Suppose the set has four new keywords, each with its own Tips card. How many booster packs do you need to buy before you can figure out what your cards do?

*The legacy problem:* Can you imagine coming across a suspend card without reminder text five years from now? Tips and tricks cards are more ephemeral than game cards. Note that for the more commonly

encountered keywords, our new [Keyword Cheat Sheet](#) can help out; for expert-level keywords, there's less support.

August 24, 2007



**Q:** How do you handle the translation of existing foreign words into their original language? Specifically, I'm curious about how most *Kamigawa* cards were translated into Japanese when most of the words involved were already in the language.

—Paran, Keene, NH, USA

**A:** From **Ron Foster**, Japan Organized Play Manager:

Hi Paran,

Thanks for your question. Although I work in Organized Play, I assist the Japanese translation team with translation and proofing, and I was one of the people that worked on creating the names for the *Kamigawa* block.

The interesting thing about the *Kamigawa* block is that the names of the cards weren't translated into Japanese—instead, most of them were conceived in Japanese by the Japanese translation team first to ensure that they were appropriate. As Chinese and Japanese use the same written characters (called *hanzi* in Chinese and *kanji* in Japanese), we also worked closely with the Chinese translation team to make certain they used the same characters as the Japanese translation team on all the cards.

The names of most of the kami were developed using the ability of the card as a springboard, and then written using something similar to *man'yōgana*, an ancient system of using kanji phonetically to scribe Japanese words (click [here](#) for a detailed explanation). For example, throughout the block there are several cards that reference a kami called Terashi. These cards all have abilities that are very white (tapping creatures, destroying artifacts, and so on), and the art shows something from the spirit world using a beam of light to achieve the effect of the card. That inspired us to call this kami "Terashi," which sounds like a conjugated form of the Japanese verb "terasu" (meaning "to shine" or "to cast light upon"), appropriate enough for white, and is written using characters meaning "hand"—"catch"—"bring." So, Terashi can be interpreted as a kami of the sun or light whose hands catch everything with its light.

For mortals, we simply picked Japanese proper names that we felt sounded appropriate for the character. Kumano contains the word for "bear" (the animal), which fits a *yamabushi* who lives in a cave in the mountains. Takeno contains the word for "martial" or "military," a fitting name for the commander of an army. Hisoka means "private" or "hidden," a good name for the mysterious head of a secretive magical academy.

For the nonhuman races, we tried to come up with an internally consistent naming scheme, to intimate that there was a culture behind the characters. All the female Moonfolk (soratami) names end in -yo, all the male names in -ku (a nod to the common practice of ending Japanese women's names with the suffix "ko"). The Goblins (akki) all have nonsensical repetitive syllables ("Ben-ben," "Kiki-jiki"), which seemed good for a race that—shall we say—is not exactly known for its intellectual or cultural achievements. All the Snakes (Orochi) were given sibilant names, as well as grouped into tribes appropriate to their function—the archers were "matsu" (Japanese for the pine tree), the warriors were "kashi" (oak), and the shamans were "sakura" (cherry).

Finally, a word about the "Maro"[no autocard] cycle in *Saviors of Kamigawa*. Mark Rosewater was telling the truth when he said he had nothing to do with that. The suffix "-maro" is classically used for male names in Japan (for example, [Utamaro](#)). When we saw the cycle in the card file, we thought it fitting to give a nod to the original Maro by incorporating it into the name of each card. For the prefix, we chose a word appropriate to each card's color or ability—"kiyo" means "pure" or "clean," "sora" is "sky," "kage" is "shadow," "ada" is "jealousy" or "covetous," and "masu" is a verb that means "to double."

In a sense, the card names in *Kamigawa* tell a story within the story. Each one is rich in meaning and offers a glimpse into the background of the set as well as into Japanese culture.

August 23, 2007



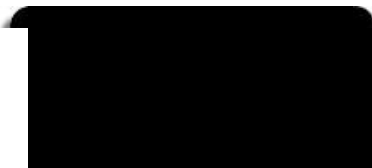
**Q:** So, when looking over Frank Karsten's article on *Masters Edition*, I checked out the Oracle on [Thawing Glaciers](#). A new keyword I am totally unfamiliar with—"substance"—was added. I was hoping you might explain this keyword to the **Magic** community as I don't believe it has been printed on any card to date.

