

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

POWERS[™]

Totems and Nature Spirits[™]



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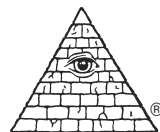
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*Let crow and raven
be your guides through
the dark labyrinths.*

*– David Carson,
How to Find
Your Spirit Animal*

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INTRODUCTION

Hey, I read about totems and I think it would be cool for my druid to have one. How do I do that – and what would it let me do?

This book answers those questions by introducing a new ability called Totem-Bearer and providing a list of totems and the abilities they can grant to those they favor, along with the framework to create your own designs. Totems are powerful spirits (sometimes gods) that guide and help those who interest or serve them. A key difference from “gods” is that they tend to demand respect rather than worship, and to work indirectly. Totems are unlikely to smite your foes or let you hurl fireballs. But they might help *you* fight better, enhance your body and mind, bless your allies, and curse, distract, or sicken your enemies.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

This supplement *requires* only the **GURPS Basic Set**, but **GURPS Powers** is strongly recommended. It was inspired by *Spirit Vessels (GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 211-214), and that material – though not required – is helpful. Totems can also be found in **GURPS Horror: The Madness Dossier**, **GURPS Monster Hunters 6: Holy Hunters**, and “Native American Crusaders” in *Pyramid #3/122: All Good Things*. **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 5: Allies**, **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners**, and **GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents** are useful as well. Finally, “Blessed Be” in *Pyramid #3/78: Unleash Your Soul* expands on the Blessed advantage in ways that might prove relevant.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rory Fansler started reading up on different religions before the modern Internet, and found a home in the spirit worlds that inspired this

supplement. While no scholar or expert, he has been blessed with the friendship of two shamans and once was honored to participate in a watered-down version of the Sun Dance.

ABOUT GURPS

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Bibliographies. Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We’ve added them to many **GURPS** book web pages with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for **GURPS** releases are available at sjgames.com/errata/gurps.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

Shamanism is a kind of universal spiritual practice with indigenous cultures around the world, and one important element of it is taking care of spirits.

– Daniel Pinchbeck

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS A TOTEM?

Totems are spirits common to animistic and polytheistic cultures. They can be abstract concepts, ancestors, animals, personal guardians, or spirits of place. This work focuses on animal spirits but includes spirits of place, as they're a good fit for many nature spirits.

When this supplement refers to a specific totem, the name is capitalized as if it were a proper name – though many spirits have other names in different cultures. For example, Owl is the totem of owls and is treated as the representation, or paragon, of what a culture thinks of when talking about owls. Such totems are often the first of their kind and may have a personal history of great deeds, like bringing fire to humanity, stealing the moon, or even creating the world.

Totems have a Sense of Duty to those they protect, including totem-bearers – unless those people misbehave! Totems rarely choose to speak directly or plainly, but may reach out through dreams or even physical signs. Interpreting these

requires appropriate abilities, including divination spells, the Blessed (pp. B40-41) and Oracle (p. B72) advantages, and skills such as Dreaming (p. B188) and Religious Ritual (p. 6).

Who Can Use a Totem?

Anyone!

While those who have a protective or spiritual nature are most likely, most professions and character roles could fit. Shamans are a natural match; druids in their role as nature's protectors are another. Totem-related abilities could be gateways to or prerequisites for unusual advantages and skills, including those that normally require Trained by a Master. An archer who can see farther, a thief with night vision, or a warrior with supernatural speed and strength would have an edge over those without. Wizards tend to rely on mastery of arcane arts, while clerics and holy warriors serve deities, so they're less likely to seek totems.

CHARACTER TRAITS

As spirits follow their own rules, a number of existing traits require clarification or adaptation. This supplement adds some new traits, too!

ADVANTAGES

A few advantages may be slightly modified where totems are concerned.

Nictitating Membrane

see p. B71

This can be enhanced with Extended, at +20% per additional sense covered, such as hearing or smell. This represents a membrane that protects the ear, the ability of some animals to close off their nostrils, etc.

Ridden

15 points

This is a meta-trait consisting of Talent 4 [20] and Odious Personal Habits [-5]. The Talent is assumed to cost 5 points per level. The player chooses the Talent when selecting from

the roles (pp. 8-9) assigned to the totem, but the player can pick another one from the list – or, with the GM's approval, something completely different. If a higher-priced Talent is chosen, increase the cost of the form.

Totem-Bearer

12 points/manifestation + Spirit Pool

You have a link to a powerful spirit that allows you to take on some of its traits and be influenced by its personality. In return for representing the spirit and its interests, you can let it flow into you and gain a measure of its power.

This advantage has two components: a manifestation cost and a Spirit Pool. You may have partial or full manifestations (forms) for several totems, though only one can be in effect at a time. Multiple forms – including several partial manifestations – are possible for a given totem. The GM may require a partial manifestation of a totem as a prerequisite for its full manifestation.

The Spirit Pool is a number of character points set aside to allow you to channel more powerful abilities. Apply any modifiers (except for Affects Others; see *GURPS Powers*, p. 74) to the manifestation cost, *not* to the Spirit Pool.

