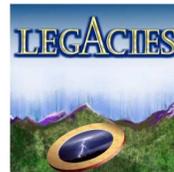


The Expanded GM's Companion

Guide to Legacy Items

by Mike Bourke, Johnn Four & Michael K Tumey



Legacy Items are powerful arcane and spiritual objects that occupy a middle ground between relics and artifacts on the one hand, and 'ordinary' magic items on the other. Legacy Items begin their existence in a campaign as mundane pieces of equipment, and gradually rise in power as their owner grows in ability and prestige.

Where possible, this guide will refrain from quoting the Player's Guide to Legacy items verbatim. It assumes that GMs have already read and understood that product.

It contains crib notes, amplified explanations, and other annotations and discussion that is not presented within *Assassin's Amulet*. Additional notes will be scattered throughout this text to amplify and annotate the contents. These notes are presented in a distinct blue color.

We are releasing it separately with the expectation that Legacy Items will be one of the backbones of the Legacies series, and that as a result it will be necessary to include these documents in all future publications in the series.

What is a Legacy Item?

Shared experiences leave a metaphysical fingerprint on the world. Some fingerprints are bound to the location of the events, and can be relived in dreams at those places. Others are bound to concepts, philosophies or personalities that resonate with those who experienced the events.

GMs should prepare their players for the existence of Legacy Items by occasionally 'dropping in' such metaphysical fingerprints. Sometimes these might be relevant to the current game events (a means for the GM to impart backstory, context, and other briefing material), sometimes they will be relevant to the personality, class, or ambitions of the character experiencing them, but usually they will be red herrings of no relevance.

A few strong imprints can coalesce within an object symbolic of or relevant to the source of the imprint. This transforms the object into a connection that can bind the Legacy of the experience to the individual who wields the item.

The key first step to creating a Legacy Item is deciding whose legacy the Item will contain, and the circumstances of the event that so imprinted the world.

As the object manifests greater and greater power in the hands of the individual, it subtly shapes the personality and ambitions of the possessor until they come to embody and represent those who shared the original experience, becoming heir to their thoughts, dreams, aspirations greatness and, yes, their flaws.

The second step is to decide how the legacy will manifest in roleplaying terms. By examining these manifestations in terms of the game mechanics that would normally be associated with the roleplaying manifestations, the Inheritances (see below) can be determined. Factors to take into account are:

- the abilities of the Legacy source in comparison to those of the *typical* character who would be subject to the Legacy binding;
- the skills and attributes that would be emphasized by the personality and ambitions of the Legacy source; and,
- anything else that the Legacy source would receive a natural advantage in achieving, which can become the basis of an ability conferred by the Legacy Item. These could be racial or class abilities, supernatural abilities, or even abilities conferred by "ordinary" magic items.

When the heir passes on, or is Unbound from the Legacy Item, the Legacy begins to bind itself to a new inheritor.

It is explained elsewhere that Legacy Items are usually found in the possession of an NPC or in a dungeon constructed for the sole purpose of confining it. This offers a third alternative, but one that needs careful integration with campaign history, paying special attention to:

- Where and how the NPC came into possession of the Item - remember that he must have been powerful enough to extract it from any dungeon involved;
- What impact it had on his personality, history, and activities;
- What impact the NPC had on the game world as a result;
- How he died or who unbound him from the Legacy Item;
- What happened to them, and why the Legacy Item is not still in their possession; and,
- Why no other NPC had previously found & retrieved the item.

Answering these questions generally requires that the mechanics and specifications of the Legacy Item be fully detailed before the recent history of the item can be determined.

A Legacy always represents the philosophy and ideology and traumas of some long-lost (and possibly forgotten) group whose beliefs were strong enough to survive the destruction or failure of that group, and which find themselves a new *home* in the Legacy Item.

How is a Legacy Item Created?

In technical terms, a Legacy Item is a masterwork item that, unbeknownst to the creator, serves as a symbolic representation of a past group or race.

Sidebar: What are Masterwork Items?

It is the contention of the authors that Masterwork Items are items created by a Master Craftsman, and as such they will have a distinctive style and appearance as well as an undeniable quality.

Skilled masters, whose style is well known, craft some such items. These are famous (or infamous) artisans who routinely turn out items of this standard – the equivalents of famous artists like Michelangelo, Shakespeare, and Picasso.

Others are lucky flukes by artisans of less creative ability, though they are often quite skilled, the equivalent of one-shot wonders on pop music charts. They are usually notable for their one great success, rather than an overall body of work. Since the result is frequently unique, it is just as distinctive as the output of a Master.

The resulting stylistic signatures are the characteristics recognised by a successful application of information abilities such as “Bardic Knowledge”.

It follows that the identity of the craftsman who created any given Masterwork Item is an important clue when identifying a magic item, or a Legacy Item.

Expecting the item to become enchanted, both mage and craftsman are astonished when the enchantment fails to *take*.

The binding between Legacy and Item must be complete for the potential enchantment to be consumed and *bound* - transformed into the potential for a bond between Legacy and wielder, making it appear as though the enchantment has failed.

If the enchantment is initiated prior to the binding being complete, the capacity for this binding is consumed by the enchantment, and the item becomes an ordinary magic item.

This does not consume the Legacy, just the opportunity for it to manifest.

Legacy Items are rarely recognized because this is not the only reason enchantments fail when constructing magic items. Other causes include:

- If the enchantment is not performed correctly;
- if there is a hidden flaw in the item being enchanted;
- if there is any sort of disruption in the arcane or spiritual energies being infused in the item; or,
- if any of a dozen other things go wrong, the enchantment will fail.

Sometimes, the process of the failed enchantment destroys the item. Other times the failure just mars it, leaving an ordinary and non-enchantable item.

Such items should still register as “Magical” when a “detect magic” is cast or similar test performed, or Legacy Items are too easy to detect.

The enchantment might also become twisted and produce a cursed item. On rare occasions, the failure is the result of the intervention of an outside agency – which is the mechanism that produces a Legacy Item.

It follows that each of these failure modes should be reflected by a failure risk when new magic items are created. It is recommended that the hazard be only 1% when a “standard” magic item is being crafted, and as high as 30% when an original creation is being attempted, no matter how similar that original creation may be to a standard item, but these values are the choice of each GM. This explains *why* certain magic items are so routine and ‘common’ that they can be included in a DMG or equivalent book.

GMs may also rule that Scrolls and Potions can never become Legacy Items because they are incapable of containing power as great as that of a Legacy.

Most of the time, crafters and possessors discard Legacy Items on the assumption that they are cursed or flawed, and not to be trusted. The items are never used long enough for others to recognize their true power and worth. And even when a Legacy Item’s powers and influence are known, they often become a closely held secret.

