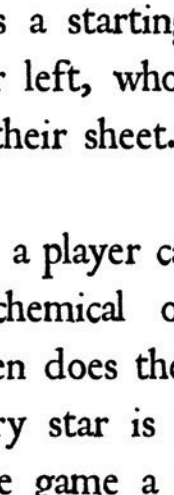


*This is not a book.
This is not a roleplaying game.
This is a wordplaying game
for lovers of verbal alchemies.*

Hear ye ! language hucksters, bards and peddlers! To all Alchiwordian apprentices, patient observers of the linguistic corpuscles, harvesters of the semantic fields: again this present century, the assembled Register of our Milky Way has laid onto our collective shoulders the burden of creating a new star. More precisely: a Constellation shall soon be built by our alchemical arts.

We all know this: inside the stars burns much more than mere gases. What shines under the moon and guides lost ships home is none other than image, symbol, an idea with the potential to glitter. This is why long ago, the sages founded the Register of All That Blazes: every star is a word, and all words are stars. Over the centuries, stars have disappeared from the astrologists' books, leaving room for new celestial lanterns. The time has come for you, lucky pen pushers, to create the evening's newest constellation.

But let us dispense with theatre tricks, for this game is not mere child's play. We are men of the word, and will therefore describe the rules of this beautiful wager.



Together, the players (no more than four, so that turns are yawnless) decide of a Space where words will shine; a semantic countryside, a half-theme, a genre of sorts. It is the blanket on the grass, where the picnic is about to be laid. One could choose: "In the kitchen". For the sake of this example, let us say: "Sword and sorcery stories".

As for required goods and instruments, each player will want a pencil and a sheet of paper.

On a scrap of paper, each player writes a word fitting the Space you have defined. The scraps are then shuffled together and given at random to everyone. All must keep secret the word they received, for it's the full stop of their alchemical quest. Finally, everyone gives a starting word to the player on their left, who inscribes it at the centre of their sheet.

On their turn, a player can do one -and only one- alchemical operation. The next player then does the same. A vital preamble: every star is unique; at any moment in the game a word can only exist once on the table. When a new word is added, simply make sure that it's not outside of the chosen Space. Note that the Space is more of a frontier than a restriction: putting a rocket in a sword and sorcery story would clearly break the border.

BASIC OPERATIONS

Sundering

A player can erase (or scribble over) a word on their sheet to create two words held within it. These can be constituent or defining terms. Attention! Sundering **DOES NOT** involve association, a process only fit of unscientific barbarians. It is strict semantic dissection. For instance, destroying the word "cottage" to create "castle" and "house" is impossible - one is much bigger, the other synonymous. One could however extract "walls" and "roof" (constituent words) or "hearth" and "family" (defining elements).

Absorption

This process is the opposite of Sundering. A player can operate a fusion between two words to make a new one (as long as both words are constituent or defining terms of the third). For example, "hero" and "armour" could produce "knight". The words used in the process are erased. They can both belong to the active player, but please note that one word may be borrowed from another player, who must then erase it from their sheet.

ADVANCED OPERATIONS

A player can only use each advanced operation once per game.

Inversion

With this manipulation, a player can turn a word into its antonym, or "opposite" word. It may happen that a term in the game doesn't have an obvious opposite. See the paragraph about nitpicking at the end of the present scroll.

Transmutation

A player can transform a word into a smaller or bigger version of itself. For instance, "snake" or "lizard" could be turned into "dragon", and vice versa.

The Comet

A player can simply appropriate a word belonging to someone else. They write it on their sheet and the targeted player must erase it.

ALL THAT GLITTERS

During the game, a player can choose up to three of their words and create a shining halo around them (failing that, drawing a circle or a simple star will do). The halo shows that the player breathes the Constellation's life into a word, which is now immune to operations by other players. It cannot be stolen by Absorption or by making it a Comet. A player can have no more than three haloed words on their sheet at any moment in the game. On their turn, they may always choose to change which words they want to shine.

WHO WINS THE STARRY JOUST?

The goal is as simple as they come: to write their Constellation's name (the word they received on a scrap of paper) on their sheet, a player must own **at least three words that constitute and/or define it**. If the Constellation is approved by the other players, the winner writes the secret word and links the four (or more) words to form the constellation they have brilliantly created. The game ends then, and all heartily applaud the genius of this vocabulary acrobat.

VARIANTS AND ADVICE

Of Nitpicking and Peer Approval

An alchemical operation must be implicitly approved by all players. This means they can deny your move if they think it is an attempt to "bend" the meaning of words to help your plans along. On the other hand, sore losers may systematically oppose your operations if they think you are about to win. In any case, try to play in good faith. Beyond the rules stated above regarding what can and what cannot be done, every group of players should work out their own conventions.

The Symbol is Stronger than the Idea

As much as possible, write concrete words. A symbol brings an image to mind, and often bears more meaning than a theoretical concept - even if these can sometimes prove useful and find a place in your Constellation.

Make it More Difficult

Three words to win aren't enough? Try four or five and see how it goes...

One For All ! Cooperative Play

If you don't like being "isolated" as a player in the basic game, try playing Nebula cooperatively with the following changes:

The goal word and every player's starting words are chosen randomly, using the closest book at hand that fits the Space you decided on. The objective is still to obtain words that can define or constitute the Constellation's name, but the players can put their words together. Instead of just three words, they need a number of words equal to the number of players plus one. Advanced operations can only be used once by all. What, such a game is impossible to lose? To make things more interesting, the team has a limited time to beat the challenge: the Constellation must be created in less than (9 minutes x number of players). Good luck!

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