

SEAN

I enjoyed the questions for this month. Thinking over my own reactions.

- ME: What are your thoughts?
- SEAN: Well monsters were on more minds than my own. I narrowed my question down, but I think the larger question looms in my mind and it is this: what is the point of monsters with actual stats? That seems broad, which may render it largely pointless to ask. Because monsters are not goblins or orcs; those are more a nod to Tolkien and perhaps the idioms of science-fantasy. Perhaps the better question is: do you think the monster list is something that can be left to individual GM prep or explicit settings, as opposed to needing to be deployed in a design. My own thinking is largely, yes. Make up your own monsters for your own situations. The information about Melee, Wizard, etc was largely things I did not know and that was a good listen.
- ME: I think there's a frame or context for the question that you're leaving out. Clearly "the monster list" has some particular role or purpose in whatever play you're envisioning. Can you say what that is without going in a circle? Even so simple as tracking how a monster gets into play and what might happen to it and how it might return into play afterwards.

GORDON

These Q&As always get me thinking, and I'm never sure how to turn those thoughts into something useful. But here's what I've got on this one: Bestiaries - "All the World's Monsters" from Chaosium in '77 is probably the earliest "encyclopedia" of monsters, and includes creatures of the type "Vance Dragon" from "The Dragon Masters". I'm not sure if Trollpak counts for biology enough to answer Lorenzo's question, but - maybe? In any case, Ron, your biology/culture sense for that product might fit/be valuable.

Melee/Wizard/TFT - All I can do is strongly agree with all of what Ron said, pluses, minuses, and nostalgia.

Critical hits - The article at <http://playingattheworld.blogspot.com/2013/09/the-first-critical-hits.html> also misses Arm's Law, but covers a number of other early examples (go, EPT for 20=double damage!).

Thinking about it, I kinda want to point to different aspects of criticals, along the lines of your comment, Ron. One, the pure damage "boost", and associated with that weather or not skill matters (Runequest & Warlock, e.g.) vs. pure luck ("Nat 20"). Then we've got possible interesting consequence associations (e.g., Runequest weapon "sticking" with impalement, losing "blows" in Warlock, extra non-damage effects like reduced movement). And finally, gore/description which I guess might have consequence but maybe is overly ... gratuitous? At least, I know it's possible - not TOO easy, maybe, but possible - for it to be overly gratuitous for my current taste.

But now I'm kinda interested in more "you can impale for serious damage, but you maybe get your weapon stuck"-style critical-ish rules!

"The Party" - I find the lure of "characters all know each other and are basically committed to doing stuff together" quite strong, and perhaps for that very reason have sometimes really, REALLY worked at NOT doing that. I'd say my play in non-party mode maybe fails a bit more often than party-play, but ... not dramatically so. The in-fiction organization, when it works, can be a neat tool, but yeah, it's no cure-all. And the ones that worked best were created either in or for particular play, not provided by the product.

- ME: I hadn't thought much before now about the difference between (i) critical means the maximum possible given an ordinary damage roll and (ii) critical means possibly more damage than an ordinary damage roll can deliver, e.g. double damage. But now I think the difference between the two is extremely significant and factors into many, many different aspects of weaponry (cost, weight, attribute requirements, various inconveniences, etc). I am also interested in the rather soft or limited version of mandated detail. Meaning, not an extensive list of clinical or colorful outcomes, but more like the generic "weapon sticks" for something which is after all called an impale. It's an interesting concept which may or may not even be necessarily associated with a special hit. I kind of like the idea of a damage system using it as a central concept, with numbers derived from it rather than being themselves primary.