—Thomas, Renton, WA, USA

**A:** From Del Laugel, Senior **Magic** editor:

We have no plans to make new cards with the substance keyword ability. Substance is a keyword with no effect. It appears only in the Oracle wordings of some older cards.

The **Magic** rules system we use today dates from the release of the *Sixth Edition* core set in mid-1999. Follow [this link](#) to see why the 6E changes were a good thing. One side effect of these rule changes was the "end of turn loophole." The end phase now consists of two steps: the end of turn step and the cleanup step. Abilities that trigger "at end of turn" are put on the stack at the start of the end of turn step, but effects that last "until end of turn" don't wear off until cleanup. This causes some older cards to do things they weren't intended to do.





Waylay is the most high-profile example of the end of turn loophole. When *Urza's Saga* released in October 1998, *Waylay* was an interesting combat trick. It gave you some surprise blockers, but you couldn't use the tokens on offence without some way to give them haste. Under *Sixth Edition* rules, however, you could play *Waylay* during your opponent's end step and keep the tokens until the next time "at end of turn" triggered abilities were checked. That is, after you'd untapped and attacked with three 2/2 Knight tokens! *Ball Lightning* is the iconic 6-power creature for three mana, and *Waylay* earned the nickname "White Lightning" at U.S. Nationals in 1999. Then *Waylay* got errata to match its intended functionality. That errata has been refined over the years.

Rules manager Mark Gottlieb explained the origins of substance in an Ask Wizards on [March 7, 2006](#). Giving something "substance until end of turn" and also an ability that triggers "when this loses substance" is an inelegant way to force an action to happen during the cleanup step. *Waylay* and *Thawing Glaciers* weren't in the first wave of cards to get this hack, but they got a makeover in the *Time Spiral Oracle* update.

August 22, 2007



**Q:** When searching for a legendary creature, nothing is more frustrating than missing the name because I added or didn't add a comma to the epithet. How is the use of the comma decided? As examples, there are "Lyzolda, the Blood Witch" and "Numot, the Devastator" versus "Lim-Dûl the Necromancer" and "Kaervek the Merciless."

—Zachary, Ames, IA, USA

**A:** From Del Laugel, Senior **Magic** editor:

I share your frustration. Let me start by sharing the answer I wrote three years ago when Devin Low (now **Magic** head developer) asked me the same question.

**From:** Laugel, Del  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 23, 2004 5:41 PM  
**To:** Bozzi, Brandon; Schneider, Brian; Buehler, Randy; Low, Devin  
**Cc:** Rosewater, Mark  
**Subject:** RE: Use of Commas in CHK Legend Names

Oh no, it's a Duel Masters player. ;) I'm happy to explain my reasoning. If anyone wants to revisit the issue after reading this, please let me know as soon as possible. Keep reading....

Del

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**From:** Low, Devin  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 23, 2004 4:17 PM  
**To:** Laugel, Del; Bozzi, Brandon; Schneider, Brian; Buehler, Randy  
**Subject:** Use of Commas in CHK Legend Names

There is something in CHK names I do not understand.

I admit that sometimes I have difficulty keeping the various guidelines straight, too . . . . Magic card naming hasn't been incredibly consistent over the years, but I'm happy to explain the precedents involved.

All the legends with nicknames, job titles, or epithets but without the word "the" in the title have commas after the first name:

Azusa, Lost But Seeking  
Konda, Lord of Eiganjo  
Seizan, Perverter of Truth  
Kiki-Jiki, Mirror-Breaker

Well, these are pretty straightforward. Without the comma, these names make no sense.

The dragon legends all have commas before the word "the":

Yosei, the Morning Star  
Keiga, the Tide Star  
Kokusho, the Evening Star  
etc.

These names stayed as they were simply because of the existence of the Dragon Legends in Invasion. If it hadn't been for those cards, I would have asked to change these to "Yosei, Morning Star" or "Yosei the Morning Star."

Here's my best guess for why these names would use a comma: These dragons are sooo famous among denizens of the plane that one person could reasonably say to another "I saw the Morning Star flying over the hills" or "the Purger burned down my village last week." The epithet and the name are interchangeable, and there's no possibility of confusion. A real-world example would be Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator or Babe Ruth, the Sultan of Swat.

All the other legends in the set with "the" in the name do not have commas:

Dosan the Falling Leaf  
Seshiro the Anointed  
Zo-Zu the Punisher  
Shimatsu the Bloodsoaked  
Meloku the Clouded Mirror  
Masako the Humorless

These names, on the other hand, use epithets merely to clarify which person we're talking about or to tell you something about the person. Real-world examples include names like Erik the Red and Peter the Great. If I said "the Red sailed to Greenland," you wouldn't have enough context to know what I was talking about. The same goes for "the Punisher hit me with a rock."

