

**Vale of Myth World Overview**  
Narrative Writing Portfolio Samples

## World Overview

### Setting

The game takes place in an alternate-history low-fantasy Earth in the time 1315 AD. This date is analogous to the same date in history, albeit with spirits and magic which form the backbone of fantasy elements in the game. The world includes two abstract realms; the Physical Realm, and the Spiritual Realm, which coincide with and interact with one another. This interaction results in both the spirits and magic in the game world. The barrier between these two realms is “The Veil.”

In general, spiritual phenomena are strongest in places where The Veil is thin. These sites can take the form of Holy Places, Cursed Places, or even as areas with an overabundance of plant and animal life.

### Physical Realm

The Physical Realm is the world as non-spirits know it. Most of the game and the entirety of human history take place in the Physical Realm, and the Spiritual Realm influences the Physical Realm. Put simply, the Spiritual Realm is like an invisible overlay on top of the Physical Realm, split into many different areas. While not tangible, humans and other non-spirits feel a presence, aura, or emotional gravitas when in the presence of strong spirits. Spirits may choose to speak with humans telepathically, through dreams or visions, or through an avatar.

Acts in the Physical Realm may also influence the Spirit Realm. For example, battlefields and areas of mass executions draw large numbers of deathly spirits. These spirits come both from the newly deceased, who remain bound to the area by regrets, and from spirits traveling to areas similar in affiliation to themselves. Humans worship spirits they believe intervene in human events. Humans erect temples, statues, and other buildings and in doing so, these spirits grow in power.

### Spirit Realm

All spirits dwell in the Spirit Realm. Particularly powerful spirits called Greater Spirits shape areas of the Spirit Realm in the shape of their own affiliations. To give an example, the world of the dead would be a location inside the Spirit Realm shaped by Death, and Heaven an area in the Spirit Realm shaped by the Monotheistic God. Shifts in power and conflict reshape the Spirit Realm as drastically as they do the Physical Realm. Souls and spirits without bodies in the Spirit Realm must be careful; without a body to protect them, harm in the Spirit Realm damages the soul/spirit directly.

For spirits of the Spirit Realm, both the Spirit Realm and Physical Realm are tangible realities. Spirits can freely cross to the Physical Realm and back. Since spirits require mana to survive, and creatures in the Physical Realm provide mana through worship and supplement to Spirits, it is in spirits best interests to remain engaged with the Physical Realm.

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#### Magic and Technology

##### Magic

###### *Mana*

In theory, mana is the intangible energy of a non-spirit to assign value to a spirit. All creatures have mana, and this mana regenerates when resting. When a non-spirit runs out of mana, it feels mentally exhausted and sluggish; drinking restorative draughts or eating food restores mana. As creatures (especially humans) become more powerful, and so more influential in their community, their mana increases.

In practice, mana is the energy used by non-spirits to request magic from spirits. To give examples, praying to a spirit and performing for a spirit both consume mana.

For spirits, mana is a source of energy and the belief beings have in that spirit. Naturally, the more mana a spirit has, the more powerful it becomes.

###### *Spirits*

Spirits are non-corporeal beings similar in substance to a soul. They live in the Spirit Realm and may cross freely between the Physical Realm and Spirit Realm. To spirits, however, the Spirit Realm is physical and reality. In the Spirit Realm spirits perceive and interact with their surroundings directly – without the need of a physical body. Should a spirit exhaust its mana supply, the spirit itself dwindles away. The more mana a spirit has, the more powerful magic it can cast, and the more powerful the spirit itself becomes. Any spirit that gains enough mana becomes a Greater Spirit.

###### *Souls*

Humans and other physical creatures have a spirit in the form of the soul. Souls are analogous to lesser, lesser spirits (spirits that cannot travel freely between realms, cannot use avatars, and can only conjure limited changes in self). The soul reacts to Songs of Power and other magic, and the soul is how non-spirits detect spiritual presence. Souls hold the personality, memory, and “self” of a physical creature. Once in the Spirit Realm, souls perceive and interact with their surroundings like spirits do. All souls in the Spirit Realm appear as small balls of blue fire called “Soulfire.”

When physical creatures die, their soul journeys from the body across The Veil to the Spirit Realm, where it arrives in Golgotha (the land of the dead). From Golgotha, souls are sent to a domain under the rule of the Greater Spirit those creatures served most in life. This process is slow, and most souls end up crafting makeshift residences in Golgotha while awaiting judgement.

The name Chosen One refers to souls under the protection of a Greater Spirit. Without the protection of a Greater Spirit, souls must manage mana to avoid dwindling. Dwindled souls reduce to a ball of barely sentient Soulfire called Shades.