This is an important factor that the GM should take into account when creating the ‘History’ of a Legacy Item. The fact that a significant individual achieved renown through a ‘helping hand’ should be a revelation, one that explains aspects of the character’s history that are otherwise mysteries. Note that for each such revelation, there will be those who deny it, and the resulting diminishment of achievement by the past Wielder.

Legacy Items shape the user, making them the heir to everything that defined the particular group whose Legacy the item represents. Those who recognize this can use this shaping to their own benefit by inciting involuntarily reflex reactions from the Legacy and not from the wielder.

To some extent, these reactions are 'built in' to the Legacy Item system, but the GM should consider in advance a list of triggers and the reactions they will impose. There should generally be a maximum of one such per Inheritance contained within a Legacy Item; one, two or three would be more typical.

Defining these triggers, and the associated reactions, is the third step in the creation of a Legacy Item.

On rare occasions, a Legacy Item can be deliberately created by having such an idealized representation constructed at the exact location where a fingerprint resides, an echo of some great past evil or good. More frequently, though, happenstance and coincidence create them.

But that should not stop evil cults and curious Wizards (etc) from trying – and others from trying to stop them. This is how Dr Frankenstein got his start, and anyone deliberately trying to capture the essence of a past atrocity should be about as welcome as that scientist.

How Does a Character Acquire a Legacy Item?

Any non-enchanted masterwork item might actually be a Legacy Item. The only way to know is to use the item for a period, foregoing the advantages of using an enchanted item. If the wielder's personality,

motives or objective harmonizes enough with the Legacy Item, it will begin to bind itself to him.

The GM must decide whether or not a character 'harmonizes' sufficiently with the Legacy Item – or can ensure that this will be the case by designing the item with a specific character in mind.

Without sufficient common ground in these areas for the item and the character to relate to one another, the item remains seemingly inert. In these cases, the item begins to influence the character subconsciously, raising doubts and creating confusion until the character opens up to new concepts, ideas and ideologies. The item then exploits this opening to mould the character into the being the Legacy needs him to be.

The GM can either start slipping notes to the player, informing him that his thoughts, feelings, and desires are being turned in a given direction – which can cause hard feelings and player dissatisfaction – or the DM should inform the player in advance of the trend in his feelings and leave it up to him to roleplay accordingly. The second is the preferred and recommended solution; the GM can always prompt the player after a game session if necessary.

If this process proceeds too slowly, or if the character proves resistant, the item will attempt to influence those around the wielder in a subtle manner.

More judgment on the GM's part – how slow is 'too slowly?' The answer should vary from one Legacy Item to another, and be based on the attitude that the Legacy represents.

If any manipulation of those around the wielder takes place, the technique given above is even more strongly recommended.

While the wielder is subject to overt and cumulative effects, those around him find their reactions and inclinations become stronger or weaker, which puts the wielder into circumstances more appropriate for the Legacy Item's perspective. It is usually in the Legacy Item's best interests for the character to survive, so it will not go too far. It is also in the item's best interests to avoid having its nature discovered by the wielder before the binding is complete, so it will be as subtle as possible.

These are all factors that the GM should take into account when determining how the influence of the Legacy should manifest.

It is also worth noting that a Legacy Item is not intelligent, though one may become so as the power of the Legacy grows. The effects described above are more akin to instinctive prompts on the item's part, making the nature of the Legacy harder to discern.

Although the potential is suggested in the preceding paragraph, it is strongly recommended that GMs do not create Sentient Legacy Items. Sentience would make too much about the Legacy obvious and diminish the magic and mystery.

In the hands of an unbound character

When initially wielding the item, a character gains no direct benefit. However, he will find that using the item feels right in some indefinable manner, that it imbues him with a sense of confidence and certainty he will be a significant individual in the future with power and influence. He will feel his destiny being shaped by circumstance into something greater.

This confidence can manifest occasionally as a minor benefit to the character: a +1 initiative, +1 on a bluff or diplomatic skill

check, +1 on a Fear save, +1 to hit, +1 to damage, and so on. These benefits manifest just on occasion, perhaps one time in ten, when a manifestation is possible.

It is clearly important for the GM to present the player with sufficient opportunities for these to manifest, without making the campaign about nothing *but* these circumstances. In order to achieve this, it is important for the benefit to be fairly commonplace and routine. If the benefit is not likely to come up very often, the GM should increase the die roll and/or reduce the number of successes required. It should take the character 3 levels or less – much less – to achieve the required number of successes.

Each such manifestation counts as one *aiding* of the character – a total the GM needs to track for reasons explained in the next section. When an aiding occurs, the character feels the item has made the difference between success or failure, or at least, made success easier to achieve.

It is vitally important for the GM and player to be on the same page when this happens. Once again, the best option is to arrange it in advance, then to hand the player a recurring note if necessary. (Side-note: I can never read the above paragraph without remembering Dave and “Chelsea the magic cow” from early issues of *Knights Of The Dinner Table*, in which Dave becomes convinced that the cow he bought because he could not afford a horse is good luck).

When confronted with an opportunity to act in accordance with the Legacy when he would normally **not** do so, the character should make a Will save at DC 10 to resist instinctively following the influence of the item. This is true even if the character is normally immune to or resistant to mind-altering effects.

The GM is required to enforce the making of these Will saves, even though the difficulty target makes them almost impossible to fail. The mere fact that the character is required to make a saving throw helps generate the correct atmosphere of “he’s not quite himself”, “he’s changing”, “he can’t be trusted” etc that is how the other PCs would perceive his behavior.

Equally importantly is being sure that the circumstances that require a saving throw occur several times before the character is *aided* too often.

If the character is actively opposed to the philosophy and objectives of the Legacy, the Legacy Item will begin subtly interfering in the judgment and reactions of those around the character. These effects are more subtle, as described previously, but are also harder to resist as a result; surrounding characters are required to make Will saves at DC 15 to resist.

Once again, it is important to ensure that the players know that their characters are being manipulated by an outside influence. A DC 15 save is not really all that much harder than a DC 10 – most of the time, even a first-level character will succeed – but even if the affected characters do succeed, the GM should describe an “inclination” that the characters “shake off” or words to that effect, *especially* if it is inappropriate.

And, once again, the GM must ensure that there are multiple opportunities for these rolls to be required, if they are going to be required at all.

The phrase “actively opposed to the philosophy and objectives of the Legacy” requires some amplification. An example would be a priest of Charity who is being

prompted toward greed, or an Orc who is being led toward Peace and gentility.

Note that at this point in their journey together, the item's influence is not strong enough to force the character into an alignment violation. However, it can imbue a desire to find a way to achieve a certain objective *within* the character's alignment restrictions.