Why do the dragons get commas, while the other legends with the word "the" do not get them? My official question is just on the apparent inconsistency, but I feel that the legends all sound better when they have commas between their first name and their nickname/epithet. They also fit the history, look and feel of Magic's legends better.

Well, no. They fit the history of Duel Masters better. We've had sixteen card names without the comma before "the" and only eight with it. That's the five Invasion dragon legends + Ertai, the Corrupted (who probably got the comma to sync up with the previously published Ertai, Wizard Adept) + two Portal Three Kingdoms cards.

When I see a comma in the title, I get excited because I know it's a badass legend. The vast majority of CHK's legends with epithets have commas -- only the non-dragon legends with the word "the" are not using commas. Magic's past legends with 'the' are inconsistent: It is "Arcanis the Omnipotent" but "Rith, the Awakener".

I hope that we end up with "Shimatsu, the Bloodsoaked."

I don't like that one because Bloodsoaked isn't distinctive enough. The one that bothers me personally is "Meloku the Clouded Mirror" simply because he seems to be a really important guy in the story, but I couldn't think of a reason that didn't mess up other things.

(I had toyed with the idea of leaving out the comma before adjectives but leaving it before nouns, but that just didn't seem to work. A name like Rashka the Slayer, for example, includes an epithet so that we can differentiate her from other Rashkas we might know. She's obviously not the only slayer on her world.)

Thanks,  
Devin

When Devin wrote that email, he was working on both **Magic** and **Duel Masters** development. The editors who wrote the style guide for **Duel Masters** had ten years of **Magic** history to learn from, and they chose to avoid making this particular judgment call. **Duel Masters** cards always put in the comma before "the."

The **Magic** game, on the other hand, has now been in print for fourteen years. **Magic** card names are sacrosanct. What I can do is enforce the "rules" that have emerged over the years as consistently as I can and make judgment calls when necessary.

There are a few close calls in *Kamigawa* block (Yukora, Meloku) and *Dissension* (Isperia, Rakdos) that I now wish had gone the other way. Meloku the Clouded Mirror should have had a comma. Yukora, the Prisoner sounds like a random dude wasting away in a dungeon rather than the awesome Demon Spirit it is. Isperia the Inscrutable and Rakdos the Defiler are effectively Dragons and should have been treated as such.

For now, expect to see a comma before "the" only on Dragons, honorary Dragons, and cards with distinctive epithets.

August 21, 2007



**Q:** I have a question that is perhaps of the more philosophical nature. When you buy a booster "in real life" the cards are already determined, i.e. it doesn't matter when you open the booster, the cards will always be the same. But when you buy, or win, a booster on MTGO, when is it determined what the booster contains? If you

could open the same booster at two different time points, will they contain the same cards, or are they randomized the moment you open the pack?

–Håkan, Uppsala, Sweden

**A:** From **Lee Sharpe**, **Magic Online** programmer:

Hello, Håkan!

A booster pack on **Magic Online** is simply a digital object that you can "open," which removes it from the system and replaces it with 15 cards. So the answer to your question is that the cards "in" a pack are determined when it's opened, not when it's purchased from the **Magic Online** store. This is true whether you open the packs yourself or use them to play in a Sealed Deck, Booster Draft, or league.

As you might suspect, opening a booster now instead ten minutes from now will most likely result in a different set of 15 cards. In effect what this means is that by looking to see what cards you got in your pack, you are changing which cards are in the pack. Schrödinger would be proud.

August 20, 2007



**Q:** What is the word limit for a **magicthegathering.com** article?

–Jacob, Grandview, MO, USA

**A:** From **Kelly Digges**, **magicthegathering.com** editor:

That's an easy question, Jacob. There isn't one! Thanks for asking.

...

What? Under my word count? Oh, very well. Here goes...

Unlike print magazines, we don't have any technical restrictions on how long an article can be. There's probably some theoretical upper band beyond which it would crash your browser or something, but I'm sure we'd hit the limit of your endurance well before your browser's. Thus, our length constraints are based on audience rather than on technology. We don't want articles that run longer than you're willing to read (or, for that matter, shorter than you find satisfying).

