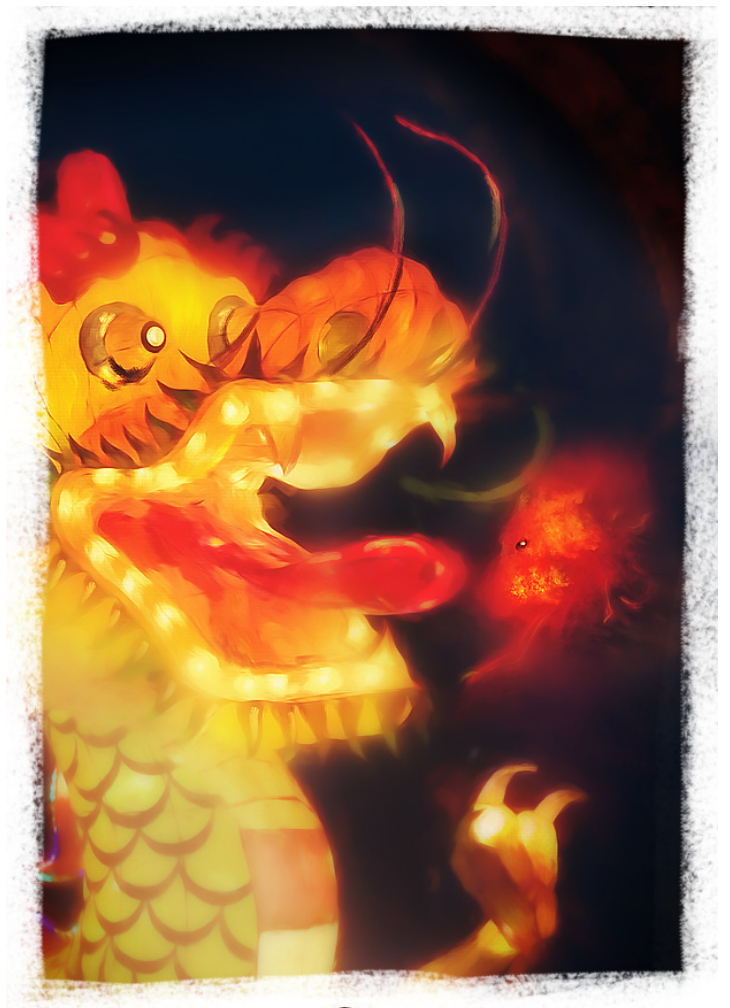


Don't Lose the Light

Lanterns and Light in the Darkest Dungeons

THE WORLD IS FILLED WITH DEEP, dark places that few dare to venture into: prehistoric caverns, ancient tombs, and foreboding dungeons. All of these places have one thing in common: their lack of light. These are places where the sun holds no sway, and the evil creatures that dwell within them hunt and thrive in total darkness.

Only a fool would venture into such a place without a light source. Sometimes, even a simple torch or iron lantern isn't enough to pierce the darkness of such places, which is where this article comes in. "Don't Lose the Light" provides players and Game Masters alike with five custom light source items that can be purchased, found, or collected as treasure.



WRITING KIEL CHENIER
COLOR ART SADE
EDITING JAMES J. HAECK
LAYOUT ERIC LIFE-PUTNAM

All of these items are well-crafted masterwork pieces, and some of them are also magical. Each item comes with an adventure hook and a suggested previous owner, though how you include them in your own campaign is up to you.

MAKING LIGHT MATTER

Low-light dungeon conditions are often overlooked or glossed over in tabletop games. While this is primarily to speed up play to focus on arguably more important things (exploration, combat, etc.), keeping track of light can actually make the game much more tense and interesting.

For example, consider how most monsters have darkvision, while most player character races do not. Now consider that dungeons are pitch-black environs where these monsters effortlessly hunt those who must fumble in the dark with their feeble surface eyes. Bringing fire and light into a dungeon room isn't just about illuminating it, it's about reclaiming it from those monsters.

On the subject of torches, you can implement a rule that a dungeon room or area doesn't count as explored unless it stays lit. Using/expending your own torches by leaving them on the ground, or placing them in empty sconces, keeps the explored room lit, which wards off random encounters in that room so long as the light remains lit.

Light sources are often disregarded once combat begins, but that's when they become incredibly important. While torches can clatter to the ground and stay lit, candles certainly can't, and lamps and lanterns cannot either without breaking or going out. Monsters aren't



ignorant of this fact, and a common tactic of theirs is to snuff out or destroy adventuring parties' lights, forcing them to fight in the dark—effectively rendering the monsters invisible.