Binding a character to the Legacy

Ultimately, the time will come when the character makes some form of positive declaration of ownership or destiny relating to the item or the innate Legacy objectives.

In game mechanics, this occurs involuntarily when the item has aided the character a number of times equal to the character's Wisdom score. The declaration signals that the process of binding the character to the Legacy that item contains, with the item serving as an intermediary, has commenced.

The GM has to track the number of times the character (PC or NPC) is aided by the Legacy Item, as stated previously. He should also start thinking early on about what in-game circumstances will make this declaration more dramatic.

When the character sleeps, he will begin re-living key moments of the past represented by the Legacy in his dreams or when resting or meditating. When he awakens, he will have difficulty remembering specifics, no matter how much he tries.

The table on the next page gives the Will Save DC that must be achieved in order to recall something from the dream. In practical terms, it is better for the player to make a Will Save and then determine what DC he has achieved, which then determines the quality of his recollections.

For example, a character with a Will Save of +5 rolls a 14, achieving a total of 19. This is sufficient to achieve specific recollections of what "he" was doing and seeing 'in his dream' but without context or explanation, because it is a success against a DC of 15 but does not quite achieve the next highest target (DC 20).

Note that these targets are designed to reflect the efforts of a relatively low-level character. Higher-level characters will tend to achieve the higher DC ratings with ease.

Recollection is	Will save DC
Vague and general	10
An overall impression	12
Bereft of context	15
Fragmentary, incomplete	20
Random, irrelevant	22
Specific, relevant	25

Behind The Scenes: Adaptive DC targets

One concept that was examined and discarded was the notion that these DC targets should be determined in some fashion from the character level when the Legacy Item first comes into the character's possession, taking the form of "Base + X". This notion was discarded for several valid reasons, not least of which being that it was more work than this aspect of the process should be.

The result is that higher-level characters will achieve high results against these targets more often than not – and therefore that the best time to hand out a Legacy Item is when the character is low-level.

One persuasive side-benefit of this is that characters have sufficient time to unlock most, if not all, the Legacy Powers (also known as *Inheritances*) that the Legacy Item has to offer.

A second, equally-persuasive benefit is that the price of Unbinding a Legacy is far more difficult to achieve for low-level characters, ensuring that there *is* a price to be paid by the character for accessing the benefits of the Legacy Item. It's only fair.

The mid-to-high-level alternative is for characters to encounter a Legacy Item being wielded by another character of equivalent level. If the players defeat the wielder and claim the Legacy Item as part of their booty, it will immediately start “looking around” for a more adequate host. And the PCs are right at hand...

Few of these considerations are important if your campaign is destined to enter Epic Levels. It's entirely possible in that circumstance for the characters to encounter a Wielder who has come fully into his inheritance, defeat him, and unlock the entire inheritance for themselves. The greatest virtue of a Legacy Campaign is that it grants time enough for such sweeping plotlines.

Until the binding process is complete, the character can still give up the item and its Legacy, though he will usually resist doing so once the binding process has begun, perhaps to the point of violence.

At the same time, the influence of the Legacy over the character will continue to grow. This first manifests in areas about which the Legacy directly relates. For example, a revenge-obsessed Legacy of violence toward dark elves would only trigger in circumstances where a dark elf was directly involved, and the save DC to avoid the prompting of the Legacy rises from 15 to 20.

Once the binding process begins, the GM should no longer go out of his way to present situations directly relevant to the Legacy, though he should remain alert to the potential for such possibilities.

It is worth amplifying a little on the example. A revenge-obsessive Legacy with a special antipathy for Dark Elves could be triggered by situations involving Dark Elves, situations in which the character might consider seeking revenge, or situations which bear some resemblance to the events for which revenge is being sought by the item.

Legacy Items can influence either the possessor or those around him, but not both at the same time; while it directs its energies towards achieving a binding between the character and the Legacy, the Legacy Item is no longer capable of influencing those surrounding the wielder.

It will prompt the character to take a more active interest and involvement in affairs of significance to the Legacy. Those who know the character well or observe him closely may realize he struggles with some inner battle; sometimes he wins, and sometimes he loses.

During this phase of the character's involvement with the Legacy Item, it can be easiest for the GM to consider the Legacy item to be an “additional player” who needs his share of time in the spotlight of the campaign, and whose motives and interests need to be taken into account in campaign planning without being dominant over the other players.

Over time, the Legacy will influence the character in situations where its motivations are only indirectly related. At this point, the character may even blame those against whom the Legacy is directed for what he is experiencing.

There are several parallels between the binding of a character to a Legacy Item and the collapse of a character into alcoholism or some other form of addiction – and they

are not at all coincidental. One of the characteristics of a character succumbing to alcoholism is blaming the situations he is in for his need to drink, and not his drinking for the situations he finds himself in.

Eventually, the Binding will be complete. This is signaled when the character takes an action not previously within their personality, purely because of the influence of the Legacy Item. This action is in complete violation of his normal character, beliefs and alignment.

The next critical event for the GM to have prepared for is this signal event, and the GM has plenty of time to prepare a memorable and dramatic occasion since other aspects of managing the Legacy Item have been not especially burdensome.

It is also worth emphasizing that the character makes the choice of action not because he is being manipulated but because his personality is changing. It follows that he may experience an alignment shift as a result, and will certainly record an alignment infraction, which may have further consequences.

The speed with which this process proceeds depends (in game mechanics terms) on the power of the first significant ability granted by the Legacy Item, a subject that is addressed in detail in a subsequent section.

In the interim, while the process of binding the character to a legacy remains incomplete, he will gain the benefits of an initial minor power, known as the **First Inheritance**. This is simply one (or more) of the unreliable benefits described previously: +1 to initiative, +1 on bluff or diplomatic skill checks, +1 on fear saves, +1 to hit, +1 to damage. However, the character can now use this power whenever he uses the Legacy Item.

Binding the Legacy to the character

When the binding process is complete, the character becomes the guardian and last representative of the Legacy. While he remains in control of his actions and choices, he will be aware of the inclinations of the Legacy he represents and feel urgings to behave in accordance with the beliefs and attitudes he now embodies. He gains a substantial ability, referred to as the Second Inheritance.

The GM should ensure that he has enough briefing material prepared that the player can make his own decisions without prompting. This material should emphasize that the character's dominant goals and ambitions are now those of the Legacy Item whenever they are applicable, and any goals and ambitions he held previously are now secondary to those, to be worked in around the edges of the main goals.

Presumably, there was already a measure of concordance between the two sets of goals or the character would not have been found suitable as a partner/host by the Legacy, so this will generally be less of an issue than it might first appear.