Rather than try to lay out a policy on word count, I took a (very) quick survey of last week's content and calculated an average column length of just over 2700 words, which is pretty typical. Some of our columns skew longer and others shorter, depending on the needs of their subject matter.

It's also important to remember that there's a lot on our site besides text. Some articles include [art images](#), [data tables](#), [draft](#) and [game](#) walkthroughs, [play exercises](#), [links](#), [card mock-ups](#), [decklists](#), [video](#), or [plain old pictures](#). All of these things take time and attention to process, the same way text does, well beyond what their technical word count (zero, in the case of that last link) would imply.

So how long is a **magicthegathering.com** article? The answer, I hope, is "just right."

Oh, and Ask Wizards varies, but this one is... just... about... exactly... 250... words... There!

August 17, 2007



**Q:** I've often wondered whether or not the **Magic** style guides (or some sort of "style guide compendium") could ever be published. As someone who was initially attracted to **Magic** by the amazing artwork, I'm always on the lookout for something like this. What's your take on this?

–Joe

**A:** From **Jeremy Jarvis**, **Magic** art director:

Hey Joe!

Our take on it is this: We think about it. A lot. And talk about it a lot. Would we just publish the style guides as are? Do we add final card art as well? How long after a block's release would people still be interested in it? What's the right market? Game stores? Bookstores? Both? How much in-depth text are people interested in?

There are several potential issues based on the answers to these questions. For example: If the art book needs to be released *with* the set, well, the art isn't done at the time the book has to be put together, which is only okay *if* we don't want to show final card paintings along with the early concepts. Anyways, yes we talk about it, and if we do it, we really want to do it right. That's where we are right now.

There are two big questions you can help answer. First:

Are you interested in some published version of a Magic style guide?

- Yes  
 No

Submit my Vote

And second, what would you want to see in a style guide? Post in the forums and let us know.

August 16, 2007



**Q:** What exactly is going on in the card **Sift** for the *Ninth Edition* art, and if Mr. Jeremy doesn't regularly visit this forum can anyone else explain to me what exactly is happening in the picture?

–Nublyk, [magicthegathering.com](http://magicthegathering.com) forums

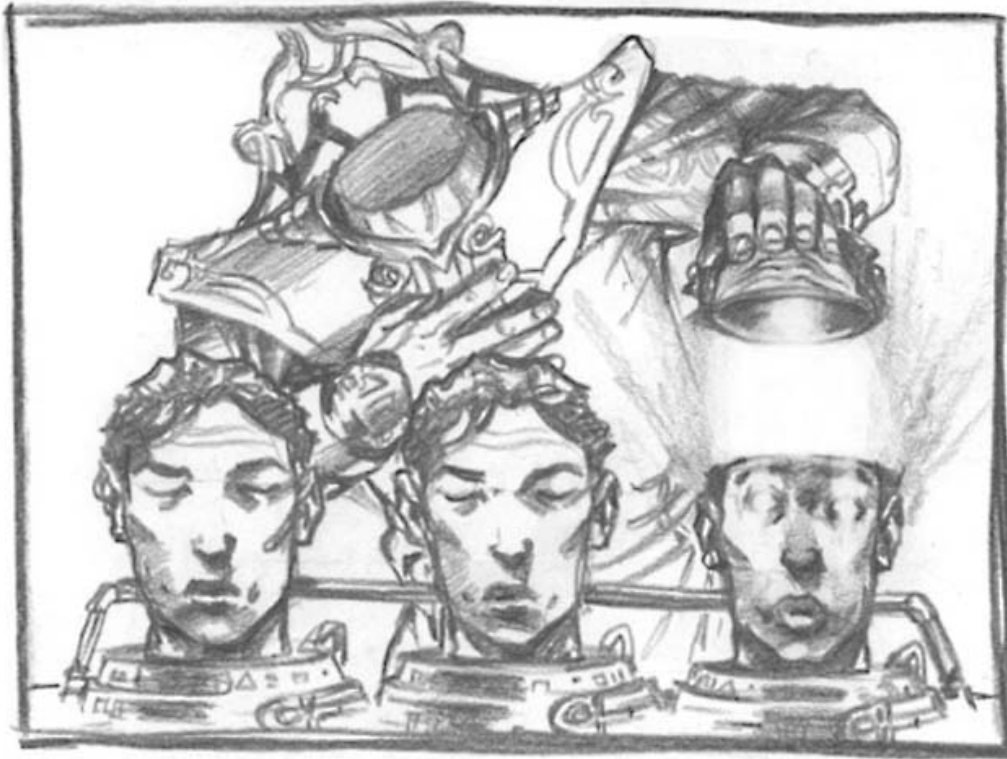
**A:** From **Jeremy Jarvis**, **Magic** art director:

What the Hell Was Jarvis Thinking?! #3: SIFT

Hey hey,

So back in *Ninth Edition* when I was still freelancing and this art description came my way, what it asked was to show a mage sorting through a pile of glass shards and digging out a diamond. Now, that's a very good concept for this card, IMO, but I just didn't think that, working the way I work (watercolor), I could pull it off in a fashion that I would be happy with as a painter *and* that would read at card size.

Most of the time the illustrators are not privy to card mechanics, but since **Sift** (and currently every card in a core set) is a reprint, I was able to look it up and see what it did. The idea is that it's a spell that allows you to peruse your mental resources (library) and find the dime among the pennies. So the visual I pitched was a mage basically playing three-card monty with his own head. The different colors on the foreheads imply there are different ideas contained within, and he's found the most powerful of the three.



The (then) creative team went along with me, hesitantly I believe, and allowed me to take it to final, warning me not to let it run into "goofy." You can tell between sketch and final I reined in the surprised expression a bit to make sure it wasn't unintentionally comical.



I love how well they played to the art and the concept in the flavor text. "Dwell longest on the thoughts that shine brightest." Not sure who came up with that, but it's a good one.

JJ

August 15, 2007



**Q:** Who is Ramos? (I'll bet he is related to Urza in a long complicated way, like the rest of the multiverse. Six Degrees of Urza?)  
 –Eric, Baytown, TX, USA

**A:** From Doug Beyer, **Magic** creative team:

The faith of the Cho-Arrim people of Mercadia revolved around worship of the being Ramos. According to their beliefs, Ramos was a god who gathered races from a broken world and brought them all to Mercadia. Five parts of Ramos's body were believed to have fallen away from the god as he entered Mercadia, and became venerated as sacred relics, the Bones of Ramos (the Tooth of Ramos, Eye of Ramos, Skull of Ramos, Heart of Ramos, and Horn of Ramos).

That Cho-Arrim creation myth is based in fact, but the mystery of Ramos goes deeper than the beliefs of Ramosians. The best way to delve into the mystery is to check out the **Magic** novels (in this case the Masquerade cycle). But if you'd prefer to be spoiled now, click [here](#).

The crew of the *Weatherlight* later discovered that the Bones of Ramos were actually powerful artifacts and part of [the Legacy](#). This does, in fact, connect Ramos to Urza. The *Weatherlight* crew meets Ramos himself, who explains that he was a Phyrexian dragon engine once used as part of Mishra's artifact army. Urza transformed Ramos into a weapon against his brother Mishra, and Ramos became a defender of innocents. When the Golgothian Sylex was detonated, ending the Brothers War, Ramos raced to save as many people of various races as he could from the blast and planeshifted them to Mercadia. Tragically, there were only few survivors of the trip, and the damaged dragon engine offered five pieces of his core as an apologetic offering to the fledgling tribes of Mercadia. Centuries later, a religion sprang up around the legend of Ramos, and the Cho-Arrim and others worshipped him as a god.

August 14, 2007



**Q:** My opponent played *Yet Another Æther Vortex*. I revealed a *Mischievous Quonar* on top of my library. I activate the Quonar to turn it face-down. What really happens? Do I get a "face-down revealed morph" (it's face-down but everyone can see what it is), a "face-up morph," or does the Quonar stay a Quonar even if I activate him to turn him face-down? Can I unmorph the Quonar to copy an instant or a sorcery? Please help us! Thanks!  
 –Bonvil, Québec City, Québec, Canada

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** Head Designer:

Bonvil,

As the *Un-Rules* Manager, I have the honor of answering this question. (Note that I'm not allowed anywhere near the rules for what I call the "black-bordered world.") Here's what happens. You have a facedown card on top of your library. That card is a 2/2 colorless creature and is in play (in addition to being on top of your library

—I love **Yet Another Æther Vortex**). It is revealed, meaning that anyone may look at it if they've forgotten how a facedown creature got on top of your library. Yes, you may turn it face up to copy an instant or sorcery.

A good rule of thumb with **Yet Another Æther Vortex** is that the card does whatever it would do if it was in play except that it also is on top of your library and revealed. Yes, this is weird, but this is what you get playing in silver-bordered world. (I personally see this is a big upside.)