ANIMAL TOTEMS

Each entry below begins with the animal's name. Under that is a *roles* line; generally, only one role is in effect for each manifestation. Then comes a short description, to give a feeling for the totem.

Next are *emblematic traits* – inspired by both modern science and various cultures' lore and mythology – the spirit can loan or teach. Specific advantages, skills, etc. are capitalized; general categories (e.g., "divination") aren't. Some advantages recommend modifiers, but feel free to apply any others that seem appropriate. The traits also include disadvantages, as frequent or intense use may lead to spiritual distortion or personality alteration. All animal totems can provide the traits under *Spirit Types* (p. 7) and *Animal Spirits* (p. 7), too.

After that come one or more *manifestations*. Players and GMs are encouraged to customize these and create others.

Some totems offer *variations*: similar animals with somewhat different roles, traits, or manifestations.

Bear

Roles: Healer, Protector, or Warrior.

Bear is omnivorous, fishing with its paws or foraging for plants. Unsuitable to stealth or rapid chases, it isn't considered a hunting totem. It's very tough in a fight, however, and usually considered the ruler of its territory. Much mythology stems from its hibernation, which ties it to the seasons and the renewal of spring. The ability to sleep safely through winter partly accounts for its reputation as a healer.



Emblematic Traits

Advantages: Higher Purpose (Protect children); Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction 2); Metabolism Control; Regeneration (Only while sleeping, -20%).

Disadvantages: Bad Temper; Berserk.

Quirks: Bad Temper when awakened; Distinctive Features (Deep Voice or Hairy); Loves honey; Uncongenial.

Skills: Fishing; Leadership; Power Blow; Public Speaking.

Manifestation

Partial Manifestation: ST+7 [70]; DX+1 [20]; HT+2 [20]; DR 2 [10]; Fearlessness 5 [10]; Ridden [15]; Bad Temper (12) [-10]. 135 points.

Beaver

Roles: Caretaker or Worker.

Beaver is hardworking and plans ahead, building dams and lodges to protect itself from predators and to store food for winter.

Emblematic Traits

Advantages: Breath-Holding; Nictitating Membrane; Protected Hearing.

Perks: Beaver Clap; Chisel Teeth.

Disadvantages: Bad Sight.

Skills: Breath Control; Engineer (Civil); Professional Skill (Lumberjack).

Manifestation

Partial Manifestation: ST+1 [10]; HT+2 [20]; Beaver Clap [1]; Chisel Teeth [1]; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Storage 25x, -50%) [10]; Nictitating Membrane 2 (Extended, Hearing and Smell, +40%) [3]; Ridden [15]; Engineer (Civil) (H) IQ-1 [2]. 62 points.

Cougar/Puma

Roles: Acrobat, Hunter, or Leader.

A powerful and prideful great cat, known for its hunting prowess. All cats are good guardian spirits, able to notice, stalk, and kill even subtle invaders.

Emblematic Traits

Advantages: Claws (Sharp; Switchable, +10%); Night Vision; See Invisible (Spirits); Silence; Striking ST.

Disadvantages: Loner.

Skills: Intimidation; Observation.

Manifestation

Partial Manifestation: ST+2 [20]; DX+4 [80]; HT+2 [20]; Per+4 [20]; Basic Speed+1.00 [20]; Catfall [10]; Claws (Sharp) [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; DR 1 [5]; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Ground) [10]; Flexibility [5]; Night Vision 6 [6]; Perfect Balance [15]; Ridden [15]; Silence 4 [20]; Super Jump 1 [10]; Vibration Sense (Air) [10]. 301 points.

Variations

Cheetah: Master of speed. Add Enhanced Move 1 (Ground) to emblematic traits. Remove Leader role, and Striking ST, Super Jump, Climbing, and Power Blow traits.

Jaguar: Shapeshifter and clever hunter, able to adjust to many situations. Add Chameleon, Mimicry, Shapeshifting, and Versatile advantages, and Observation and Shadowing skills, to emblematic traits. Remove Leader role, and Striking ST and Power Blow traits.

Leopard: Secretive, elusive, stealthy, and a master of the precise planned attack. Add Invisibility and Shapeshifting advantages, and Karate skill, to emblematic traits. Remove Leader role and Power Blow trait.

Lion: Calm and dignified, Lion takes pride in its appearance and demeanor, and is a natural leader. Add Warrior to roles, and Appearance, Congenial, Laziness, and Penetrating Voice to emblematic traits. Remove Catfall, Night Vision, Perfect Balance, and Super Jump, and the Climbing skill, from traits. *Partial Manifestation:* Add +5 ST [50]; drop Super Jump. 341 points.

Lynx: A medium-sized cat, weighing up to 66 lbs. There are many variations, ranging in size down to the bobcat at 19 lbs. Characterized by thick fur, dark tufts at tips of the ears, a short tail, and often dark stripes on a lighter coat (white on chest, belly, and inside of legs). Tends to hunt small game, but larger ones will hunt deer. Many are good swimmers and have wide paws adapted for soft ground, including snow. Remove Leader role. *Partial Manifestation:* Add Temperature Tolerance 2 [2] and Terrain Adaptation (Snow) [5]; drop ST bonus. 288 points.

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