That presumption is something that the GM should take into account when initially designing or introducing the Legacy Item. He should choose an item that – at least at first – will accord with the goals ambitions and personality of the wielder.

From time to time thereafter, as the wielder gains in character levels, he has the opportunity to unlock further powers, known as Inheritances, within the Legacy Item. Should he succeed in doing so, each such power is his to call upon thereafter; should he fail to unlock the power, he will begin building up to an attempt to unlock the *next* power in the sequence. When the

character next succeeds in unlocking a new power within the Legacy Item, he will also acquire any powers that he had failed to unlock previously.

The greater the power, the more difficult the challenge to unlock that power will be.

While guidelines as to the structure and difficulty of the challenge are provided within these rules, we have intentionally left the detailed specifications as vague as possible to facilitate integration into individual campaigns.

But that means that we have foisted some of the responsibility onto the GMs of those campaigns. We've spread these responsibilities out into successive requirements rather than dumping them all on the GM at the same time. Once the responsibility for shaping the bonding with the character ceases, the GM's obligations are to monitor the player's interpretation of the bonded character in play, and to design appropriate Unlocking Challenges.

The following section, The Powers of a Legacy Item, describes how the GM allocates powers to an item. This is followed by Potential Powers of a Legacy Item, which describes the process of determining the resulting requirements before an unlocking attempt may be made to obtain a new power within the Legacy Item. The section that follows that discussion goes into the specifics of matching powers to an Unlocking Challenge.

The Powers of a Legacy Item

Legacy Items have multiple powers, from minor to major, that they grant to the wielder. Initially, the wielder will not even be certain the item is granting a power, so unreliable are the benefits while the

character is unbound to the Legacy. When the binding process begins, the character gains access to a more reliable ability, appropriate to the nature of the Legacy that the Legacy Item represents. This ability is known as the **First Inheritance**.

As the wielder and Legacy Item continue to bond together, the character levels gained mark the passage of time as the bonding experience proceeds. The power level of the Second Inheritance determines the number of levels to be gained before the bonding is complete, and the character gains the benefits of a power referred to as The Second Inheritance.

At the GM's discretion, the character may experience *flashes* of the Second Inheritance in advance of its being reliably available to the character, under circumstances especially appropriate to the Legacy. When such circumstances are present, the GM should roll a dX, where X is the number of levels remaining before the bonding is complete; on a roll of '1' the power may be called upon, once, and immediately.

There is little more frustrating to a GM than to have a major plotline just building up a head of steam when the death of the character who is most central to that plot is killed in some random, meaningless encounter – or someone else's non-random, meaningful encounter! This rule is a deliberate escape clause to reduce the risk of this occurring.

The rule also ensures periodic reminders of the presence of the Legacy Item. It's all-too-easy for that presence to be forgotten, and for the Legacy Item to become just another magic item in the character's toolkit. The fellowship can lose themselves for a while in the sights and sounds of Rivendell, but eventually something should remind them of the presence of the Ring.

Once bound to a Legacy, the character gains the opportunity to unlock additional Inheritances as he gains additional levels, presumably while representing the Legacy. There may be many such Inheritances of a minor nature, or few of more substantial power, or some combination of these two extremes.

Inheritance rankings

A non-arbitrary scale is required in order to measure the power of any given Inheritance.

Inheritances are ranked on a scale of 2 to 6. Each increase in ranking indicates the Inheritance is more powerful – roughly doubling with each +1. The following table lists Rankings and the inheritances that correspond to that Ranking:

Inheritance Ranking:	Appropriate Inheritances
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • +1 to a stat bonus • +1 to a saving roll vs. a specific effect • +1 skill bonus • 0 or 1st level spell usable 1x per day
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • +2 to a stat bonus • +2 skill bonus • +N to another numeric value; e.g. +5' base movement • +1 to a saving roll • 0 or 1st level spell usable 3x per day • 2nd or 3rd level spell usable 1x per day
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • +4 to a stat bonus • +4 skill bonus • +2N to another numeric value • Power equivalent to a feat • 0 or 1st level spell usable all the time or at will • 2nd or 3rd level spell usable 3x per day • 4th or 5th level spell usable 1x per day • +1 weapon or armor effect*
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The abilities of a minor wondrous item • +2 weapon or armor effect (refer below) • A doubling of the number of uses per day of a lesser-ranked Inheritance Power** • At will use of a lesser-ranked Inheritance Power***
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The abilities of a medium wondrous item • A +3 weapon effect (refer below) • Item Intelligence and a further ability with a ranking of 3

Table Notes:

- * Weapon effects—consult your magic item pricing rules to determine options for effects. For example, the Bane property is equivalent to a +1 weapon effect, so it is usable as a 1st rank power.
- ** The cost of **doubling the frequency** of availability of a Legacy Power is equal to 5 less the price already charged for the Legacy Power.
- *** The cost of making a power available **at will** is equal to 5 less the price already charged for the Legacy Power, plus you have to have already paid to double the frequency of availability.

All benefits are cumulative in effect.

The modifiers to the price of a Legacy Power stated in the notes above modify the Base Price, before any other considerations are applied.

The table offers usable examples but the list is **not** exhaustive. Powers and restrictions not listed are possible and acceptable, limited only to the GM's creativity.

Assess new options using the above scale as a guideline.

Inheritance ranking modifiers

The rankings determined above are then modified based on how much they express the unique nature of their Legacy:

+1 for powers **not** directly expressive of the uniqueness of the Legacy. This makes powers more *expensive*. For example, a Legacy of peace might make combat powers more expensive, so +1 to hit could be Rank 2 instead of Rank 1.

-1 for powers that are directly expressive of the uniqueness of the Legacy. This makes powers less *expensive*. For example, a Legacy of peace might make social skill powers less expensive, so +2 Diplomacy could be Rank 1 instead of Rank 2.

The GM should determine the ranking appropriate to each Inheritance after listing the powers he wishes the Legacy Item to confer.

If any aspect of the ranking process is unclear, consider the examples provided in the main body of Assassin's Amulet.

For example, the third Legacy Power of the Shield Of Madrassias doubles the frequency with which the second Legacy Power can be used. Both the second and third powers receive a -1 ranking modifier for being appropriate to the Legacy. The Second Legacy has a base ranking of 3, which becomes 2. The second has a base ranking of 5-3=2 (ie, 5 minus the base ranking of the second inheritance), which is then modified to become a 1.



The First Inheritance of the Mask Of Serephides illustrates two other important principles. The First inheritance confers three abilities which *in combination* form the first inheritance. One of these has a base rank of 2, the other two have a base ranking of 1.