August 13, 2007



**Q:** I was wondering if you can show me the art description for the *Tenth Edition* **Regeneration**. I don't see how it shows regeneration, and was wondering if that is the artist's interpretation or if there is just something I am missing. Thanks.

—Andrew, Ottawa, ON, Canada

**A:** From **Jeremy Jarvis**, **Magic** art director:

Oh sir! You have cut me to the quick!

Kidding, kidding... It's a fair question and a fun one. This sort of question probably going to keep coming up, be it regarding concepts or paintings, so maybe we should name them when they do!

What the Hell Was Jarvis Thinking?! #2: REGENERATION

(see [Ask Wizards July 26, 2007](#) for What the Hell was Jarvis Thinking?! #1: DEATHMARK)

The answer is yes, it was all the artist's interpretation, as in this case the artist happens to be in-house as art director and contributing concepts for cards along with Brady, Doug and Jake.

For most of the art development cycle the art description for **Regeneration** read as follows:

JJ: I have an idea for this.

I know what I wanted on the card, to try to capture a new and iconic take on **Regeneration** that is distinctly green, communicates the idea, and does so with an engaging visual. The art description should have read:

Color: Green Spell

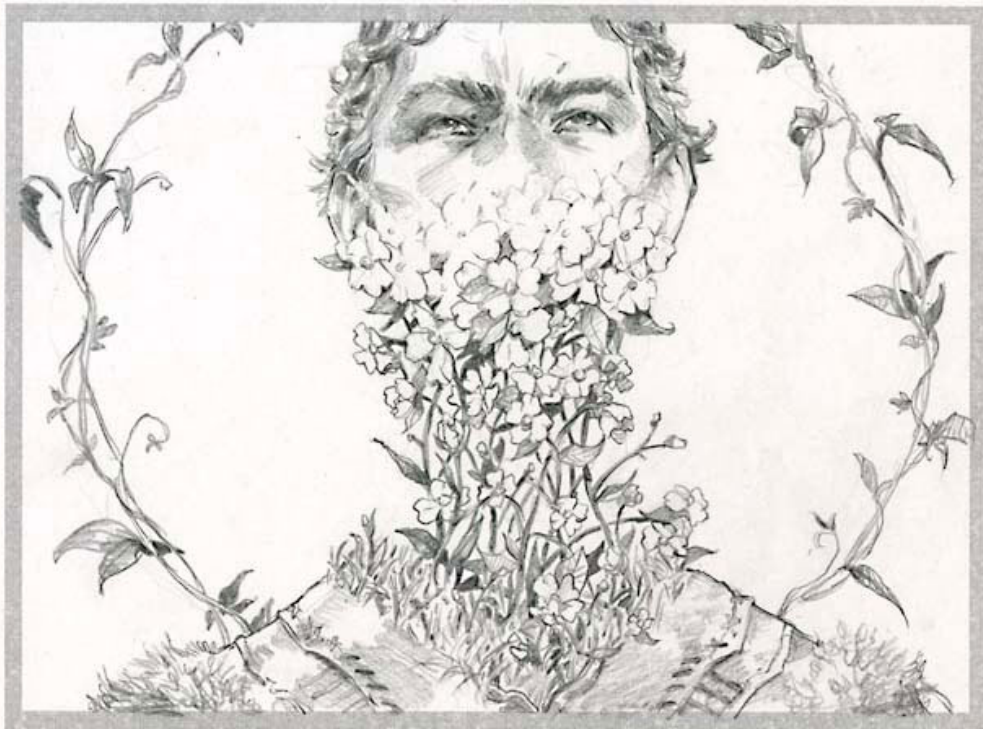
Location: N/A

Action: Show us a tight bust shot of a human who feels green-aligned (indications of leather and fur on the barely visible clothing maybe?) and who we can see has been beheaded at the bottom of his neck... But thanks to this spell his neck is re-growing, not as flesh, but as grass, and weeds and mostly as white flowers. The flowers are sparse at the bottom, so we can see how much of him should be missing, but as they go up, they are more and more numerous and grow closer and closer together until they overlap and start to magically merge and re-knit his flesh. By the time we are up to his eyes, we can see his actual head has re-formed from that point up. Maybe his eyes are focused up a bit, as if toward the sun, and maybe they are a bit intense... Maybe this process isn't the most comfortable thing ever. He was beheaded, after all.

