

FANTASY HERO



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INTRODUCTION



Fantasy has long been the most popular genre for gaming — in fact, it's the genre that led to the creation of roleplaying games in the first place. The release of the *Dungeons & Dragons* game in the mid-Seventies introduced millions of people to the concept of roleplaying, slaying monsters, and adventuring using only their imaginations, some paper and pencils, and dice. D&D inspired many other games, including *Champions* and the *HERO System* — and thus, eventually, this book (and its predecessors, the first edition released in 1985, the second in 1990, and the third in 2003).

But long before gaming came along, Fantasy was working its magic on the minds of readers. Beginning with the tales and legends of ancient days, and leading up to novels by such modern masters of the genre as Tolkien, Vance, Dunsany, Moorcock, Howard, Leiber, Kurtz, and Kay, stories of wizards, quests, swordplay, dragons, and magic have long enthralled us. In fact, most gamers come to Fantasy gaming through their love of Fantasy literature, rather than the other way around.

Thanks to their interest in Fantasy, gamers have run Fantasy campaigns using the *HERO System* rules for decades — before there ever was an official “Fantasy Hero” book, in fact. No two Fantasy settings are identical, and the unmatched adaptability, flexibility, and customizability of the *HERO System* makes it a natural for Fantasy gaming. Rather than forcing you to use a pre-defined list of spells, monsters, or the like, *Fantasy Hero* lets you decide what magic is like, how characters create and cast spells, what attributes different types of characters have, how strong giants are, and how your Fantasy world functions.

Thus, *Fantasy Hero* is a *genre book*, a sort of “guidebook” to the genre of Fantasy that shows you how to use the *HERO System* rules to create the sort of Fantasy campaigns and characters you want — whether that's in the style of your favorite Fantasy novels, short stories, and movies, or some idea that's entirely original to you.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Fantasy Hero is designed both for players experienced with Fantasy roleplaying and those who are new to this style and genre of play. Nothing in these pages is secret or for the GM's eyes only, so every reader can read it all the way through and then decide which portions he wants to utilize.

Chapter One, *Warriors, Wizards, And Wondrous Worlds: The Fantasy Genre*, delves into the nuts and bolts of Fantasy as a genre. First it discusses what “Fantasy” is, and describes many of the classic Fantasy “bits” and elements — things like dragons, necromancy, prophecies, and swords. Then it explores the major sub-genres of Fantasy, such as High Fantasy, Epic Fantasy, Swords And Sorcery, and Urban Fantasy, as well as the interaction of Fantasy with meta-genres such as Tragedy, Comedy, and Romance.

Chapter Two, *Heroes Of The Realm*, reviews the subject of Fantasy Hero character creation in two sections. The first section contains over five dozen Racial, Environment/Ancestry, Culture, and Professional Templates covering not only the “typical” races and professions found in Fantasy gaming — dwarves, elves, gnomes, warriors, wizard, priests, and so on — but many more unusual ones as well (winged folk, lizard-men, shamans, bounty hunters, and the like). The second section reviews the major elements of the *HERO System*, such as Skills and Powers, and describes how they function in Fantasy games. This section includes several new or expanded Perks and Talents as well.

Chapter Three, *Battles And Blades: Combat And Adventuring*, discusses the subject of Fantasy Hero combat. It includes optional rules for the use of Combat Modifiers and Maneuvers in Fantasy settings, an expanded weapons list and rules for weapons use, and a mass combat system so you can include battles and sieges in your games.

Chapter Four, *Arcane Creations: Magic*, is perhaps the most important one in the book. Magic is a core defining element of most Fantasy settings, and how magic works influences many other aspects of the setting. Thus, it's important for the GM to take the time to define how magic functions in his campaign, and what affect it has on society, history, the economy, and even geography. First the GM has to create a *magic system*, a framework and set of rules explaining how magic

ABBREVIATIONS

Fantasy Hero uses the following abbreviations to refer to other *HERO System* books:

6E1: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume I: Character Creation*

6E2: *The HERO System 6th Edition, Volume II: Combat And Adventuring*

APG: *The HERO System Advanced Player's Guide*

HSB: *The HERO System Bestiary*

HSEG: *The HERO System Equipment Guide*

HSMA: *HERO System Martial Arts*

HSS: *HERO System Skills*

UBA: *The Ultimate Base*

works in the game. After he knows how magic works generally, he has to create *spells* for the characters to buy (or let the players create their characters' spells themselves). This chapter walks you step-by-step through the process, discussing not only basic considerations but social and rules-related issues; it includes over a dozen sample magic systems, each with several spells, to get you started. Lastly, the chapter describes enchanted items — how they function in the campaign, how characters can create them, and so forth — and provides examples.