Two powers of ranking 1 are the equivalent of one power of ranking 2, by definition, so these three powers are the equivalent of two powers of ranking two; which are the equivalent, in turn, of a single Inheritance Power of ranking three. So the base level of the combined benefits is three.

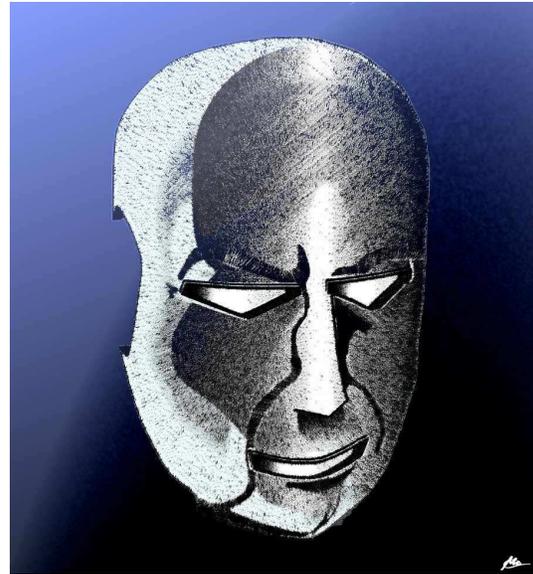
This base level is reduced by 1 because the combination is appropriate to the Legacy. But, if the actual example is studied, the reader will note that the modified rating is only one, and not two. The additional reduction has been applied because the designer of the mask has added a further restriction to the requirements that must be met to activate the Inheritance on any given day – “the Mask must be worn for at least one hour per day”.

Technically, this is an additional component of the Legacy Power – one that has been adjudged to be the equivalent of a legacy power ranked “-2”. This cancels out one of the two powers ranked “2” and leaves the base total of the first inheritance as a “2”, which is then modified to a “1” by appropriateness:

Inheritance Base Ranking = $(1+1)+2-2=2$;
Modified Inheritance Ranking = $2-1=1$.

The same approach has been used throughout the design of the Mask, with the requirements gradually becoming more and more restrictive to the character. However, the modifier does not automatically increase; in order just to be worth the same reduction for a higher Inheritance power, the impairment must increase.

This example shows that there is more than just game mechanics involved in the design of a Legacy Item; there is also a certain artistry required.



A further example of this approach, and the extremes of effectiveness that can result, can be observed by considering the First Inheritance of the Spiked Gauntlet Of B’rrastis, where the First Inheritance has a modified ranking of Zero. The character therefore comes into the First Inheritance immediately he takes possession of the Item, as described within the accompanying text.

Each example Legacy Item has been designed to be more complex in construction than the one before, each building on the foundations demonstrate in the previous example.

Total Legacy Ranking

Total the modified rankings, once known, to determine the Total Legacy Ranking. Most Legacy Items have a total of 16-20 total ranking; some, suitable only for an Epic Campaign, might have as many as 40 total ranks.

When crafting the examples, we deliberately examined how strong a guideline this range would be. The Spiked Gauntlet, mentioned earlier, and the Armor Of Atrisses, were the results; The spiked Gauntlet has a Total Inheritance Ranking of only 8, while the Armor has a total of 36. A first-level character who comes into possession of the armor might achieve the Fifth Inheritance by the time he reaches twentieth level; he cannot achieve the Sixth. The last four Inheritances total 18 ranks out of the 36 in total. In any campaign without Epic Levels, the armor would consist of only the first five Inheritances.

The greater the total, the more powerful the Legacy Item will become when the character has mastered the powers it offers.

That's not entirely true. Take another look at the Spiked Gauntlets; by the time the Ninth inheritance is achieved, perhaps only 8 character levels after the Legacy Item is first received, here's the aggregate of abilities that it can confer:

- +1 AC
- +2 to hit
- +2 damage
- +4 STR
- +2" height
- +140# weight
- +4 CON
- +4 DEX
- +4" shoulder width
- DR 2/Magic
- +2 Critical Threat Range
- +2 Critical Hit Damage Multiplier
- +2d6 non-lethal damage on a successful hit
- Critical Hit inflicts Large Scorpion Venom on the target.

There are good and valid reasons why all this is available over a span of only 8 levels.

The restrictions that the item places on the character are severe. The character's CHA is reduced by facial scarring, the character is unwilling to remove the cestus, elements of his behavior is no longer under his control, he is required to adhere to a code of conduct that makes him easy to manipulate, he cannot refuse a personal challenge, and has an out-of-control ego.

Furthermroe, should he ever remove the Legacy Item despite his unwillingness to do so, he *and anyone around him* suffer a -2 on all attack rolls, skill checks, and saves, and are Cursed with Bad Luck – the interpretation of which is left to the GM.

Nevertheless, the total benefits are easily comparable with those of the 19-level Shield Of Madrassias, but which imposes less severe restrictions on the character. So the total of Inheritance Rankings gives no more than a guide to the overall power conferred by a Legacy Item.



The table below shows the correct means of calculating the value of a Legacy Item.

Value Of A Legacy Item	Applicability
Value = 20,000gp x total ranking of revealed powers	Always
+50,000gp	if the total ranking of revealed powers is less than 16

A Legacy Item with 8 power ranks revealed has a value of 210,000gp – mostly for the abilities it is already known to confer, plus a lump sum reflecting the certainty that there are more to come.

Unlocking Powers

Until an Inheritance is unlocked, a power only exists as a potential – something the Legacy Item may grant in the future, but which it does not yet bestow. **The number of levels a character must gain to receive an opportunity to unlock the next Inheritance equals the modified power ranking of that Inheritance.**

For example, if the modified power ranking of an Inheritance is 3, the character must earn 3 levels before the character can attempt to unlock the Inheritance. The character must use the Legacy Item as the primary item of its kind throughout these levels. If the Legacy Item is a sword, for example, it must be the character's primary melee weapon.

This is a question for each GM to adjudicate. The goal is to maintain a balance between the benefits and advantages conferred by a Legacy Item and the penalties and drawbacks conferred by the Legacy Item. A single battle where the character utilizes an alternative that is more appropriate to the circumstances is not a concern; having the character routinely pull out some other

weapon is a different situation. If the character is not meeting the requirement, the GM should warn the player before it is too late.

The penalty for failing to meet this requirement is simple: that level or levels earned does not count toward unlocking the next Inheritance.

Repeated infractions may require the Legacy Item to exact stronger punishments – inflicting pain on the character, or getting him into trouble, or otherwise punishing him. Remember that Legacy Items are an expression of dark, angry or tortured experiences – and that doesn't imply a high degree of patience or maturity. In fact, "petulant child" probably comes closer to the mark.