Notes: Don't let this be gory, even though it's a concept based on beheading. Keep it feeling "green."

Okay. That's a mouthful, it's overly descriptive, it's overly *constrictive* for the artist receiving it, and would (and did just) take me longer to type the damn thing out then it would for me to just draw it myself.

So I did.



IDE

REGENERATION  
#104530

J. Barrow  
2006

The rest of **Magic Creative** approved, so I went to FINAL:



For the second part of your question, "How does it show regeneration?", the gag is that it's a guy growing his head back, just in a kinda weird way.

:)

JJ

August 10, 2007



**Q:** The new art for **Terror** is definitely sick (awesome)! However, I know that in the past Wizards has had to change art for the Chinese market because of skeletons. How does this change affect the new **Terror** art with the skeleton being such a large focus of the piece?

—Ed, Sebring, OH, USA

**A:** From **Jeremy Jarvis**, **Magic** art director:

Hi Ed,

Yeah, this was a tough one, but in the end I decided to revert to the *Mirrodin* version of **Terror** for the Chinese market (where depictions of human skeletons are not allowed). I hated to have a version of the set in any market without that new wonderfully skin-crawling black spell, but the skeleton is a third of the gag, and the painting is just too effective to undermine the gag in any way.



They also get the snake-table **Diabolic Tutor** for the exact same reason.  
JJ

**August 9, 2007**



**Q:** Will the *Masters Edition* cards use the original card images/frames? Or will they use new images/frames?  
–Todd, Vancouver, BC, Canada

**A:** From Worth Wollpert, **Magic Online** Brand Manager:

Hey Todd,

All the *Masters Edition* cards will use their original art and frame. In the case of cards that have multiple images to choose from (like alt-art *Fallen Empires* commons, for instance), our esteemed **Magic** Art Director Jeremy Jarvis chose what piece to use, since we're not reprinting all the pieces.

You can find more information about *Masters Edition* [here](#), the full list of Card of the Day previews [here](#), and Frank Karsten's Online Tech article about *Masters Edition* [here](#).

Thanks for writing in. I hope you all enjoy what promises to be an incredible set, and that everyone enjoys the trip down memory lane while adding some powerful new stuff to their online collections.

**August 8, 2007**



**Q:** **Mass of Ghouls** was printed in *Future Sight* as a "timeshifted" card from the future of **Magic**. Core sets only add cards from previous expansions. So how did this get into *Tenth* without creating a self-referential paradox?  
–Roberto, Ontario, Canada

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** Head Designer:

Roberto,

Many temporal historians have attempting to explain this anomaly. Unfortunately, each time they get close, they've fallen victim of a strangely bizarre accident. It's almost as if time itself... Um. Never mind. I guess some questions just aren't meant to be answered. I mean, I have no idea. No idea! Just a mystery I guess.

**August 7, 2007**



**Q:** Since I see these two words all the time, and I think I see the latter more often, I was wondering how

Wizards settled on the spelling of Coliseum over Colosseum for **Grand Coliseum**?

—Gabriel, Tampa, FL, USA

**A:** From Del Laugel, Senior **Magic** editor:

My first stop for any spelling question is Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition (or Tenth Edition if you go back to *Odyssey* block). The dictionary has this to say:

```
coliseum
1 cap : COLOSSEUM 1
2 : a large sports stadium or building designed like the Colosseum for
public entertainment

colosseum
1 cap : an amphitheater built in Rome in the first century A.D.
2 : COLISEUM 1
```

It may look as though the two spellings are interchangeable, but the fact that the dictionary writer chose to spell out one of the words meaning under one spelling and one under the other is important. Digging deeper turns up the relevant "ruling" in the Columbia Guide to Standard American English:

The generic English spelling for a large stadium or building containing an amphitheater or sports arena is coliseum, but the name of the original Roman amphitheater is the Colosseum.

August 6, 2007



**Q:** With the recent restoration of **Phyrexian Dreadnought** when can we expect similar worded cards, such as **Mox Diamond** and **Lotus Vale**, to also be restored?