For Game Masters, when a monster with darkvision hits a PC with an attack, instead of doing damage, they might steal or snuff out a light source.

TRACKING LIGHT WITH DICE

Timekeeping and tracking light sources feel like an essential part of the dungeon crawl experience, but both are difficult for the already overloaded Game Master to track. As a GM, it's on you to track random encounters, how long torches or lanterns burn for, and how much time passed while the players were debating what to do next. Thankfully, the advice from prior EN5IDER article "Those Who Crawl"* about timekeeping can easily be used to track how long light sources stay lit for:

You can track time using dice. Specifically d6's and d12's.

Set aside a d6 and a d12 when the PCs enter a dungeon. The d6 represents minutes, and the d12 represents hours (in game time, not actual time). Both begin at the '1' position. You track time in the dungeon in 10-minute increments. When 10 minutes pass, you turn the d6 to '2', then to '3' ten minutes after that. After 60 minutes have passed in game, you turn the d12 to '2' and reset the d6 back to '1'. Minutes and hours. Simple.

Torches and candles burn for a single hour before they're spent. Lamps and lanterns burn for 6 hours on a pint of oil.

* Kiel Chenier, "Those Who Crawl." EN World EN5ider, <https://www.patreon.com/posts/2605713>

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NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Dwarven Gem Helmet

Wondrous item, rare

Dwarves have delved deeper underground than any other surface species, into places so supernaturally lightless that even their inborn darkvision was rendered useless. In such places, open flame light sources are dangerous to use, as mining underground near pockets of trapped flammable gasses. The dwarven gem helmet circumvents this danger; producing light sensitive to dwarven needs and keeps both hands free to focus on mining.

While wearing this helmet, you gain a +1 bonus to AC.

This helmet has 3 charges. As an action, you can speak the helmet's command word ("Hi-Ho!") and expend 1 charge. For the next hour, the

helmet produces a forward facing cone of light equal to that of a lantern. The helmet regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

Additionally, while this helmet is both worn and lit, you have advantage on all checks to locate secret doors.

Blood Lantern

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

Crafted during wartime, this crimson iron lantern is caked with the clotted blood of soldiers who perished on the battlefield. It has passed from soldier to soldier, claimed by the one who slew the other and took it for themselves. Being constantly surrounded by hate, death, and blood has imbued the blood lantern with a number of magical properties.

The lantern is so covered in coagulated blood that it will hold no candle or oil. Instead, you



may willingly wound yourself and give at least 3 hit points worth of blood, after which it emits dim red light in a 40-foot cone for 1 hour per 3 hit points of blood given. While this lantern is lit and displayed on your person (for instance, carried in your hand, or on a belt) you gain a +1 bonus to damage rolls.

As an action, you can choose to make the lantern only grant its illumination to you and up to six other creatures of your choice. Once per day, placing the blood lantern upon the grave of a soldier will allow you to communicate with the spirit of that soldier for 1 minute.

Wyrnwood Torch

Wondrous item, common

Rangers and druids learned long ago that those who bear flames are not welcome within the living woods of the world. Even a flickering candle is seen as an affront to the safety of the trees, and may bring down the wrath of treants, sprites, and dryads. Magical light is permissible, but wyrnwood torches are the true choice of light source for those who dwell within these woods. Fashioned from wyrnwood, willingly given by the forest, these torches hold a flame that can do no harm to living wood or plants.

The flame carried by a wyrnwood torch does not burn or damage living plant materials (wood, leaves, grass, etc). It can burn dead trees and wood only if you intentionally ignite it. The torch must be lit by a flame or another wyrnwood torch, and sheds light as the light spell. This torch burns for 1 hour, after which time it is consumed.

Paper Dragon-Head Lantern

Wondrous item, uncommon

Coastal villages on volcanic islands and peninsulas fashion these lanterns out of lacquered rice paper, and fuel them with strange glowing steam that rises from hot springs. These lanterns are lit and placed in 'dragon graveyards': sites where dragons were slain by people, killed by giants, or eaten by other dragons. The lanterns are meant to anchor the dead dragons' spirits to

the site, so that their greed does not compel their ghosts to rise and continue to hoard treasure. Finding the ripped or torn shells of these lanterns in a dungeon or cave is a sure sign that it was once a dragon's lair.

Kobolds, dragonborn, half-dragons, and other lesser draconic creatures react to paper dragon-head lanterns with caution and superstition. In their presence, the first checks/rolls they make are made with disadvantage. Chromatic dragons hate these lanterns and destroy them on sight. Most metallic dragons are bemused by them, thinking they're cute.