Unlocking an Inheritance Power requires more than merely achieving the character levels specified. The possessor must also complete one or more tasks, skill checks or quests specified by the GM as the key to unlocking that power. These tests are known as an Unlocking Challenge. After the possessor succeeds at the Unlocking Challenge, the power becomes unlocked and readily available to the character. As soon as a character qualifies to attempt an Unlocking Challenge, the process of earning levels toward unlocking the next power begins.

Roleplaying requirements

Unlocking Challenges are required because they encourage characters to roleplay the effects of the Legacy. Legacy Items are powerful, but the price of that power is an influence shaping the character's opinions, reactions and thoughts. This manifests in terms of game mechanics as a roleplaying requirement.

The Legacy carried by a Legacy Item is as much a part of the personality of the wielder as any other. It need not be dominant, but it *must not* be secondary.

The GM and the player should agree on the nature of the personality effects of the Legacy when reaching the point where character can no longer discard the Legacy Item. The GM should formulate background elements prior to this event to serve as the foundation for this influence, and use the binding period to give the player—and the character—fair warning *in-game* of what lies before them.

One of the major reasons for the binding period (during which the character is not committed to the Legacy) is to facilitate a considered decision from a metagame perspective.

The GM defines the Legacy and the powers it grants. The *player* determines how that Legacy will shape the character. The GM must enforce these mutual decisions, and should review the actions and decisions of the character each time a character levels up to ensure the Legacy is being properly reflected in the character's behavior.

This does not grant the GM a veto over the choices of the player; however, it does require him to point out that failure to act appropriately will have consequences for the character. In this respect, the Legacy is not

unlike an alignment restriction or the code of behavior to which a paladin should adhere.

Unlocking a new Inheritance Power is akin to an end-of-year exam in the subject of "behavior appropriate to the Legacy." It's not enough to overcome whatever Unlocking Challenge the GM places before the character with a skill roll or a battle; the manner of the solution is as important as the answer.

Unlocking challenge difficulty

Exactly how difficult a challenge should the GM put before the character? Bear in mind that unless it is important to the specific Legacy, there is no requirement for the character to solve the problem or defeat the challenge unassisted by the other PCs.

The answer comes in two parts: number of steps or encounters, and significance of the challenge.

The first should equal the count of Inheritances the character has already received, plus one.

The second should equal the total Modified Inheritance Rating of powers already received by the character, plus the number of steps or encounters. This number becomes the DC of any skill roll required, or the EL of the opponents to defeat, to achieve success in a stage.

For example, a specific Legacy Item might have granted its wielder 4 Inheritances so far, with a total rating of 14. Now the character faces an Unlocking Challenge to receive his Fifth Inheritance from the Legacy. That challenge should consist of a mini-adventure or subplot of 5 stages (4 Inheritances received, plus 1), each of which requires a skill check of DC19 (14 total rating plus 5) or a battle against a foe or group of foes of EL19.

Since presumably the character is level 14 or 15, and presuming that he has three allies of equivalent level, this is either a difficult but not impossible challenge or a fair fight.

Depending on the player and his inclination to contribute to the overall metaplot of the campaign, the GM may permit the player to assist in the design of this mini-adventure/side-quest/subplot, or may spring it on the character blind. It may form part of the ongoing plotlines within the campaign or it may be a side-quest completely divorced from those plotlines.

GMs should bear in mind it is not enough for the character and his companions (if any) to overcome these purely mechanical challenges; the roleplay component is just as essential, and the design of the Unlocking Challenge should provide an opportunity for that roleplay.

Impact on characters

When discussing these notions with playtesters, the question was posed whether these challenges should be real events, with substantial impact on the lives and history of the world and the affected characters, or whether they should take the form of dreams or illusions with no external effect.

Opinion on this question was divided. Some argued the training during the bonding stage had established a precedent, while others took the position that, since the Legacy and its powers were real, if metaphysical, so should the challenge be, and that enforcing some impact on the outside world of the character coming to represent the Legacy was appropriate.

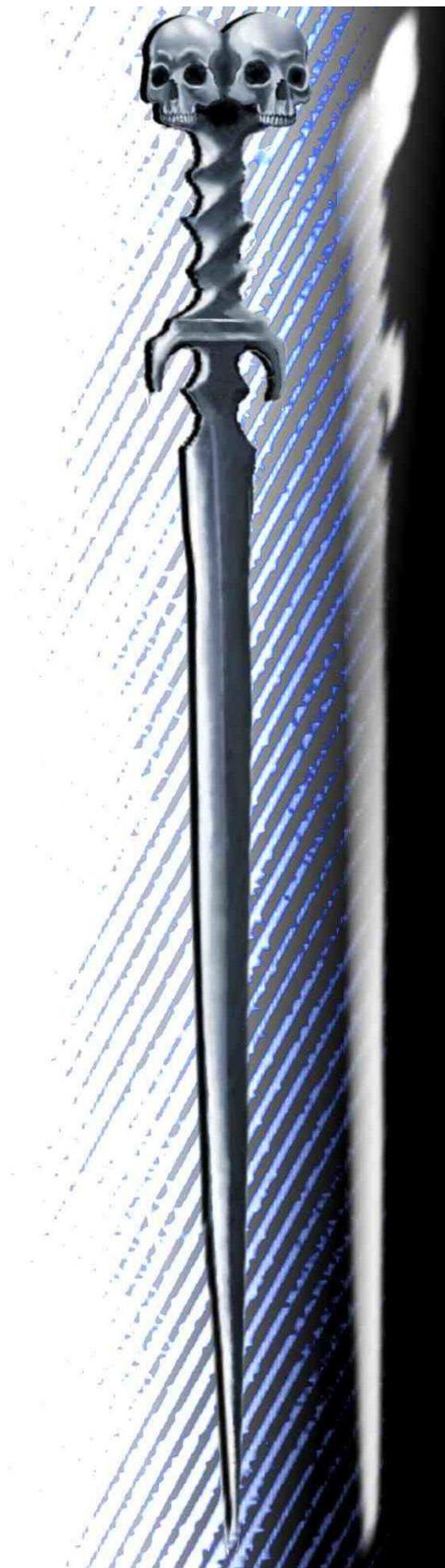
While each GM is free to rule on this matter as he or she sees fit, a consensus eventually emerged in the aforementioned debate:

- Whenever possible, the GM should undertake to make the challenges real, with real impact on the game world.
- Where this is not possible, the Legacy will twist the perceptions of the possessor (but not his companions) to make events seem relevant. For example, making the population of a town appear to be bugbears, trolls or other race appropriate to trigger Legacy-derived behavior.
- If this is also not possible, only then should the challenge take place entirely within the confines of the character's mind. In this case, the GM should enlist the assistance of the other players at the table.