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#### Greater Spirits

Greater Spirits are particularly powerful spirits. They shape areas of the Spirit Realm in the shape of their own affiliations and may war to gain influence in the Spirit Realm. The power of a Greater Spirit is equivalent to the size of its domain. The domains of Greater Spirits attract lesser spirits with the same element or affiliation. Lesser spirits in the territory of a Greater Spirit respond to the Greater Spirit as a sort of ruler or king. Any Greater Spirit that loses enough Mana dwindles to a (lesser) spirit.

All deities across world faiths are depicted here as Spirits, and those most prominent among world faiths are treated as Greater Spirits (including the Monotheistic God, and the Pagan spirit Gaea). Areas of afterlife in world faiths appear here as areas of the Spirit Realm.

#### Nephilim

Nephilim were unique in that they were physical humans with spirits infused into their very souls in an imbue process. This allowed them to conjure magic without petitioning an external spirit. All Nephilim died during the biblical great flood.

Siegfried, one of the game antagonists, becomes the first Nephilim in thousands of years. To combat him effectively, the player characters also become Nephilim while stranded in Golgotha.

#### Avatars

All but the most powerful spirits cannot physically interact with the Physical Realm unless they have an avatar in said realm. Avatars range from animals to human hosts to demons to abstract physical constructs. Killing an avatar (Dispersing it) renders the spirit using that avatar unable to physically engage with the Physical Realm until it gets a new avatar.

#### Casting Magic

Casting magic is a process in which a spirit consumes an intangible magical energy called mana to physically manifest a form of magical energy. Generally, the more powerful the manifested energy will be, the more mana it requires to cast.

By non-spirits spending mana in song, dance, prayer, or other supplication, they give the expended mana to the spirit they entreat. The entreated spirit conjures the magic asked of it, which the non-spirits channel into physical reality. By completing this exchange, the spirit's mana grows as non-spirits believe more strongly in it. Likewise, spirits may refuse requests to conjure magic but lose mana.

#### Schools of Magic

##### Conjuring

Conjuring is a self-sufficient magic that consumes magical energy called mana to physically manifest a form of magical energy. Even though all beings have mana, only spirits may conjure. Please see Casting Magic for details on how this conversion of energy takes place.

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#### Channeling

Channeling magic requires an attunement to a spirit affiliation (most often an element). Creatures may only have attunement to a single affiliation. The channeling act itself includes two logistically separate events. The first event is the request for magic or supplication and can take many different forms including singing, dancing, praying, or even writing runes. The second event is the response, where the non-spirit acts as a conduit through which conjured energy from the Spiritual Realm channels into the Physical Realm. The more powerful the magic channeled, the more dangerous acting as a conduit for it is.

#### Common Restoratives

##### Restoratives

Healing agents work by both accelerating and magnifying the body's self-repair systems to unprecedented degrees, healing in seconds injuries that would take months or years to heal naturally. Due to their potency, despite the incredible pain they put patients in, healing agents are highly addictive.

Healing agents have several components that stabilize and block pain. Despite this, accelerated healing still puts a great strain on the patient. The strains of accelerated healing are very painful; some describe it as an unbearable itching sensation covering the entire body. According to in-world documented records, restoratives do not re-grow lost limbs and/or organs. This makes sense as the body cannot recover limbs or organs naturally.

Healing agents are also risky for treating the elderly. Using restoratives on them often results in organ failure, causing death. The reason for this is due to bodies that are no longer able to sustain the demands such healing places upon them. Because of these deaths, there is a growing in-world concern that repeated use of such restoratives degrades the body, effectively reducing the patient's lifespan.

#### Branwen Soup

During events prior to the game (1242AD), a group of adventurers defeat Branwen the Witch. Branwen had a black cauldron full of a strange brew, and she used that brew to an army of undead. After killing Branwen, the adventurers take some of the cauldron brew back with them and exchange it with the London branch of the Guild of Pepperers (an Apothecary Guild) in return for coin.

After years of study, the Guild of Pepperers becomes the largest player in the field in 1288AD. They achieve a breakthrough; using Branwen's Soup on a dying person will restore them to life, using it on a dead person results in a zombie. Using it on the living results in temporary blindness, nausea, cramping, and vomiting. Over two dozen staff die because of the experiments. They then reverse-engineer the brew to get a recipe for producing more and guard the recipe zealously. To get hold of the rare ingredients needed, the Guild of Pepperers set up guild relationships with the Monster Hunters Guild and offer lucrative contracts for obtaining items. The Guild of Pepperers delivers a part of Branwen Soup to the Monster Hunter Guilds in exchange for services. It has been rumored - but never proven - that the Guild of Pepperers assassinate anyone who tries to reveal the recipe.