This lantern illuminates everything with dim light in a 30 foot radius. It is filled with a heavy, flammable gas, and once lit, the lantern burns until all of its gas is expended or it is blown out. A full lantern holds 20 hours-worth of a sulphurous-smelling gas commonly called dragon's breath. Dragon's breath can be bought from coastal towns for 20 gp per hour of gas.

If a lit lantern is thrown, struck, or pierced violently with an attack, the lantern explodes. Creatures within 30 feet of the lantern must make a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 8d6 fire damage on a failed save, or half as much on a success. The lantern is consumed in the resulting fireball.

Soul Lantern

Weapon (flail), rare (requires attunement)

There are few things more luminous than souls. In both the Hells and the Abyss, lesser mortal souls are used to light the hanging lanterns that keep their labyrinthian cities illuminated. From time to time, these fiend-forged lanterns find their way onto the Material Plane, where they fetch a hefty price from antiquities dealers and curio collectors. There are, of course, a select few who can use these soul lanterns, and can stomach the murders needed to keep them lit.

A soul lantern is a spiked bulb of iron held on a long chain, and functions both as a hooded lantern and a flail. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon, and

deal an additional 1d6 fire damage on a hit. The soul lantern emits twice the light as a typical lantern. It is fueled by the souls of killed creatures, and when you kill a creature with this weapon, you can collect the soul of the victim with the lantern as a reaction. Though the soul seems to be burned as fuel, the soul is only permanently destroyed if the wielder of this weapon is a fiend; otherwise, the creature's soul passes to the afterlife as usual after the lantern is extinguished. The lantern's light lasts an amount of time equal to the robustness of the soul collected:

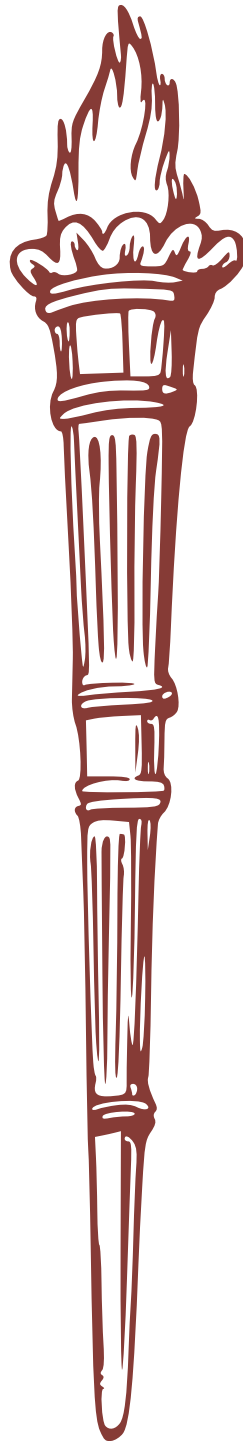
SOUL LANTERN LIGHT

CR of creature	Duration
Lower than 1	1 hour
1	3 hours
2	6 hours
3	12 hours
4	24 hours
5	3 days
6+	1 week

Torchling

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

The torchling is a creature thought up by a pair of very clever and very inebriated wizards after a long night of arcane experimentation. The story goes that the first said: "Torches can be such a pain to carry. What if an itty-bitty fire elemental just followed you around



instead? Wouldn't that be cute?" Indeed, they were cute, and more useful than the wizards originally anticipated. Friendly in nature, the torchling is a creature that seeks to help its attuned master however it can. Unfortunately, the torchling isn't especially bright—so to speak—and in a pinch may burn things up, hindering as much as helping.

In its inert form, the torchling is an enchanted piece of charcoal that could fit in the palm of a human's hand. As an action, you concentrate and speak the torchling's true name, causing it to ignite and burst into flame. You can dispelling the torchling's flame as a bonus action by saying the torchling's true name backwards. The torchling immediately goes out, and returns to its charcoal form. The torchling can stay lit continuously for 8 hours, after which it must rest in its charcoal form for an equal amount of time.

The torchling creates light identical to that of a torch. It walks at a speed of 20 feet per turn. Anything it touches takes 1 point of fire damage, and flammable materials catch on fire. The torchling will follow simple commands given by its attuned master, which it follows gleefully. It cannot attack, pick up objects, or jump more than five feet. Water, strong winds, and/or spells can snuff out the torchling, just as a torch might be snuffed out. It can, however, be resummoned afterwards. 