We want to emphasize an important distinction between these options.

With the first two alternatives, there are genuine risks, and hence there should be genuine rewards and consequences. In the third case there is no risk — a character who is killed simply wakes up from the dream — so there should be *no* rewards. That means the character should gain no experience points for success, just as he loses nothing in the event of failure; his sole reward is the activation of the next Inheritance, his sole punishment for failure the lack of same.

Furthermore, the GM can interpret the middle ground as imposing circumstances that make an encounter more difficult. If this is the case, he may offer additional rewards.



The Effects of a Legacy

Legacy Items are a high-fantasy plot device sufficiently manageable and flexible to operate even in a low-fantasy world. By virtue of the fingerprints significant actions impart onto the game world, they form a different type of connection between the campaign history and the contemporary gaming environment, a new set of plot threads you can weave into an existing tapestry.

GMs can use Legacy dreams as a conduit to additional game world background, revealing past events and campaign briefing material as it becomes relevant. This offers an advantage for roleplaying by sheltering players from the omniscient awareness of the past conferred from a more substantial historical overview.

Furthermore, the existence of Legacy Items implies a connection and cohesion to past events and primal conflicts that can serve as motivation and a source of plotlines, a metaphysical backdrop of which contemporary events are a modern consequence. They not only imply high-fantasy cosmic conflict, but they can place it at arm's length from the campaign, permitting the GM to enjoy the best of both worlds.

The effects and implications of a Legacy Item extend far beyond the immediate consequences upon the campaign. They can provide a vehicle for a wider narrative, enriching the campaign and making possible stories that would otherwise be beyond reach.

Contemplate a vast historical conflict between two ideologically opposed forces such as Good and Evil, Order and Chaos, even Centralized Authority versus Liberty

and Independence. For convenience, we will abbreviate all such conflicts as Left versus Right. These two forces, Left and Right, fought a war-to-end-all-wars in the distant past, with no clear winner. The extreme adherents of both causes battled each other to the point of annihilation. However, the Legacies of these ideologies lives on, forming a central spark that drives the evolution of the societies that have arisen from the ashes. This shapes those cultures, drawing those more sympathetic to one side than the other into alliances and coalitions, until two factions once again emerge, one the embodiment of Left, and the other of Right, each wielding their respective Legacy Items. Then once again, the two sides will clash in the latest incarnation of their never-ending conflict, seeking to resolve the irresolvable, until both are again destroyed, and the cycle starts anew.

The clash between these two forces is high-fantasy. However, any other point in this cycle of never-ending conflict can serve as a background template for mid- or low-level campaigns possessing the scope of the high-fantasy concept without the baggage.

This is but one of many ways Legacy Items can connect past with present to enrich a campaign. Any philosophy, ideology or point of collective identification, if held strongly enough, can perpetuate itself beyond its history into a contemporary game era by using a Legacy Item as a vehicle.

On a character

Legacy Items provide a method for character development in-game beyond encounters. The impact of the Legacy on the character – from a bias to an abiding influence that must be constantly battled to a complete consumption of the original personality – offers a choice to the player, in consultation

with the GM, to go far beyond the normal range of character options.

No matter how limited the change, however, every character possessing a Legacy Item should be marked in some way by the burden. He will see that which no living eyes have apprehended, hear sounds from an age long past, experience events from long before his time. These might have little relevance to the contemporary era or be directly relevant. They might reinforce character flaws or teach wisdom, or both. At best, a Legacy Item should be a mixed blessing.

It is the GM's responsibility to ensure this is the case by creating some downside, some price to pay, for possession of such a powerful object. The character should be the focus for an incomprehensible and implacable force from a different time who sees the world in absolute terms; the character should feel the impact of these circumstances.

On game balance

It has often been suggested amongst Mike's players that wizards trade low-level effectiveness for greater power at higher levels, while other character classes either gain most of the power early, or at the least, progress in a more orderly fashion. It follows that since Legacy Items act to reduce the short-term advantage of magic items to a character in exchange for more power in the longer term, they shift game balance a little closer to the progression of the wizard.

The greater the total number of Inheritance Levels of potential powers within the Legacy Item, the longer the period of deferral and the more substantial the eventual benefit.

It follows that GMs should be wary of Legacy Items in the hands of wizards, who might be so compromised at lower levels that they cannot survive to come into their full power, and who may overwhelm the campaign if they do so. Careful selection of Inheritances can mitigate this risk, and might even counter it by providing wizards additional security in the areas of greatest weakness at lower levels.

Underestimated inheritance value

The procedure outlined in previous sections provides a broad basis for the selection of Inheritances and valuing the power they provide relative to each other. The procedure is not infallible, so GMs should use their own judgment in advance (and in consideration of the encounters players are likely to encounter in the future) and in hindsight to reassess the value of each inheritance power.

If a power has been undervalued, the GM can easily compensate by deliberately overvaluing the next Inheritance Power.

While the initial description of the Legacy Item provides a road map, it should not be taken as gospel (and should not be revealed to the player). Rather, the planned powers conferred by the Legacy Item should be an evolution of intent throughout the campaign.

Too many legacies

Beware overpopulating the campaign with Legacy Items. These should be rare items. One, or at worst one matched set, in an adventuring party is sufficient; more can unbalance the campaign. If players without Legacy Items become dissatisfied, it is a sure sign the GM has not highlighted the penalties and downsides of having such an item.

The ideal balance makes the choice of accepting a Legacy Item difficult due to its good and bad elements.

Legacy sets

One notion sure to occur to GMs is the potential of Legacy Sets – matched items intended to join or work together to create a whole greater than the sum of their parts. For example, a suit of mail, shield, helm and sword, all of which embody a portion of a Legacy.

In theory, there is nothing wrong with this, since the process of designing a Legacy Item balances disadvantage with advantage. A character coming into possession of such a set sacrifices even more early advantage for even more eventual power.

Yet game balance can be precarious. Too much of a good thing can easily overwhelm a campaign. It follows that unless you are sure of where you are going with the construction of such sets, it is better to embrace the rule of thumb offered in *Too many legacies*, above.

Not everyone leaves a legacy

It follows from the rarity of Legacy Items that most groups do not leave a Legacy. No one knows the exact combination of obsession and circumstance that create one.

Some have even speculated that an epic magic of unprecedented ability has propagated through time from the distant future (since there is no evidence such a spell has been cast in the past). Perhaps he tried to ensure the survival of a specific Legacy, and was indirectly responsible for the creation of all the others as a side effect.