—John, Lynchburg, VA, USA

**A:** From **Kelly Digges**, **Magic** Editor:

This is a question we've received a lot ever since the return of **Flash** to its original functionality, and even more since the [Tenth Edition update bulletin](#) and the announcement that **Phyrexian Dreadnought** would be similarly restored. It seems at first glance that the printed wordings of **Flash** and **Phyrexian Dreadnought** represent the same case as the printed wordings of **Mox Diamond**, **Lotus Vale**, **Scorched Ruins**, and similar cards with comes-into-play drawbacks. Let's look at the printed wordings:



Hmmm. Those look the same to me—so similar that I asked Rules Manager Mark Gottlieb (who is way too busy keeping the rules from disintegrating to answer Ask Wizards questions) what the difference was. He didn't deign to answer—he speaks mostly in cryptic riddles these days—but he did email me the URL of the [Weatherlight FAQ](#). Now we're getting somewhere. This historical document dates back to the set's release (though not, one supposes, in its online form). Maybe I can find a passing reference to it, or... ah, this should do:

**Can I tap Lotus Vale for mana before I sacrifice the two lands?**

No. You must deal with a card's coming-into-play cost before you may activate any of its abilities.

There you have it. Under pre-*Sixth Edition* rules, comes-into-play costs—much like phase costs such as echo—had to be paid before any of a permanent's abilities could be used. **Lotus Vale** and company could never be tapped for mana without paying the proper costs, and so their current Oracle wordings reflect only the changing rules, not changing functionality. By contrast, **Phyrexian Dreadnought** doesn't have any activated abilities, and **Flash** doesn't give you the chance to use them—the creature comes into play and leaves play (if you don't pay) all during the spell's resolution.

So don't expect to see errata for **Mox Diamond**, **Lotus Vale**, or **Scorched Ruins**. We might revisit them to get them even closer to intended functionality—you'll notice an interaction change with **Ankh of Mishra**, for instance—but all evidence indicates that they currently work the way they always did in the majority of cases.

August 3, 2007



**Q:** Why do you bother creating new keywords when you just print the reminder text anyway? It would seem that the purpose of keywords was to have a concise, uniform way to describe what a card does, using as little text as possible. Immediately following it with reminder text seems to defeat this purpose and renders it redundant.

—Kevin, Boston, MA, USA

**A:** From **Mark Rosewater**, **Magic** Head Designer:

Kevin,

I think you are misunderstanding our goal with reminder text. We're not trying to lessen the amount of text printed on the card; we're trying to lessen the amount of text that an experienced player needs to read. The idea behind this goal is that we want each card's text to be as short as it can be while still providing the player with what he or she needs.

Reminder text is very handy because we can train more experienced players to ignore it, making the "necessary text" they have to read as short as possible. Players who need the longer text to understand how the card works will still have it available.

That is our goal: making cards as useful as possible to each type of player while still meeting the needs of other types of players. That is why reminder text works as it does.

August 2, 2007



**Q:** In most fantasy worlds I've seen, elementals are usually living manifestations of the four basic magical elements—so there are Fire, Water, Air and Earth elementals, and sometimes a Lightning one, all of which **Magic** has covered. But, in **Magic**, elementals can also be based on everything from substances to time periods. What exactly are elementals in the **Magic** universe?

—Andre, Brazil

**A:** From **Brady Dommermuth**, **Magic** Creative Director:

Your initial definition of elementals holds true for all elementals: They are living manifestations of elements. But **Magic** uses "element" much more loosely than other fantasy worlds do. We use "element" to refer to not just one of the four classical elements. We use its secondary definition instead: "a constituent part." With this usage you can envision an elemental of joy, an elemental of pond scum, or an elemental of cashews, for example.

One reason for this is because **Magic** has an ongoing need to create countless creatures—many more than almost any other fantasy property—and using a wider definition of "element" enables their creation. Another reason is that some nontraditional elementals are just too cool not to do, such as an elemental of shadow or blood. A final reason is that things work in threes and therefore I need a third reason, or if you prefer, because cashews are delicious.

August 1, 2007



**Q:** Do Wizards employees get free access to a gym? If so, is there more dust in there than there is in Mark Rosewater's office?

—Richie C.

Toronto, Ontario

**A:** From **Jo Hyde**,

Yes we do!

This is the standard blurb from our benefits info:

*On-site Fitness Center: Offers a wide range of training and exercise equipment, staffed by qualified fitness professionals. The Wizards' fitness staff members are trained to check blood pressure, take body measurements, and calculate body fat. The fitness trainers can also assess the current fitness level, help establish reasonable goals, design a personalized fitness program, and train employees in the proper use of the exercise equipment.*

And the fans seem to blow the dust away on a regular enough basis—although I have never actually seen Mark in the gym. (Good or bad, I'm not sure!)



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