Chapter Five, *Beyond The Fields We Know: Fantasy Worlds And Races*, describes how to create Fantasy settings and races. For many gamers, creating their own Fantasy world is one of the most enjoyable things about gaming, and this chapter discusses the creation process in detail. It includes sections on government, population, trade, travel, technology, and religion, among other subjects.

Chapter Six, *Wonders Of The Imagination: Gamemastering Fantasy Hero*, provides advice for the GM. It discusses campaign guidelines and standards, themes, and morality, and covers the Fantasy Hero environment (including underground adventuring, traps, and the like). It also describes Fantasy villains and NPCs — how to create memorable ones and use them to best effect in the game.

Chapter Seven, *Drudaryon's Legion*, provides a selection of sample heroes and villains to inspire players and GMs, or even to adopt for their own use. The characters all come from Hero Game's Turakian Age setting, but you can easily adapt them to other Fantasy worlds.

Lastly, the book concludes with a detailed Bibliography of Fantasy literature and movies. It's not complete (no Fantasy bibliography could be!), but it contains a long list of Fantasy works gamers may find inspirational — not to mention just plain fun.

So, draw your sword, prepare your spells, and get ready — realms of wondrous Fantasy await!

HISTORICAL REALISM

Most Fantasy games portray quasi-medieval societies, or other societies based, in whole or in part, on earlier eras of human civilization. This raises the issue of conducting research to make the settings more historically “accurate,” increase the verisimilitude of the world, and even unearth unusual and interesting facts that might add flavor and color to a game.

While there's no question that historical research often proves helpful to a Fantasy game, Fantasy Hero only contains a few historical facts here and there as points of comparison. There are several reasons for this (beside the lack of page space).

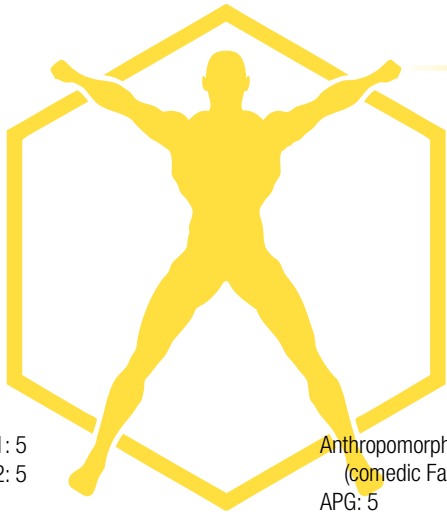
First, there's often little consensus on what constitutes “historical fact.” Historians have only limited information about many subjects relevant to gaming, and in other cases their conclusions inspire extensive discussion and debate. What one historian (or gamer) regards as “fact,” another dismisses as speculation or erroneous information — and it's entirely possible both views are justified.

Second, most Fantasy gamers don't want historical realism. They want their games to have a *vener* of historical realism — a political system approximating Western European feudalism, weapons and armor similar to those used in medieval cultures around the world, and so forth. They don't care about the nature and function of incorporeal hereditaments, how medieval economies “really” worked, or the precise relative merits of one type of weapon over another. An approximation, often one made with dramatic rather than “realistic” considerations in mind, suffices. Like most Fantasy novels and movies, they want the flavor and the feel, not the substance... and there's nothing wrong with that at all.

Third and most importantly, in many cases historical data, accurate or not, is totally irrelevant to a Fantasy game. A Fantasy world is not our world, and it's questionable just how analogous real-world data can be to a Fantasy setting. Numerous factors, including geography, natural disasters, influential persons, and native flora and fauna vary so much from the real world to the Fantasy world that it's hard to say that the state of affairs prevailing on Earth (or some part of Earth) at various points in history would duplicate, even to a slight degree, in another world.

In particular, the existence of magic has an enormous effect on Fantasy settings. All but the most mundane of Low Fantasy settings features magic; it suffuses some High Fantasy worlds. Once you bring magic into the picture, analogizing between the real world and your Fantasy world becomes much harder, and perhaps even futile — especially when magic is common and powerful enough to effectively take the place of high technology. What would the Roman Empire have been like with fireballs and sorcery? We don't know, and we never will, and speculation about the subject is largely meaningless...

...but of course, sometimes meaningless subjects are fun to pursue. Even though *Fantasy Hero* doesn't include a lot of historical research, there's no reason you can't do all the research you want, if you're so inclined. The books in the “Nonfiction” section of the Bibliography are a good start. Examine the facts, draw your own conclusions, and plan your game as you see fit. As long as you and your players have fun, you win, whether you're “historically correct” or not.



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