Severing a Bonding

Severing a bond is not normally possible; at the time of the Second Inheritance, the character accepts the burden of the bonding of his own free will, after ample warning. Nevertheless, it might become possible – under special circumstances.

Should a character wish to be unbound, each Inheritance, from most recently Unlocked to First Inheritance, must be removed using either a Wish or Miracle spell. Stat or XP losses associated with these spells *cannot be borne by the bonded character*. The bond itself can then be broken with a Remove Curse or Remove Blessing.

That means that either the character's companions must so badly want to break him free of the item that they will make this sacrifice to do so, or that the player who wishes to be rid of the item must seek out those who – willingly or unwillingly – will fuel his attempt to obtain freedom.

Should the character not wish the bonding to be unbound, he will gain the full benefits of saving throws, spell resistance, etc, in overcoming any attempt to unbind him forcibly. Further, his Wis bonus adds to his benefit on any such roll (or acts as a penalty to those attempting to overcome any resistance).

This is clearly the fantasy equivalent of staging an intervention.

Consequences Of Severing A Bonding

The character can never again wield the item without risking the Reinstatement of the bond and Inheritances, as described below. Severing a bonding will not reverse any physical or psychological effects on the character. If he had lost the ability to see

green, he is forever colorblind; if he suffered the delusion he was a gifted singer, he will still break into song at the drop of a hat. Nor can the character ever bond with a different Legacy Item unless it is part of a matched set of such items, which would trigger reinstatement of the original bond.

I (Mike) remember a sequence in the history of the DC Comics character, Dr Fate, in which he abandoned the wearing of the full-face helmet (and most of his arcane powers). While he wore the mask, his body was possessed by the ancient Egyptian deity who fueled his spells; so subtle was this control that it had persisted for many years without his being aware of it. Eventually a menace arose that was so overwhelming, he had no choice but to don the full-face helmet once again – uncertain whether or not he would ever be permitted to remove it. The preceding rules were very much inspired by this and similar scenes, in which a character who thought he had succeeded in overcoming his fate is forced to submit to it in order to save everything he holds dear.

This type of plot makes for a great story, full of drama and emotion and pathos. So long as it's done with the connivance and cooperation of the player concerned, the results should be memorable.

Reinstatement of a severed Bond

The moment a character begins severing their bonding, divide his total XP by 100 (round up) and record the total on the character sheet. If the character ever wields the item again, convert the experience he earns while doing into a percentage of the result. He must make a d% roll against this total. If he rolls the amount or lower, the bonding and Inheritance are restored exactly as they were, though any character levels gained in between do not count toward the next Inheritance.

For example, a 12th level character with 69,272xp bonds to a Legacy Item. His party members stage an intervention, each sacrificing 5,000xp to have three Inheritances removed and the bond broken. $69272 / 100 = 692$ xp. If the character earns 220 xp wielding the Legacy Item, he has a $220/692 = 31\%$ chance of the bond being restored. (If the character earns more than 692 xp, this chance is 100%.)

Reshaping a bonding

It may be possible to reshape a bond, removing some undesirable side effects and replacing them with a less-severe version. I recommend this require an epic spell if the campaign has such; if not, the precise mechanism for doing so is left to you.

This idea was very much influenced by the writings of Raymond E. Feist.

There are a number of restrictions to any such reshaping:

- The side effect must not yet have been inflicted upon the character
- The caster must know exactly what the undesirable side-effect will be (this may require considerable arcane research, scrying, and the like)
- The subject must be willing or ignorant of the process
- The caster must expend a minimum xp of $1000 \times$ the total rating of Inheritances received to achieve each shaping. This expenditure may be in a lump sum or in smaller amounts spread over time at your discretion.

For example, if a character has received four Inheritances with a total rating of 11 between

them, each shaping costs 11,000 xp and can only blunt **one** future effect of the Legacy.

It should go without saying that the wielder cannot pay this cost without explicit permission from the GM.

Analyzing, encountering and destroying a legacy

Legacy Items are artifacts for the purposes of Mordenkainen's Disjunction and similar spells. They are magic items with reference to Detect Magic and similar spells. Only powers that have been Unlocked, plus the next Inheritance to be unlocked, can be analyzed using Identify and similar spells.

The last rule above is very much a concession – the original concept was that only powers that had been unlocked already could be Identified. But that's because Mike has a particular dislike of this spell and its stultifying effects on the mystery and fantasy of magic, and thereby on plot, mood, and tone within the campaign as a whole.

In all other respects, these rules reflect a concept that is somewhere in-between a Relic or Artifact and a typical magical item. In some respects, they are similar to one, and in others, they resemble the other; the net result is of a blending of the two concepts.

This creates a continuity of arcane creation, a spectrum with potions and scrolls and other one-shot devices at one end and Relics at the other. More permanent magical items occupy the lowest third of this spectrum, Relics and Artifacts the uppermost third, and Legacy Items the middle ground.

That makes them difficult to destroy. Only unbound Legacy Items can be destroyed and doing so is still an epic task akin to the destruction of the One Ring.

The safer course is to lock the item up somewhere, place guardians and traps around them (self-sustaining ones if possible) and then try to eliminate all knowledge of where it is hidden – to create a dungeon, in other words.

One could even create more such depositaries with no exceptional treasures and scatter them around, just to make it harder for anyone searching for the Legacy Item to pick out the right one.

If the GM opts for this approach, he should deliberately salt the campaign with such old-school Dungeons (it's a convenient explanation for why such unlikely things exist) and should also liberally sprinkle the myths and legends known to the characters with tales of those who found their way into legend or infamy due to what they have found. It's called *fair warning*.

Nevertheless, the majority of Legacy Items encountered in a game should be encountered in the hands of an NPC. **Never** permit a PC a Legacy Item during character creation without careful thought by the referee.

Naming Legacy Items

Legacy Items generally take the format "The XXXX of NNNN." In general, Legacy Items are named for one of six sources:

- The craftsman responsible
- The first, most famous or most infamous wielder
- The name given to the item by the first wielder
- The source of the Legacy, if that can be identified
- The location in which the Legacy was discovered or recovered
- The location in which the Legacy was first instrumental in dramatically changing the course of events

I encourage you to retain the general format of the names given to Legacy Items because it conveys a Legacy Item's uniqueness. Variations on the source of "NNNN" also work, and the choice made should reflect the history of the item. Every Legacy Item should have a backstory.

Literary References

Many references inspire the framework for Legacy Items, notably:

- The One Ring in *Lord Of The Rings*
- The Orb Of Aldur in *The Belgariad*
- The principles of different aspects of magic in *Master Of The Five Magics*
- The armor of Ashen-Shugar in *Magician*.

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