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#### Major Landmarks / Locations

##### Physical Realm

##### *Holy Circles*

Glowing Holy Circles mark the site of holy events. They make travel much easier, as camping in a Holy Circle prevents monsters and demons from entering the camp. People build towns near Holy Circles for the same reason. Trailblazers take advantage of any nearby Holy Places. Holy Circles also double as Save Points.

Holy Circles output a holy energy (appearing as mild white light) in a centered sphere, ten paces in radius, and evil creatures disperse on contact with this radius. This light does not dim or weaken over time. Wild animals and other humans are not inherently evil however, so it is still necessary to keep watch at night.

##### *Whispering Falls*

Whispering Falls disappeared from maps in 1130AD, sadly, the year that a mob from Whispering Falls helped Templar kill off the cult in the Cave of the Dead. Without its followers, Legion bides its time in the mass grave, regaining strength until it could create an Avatar from the bodies. Realizing opportunity, three Kornikaned, with a lair close to the town of Whispering Falls, made their move.

The Kornikaned are master-class illusionists, able to create false reality that is indistinguishable from true reality. The Kornikaned possess leaders of the town. Using the superstitious roots in the town that saw the Legion Cult rise to prominence, the Kornikaned create a new cult centered around themselves. To this end, they decree that in exchange for their continued "benevolence," the town will choose one person to sacrifice to them each year in a ceremony they refer to as the Hacinas Festival. With reality itself in question, and unable to effectively combat the Kornikaned themselves, the villagers have little choice but to comply. The Kornikaned then isolate the town by taking all visitors as sacrifices.

The Kornikaned, through this new arrangement, gain power quickly. While the Kornikaned are tied to the area near the town, the most powerful of the three takes over the body of a bandit named Bosque in 1308AD. With his followers none-the-wiser, Bosque journeys west to the Spanish Cliffs, and begins raiding caravans. Even so, the most powerful Kornikaned cannot remain away from its powerbase for long. The bandits bring survivors to Whispering Falls to sacrifice in exchange for coin. With recent activities, sacrifices have become hard to find.

##### *Whispering Falls Arena*

Hidden away in a large cave secretly connected to the Whispering Falls lumber mill, an old arena sits. This cave system runs the entire distance between the town and the Kornikaned Lair. The reasoning behind the construction of the arena is unknown. In this arena, the yearly Hacinas Festival takes place, in which during ceremony, a live sacrifice is tied to a stake for the Tarasque to devour. The whole village must attend; those who refuse to attend became sacrifices themselves.

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#### Spirit Realm

##### *Golgotha*

Golgotha, meaning “place of the skull,” is also known as the Land of the Dead. Located within Death’s domain within the Spirit Realm, it is best summarized as an enormous ossuary (amalgamated from the bones of all deceased life), meets Limbo, meets the Disney depiction of Hades. It is completely hostile to life; any living creature or external spirit that somehow reaches Golgotha slowly chokes to death on the Black Mist, a stagnant poisonous air. As such, the sand in Golgotha is ash, the ground is layers upon layers of bone, the water is lethal – full of tormented souls - the air is still, and the mountains Obsidian (no minerals can grow in Obsidian). The only respite is Holy Circles, around which life blooms and a small dome of protection wards off the Black Mist. Another item, called the Herald Marrow also protects against the mist. This item and the Holy Circles are concessions to messenger spirits which need to survive the trek through Golgotha to fulfill their duty.

Golgotha itself includes several distinct regions. Souls first arrive on outside the massive bone Gates of the Dead. A long queue of souls waiting in line winds its way up to the gates. The gates are flanked on both sides by sheer Obsidian cliffs, which along with the Soulsea, isolate the entrance peninsula from the rest of Golgotha. North of the entrance lay the Dying Wastes, the Path of Ascension, The Great Necropolis, and the Hill of Despair.

The Judge sorts the souls at the front of the line. The Chosen Ones pass through the thick gates and take a leisurely stroll up to the teleporter, which sends them straight to The Great Necropolis (haven). This teleporter sends those not chosen to the Dying Wastes. Souls suffering this fate must make the hard and perilous journey up to The Great Necropolis, or wither into Shades.

The Dying Wastes are a vast expanse of bone and stone remnants of old temples. The Soulsea eats into the wastes, and ultimately will consume it entirely (hence the name). Souls braving the Dying Wastes must avoid the Skulleaters (colossal sentient bone collections that devour hills, structures, souls, and spirits) and vengeful spirits, and then must climb to the very top of the Path of Ascension (an obsidian mountain range), at the pinnacle of which The Great Necropolis sits. Rarely, a Skulleater will try to climb up the sheer cliffs to feed on those cowering in The Great Necropolis, but vigilant souls (often warriors from a past life) defend the necropolis by hurtling boulders and throwing spears made from sharpened bone. These defenses easily unbalance Skulleaters (already heavy, clumsy, and misshapen) and the Skulleaters fall to their death.