Elves and Orcs: Building Cross-Cultural Relationships (Critical Success)

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In most fantasy literature since Tolkien, elves and orcs live at constant odds with each other. Among other reasons are their cultural differences and their inability to see each others' viewpoints. Elves typically live for a millennium, whereas orcs have shorter lifespans than humans. Time alive, both how long it's been and how long one expects to have left, changes perspective.

Even on a human level, I see this play out. Teens tend to feel like they have unlimited time, and depending on how their formative years have played out, that can mean unlimited possibilities or a sense of hopelessness. The older I get, I expect to have less years remaining than I've already had, so I feel a sense of urgency to accomplish my dreams, whereas others my age or older have given up.

Either way, we can learn from each other, and that's something I love about my D&D group, which ranges in age from teens to 40's. Unlike many games and sports, D&D and other tabletop role-playing games are cooperative and depend on players working together toward a goal. They have to help each other and use teamwork, and those different perspectives they bring to the

table help to give them success.

But more than just success in the game, they build relationships. Teens benefit drastically from multiple positive relationships with adults besides family, teachers, and clergy, not that I'm discounting those by any means. They need adults who choose to spend time with them out of mutual respect instead of perceived obligation. (Yes, parents, teachers, and clergy are usually in those positions in the first place because they care, but that's not always the teen's perception.) Correctly managed, D&D can foster those multigenerational relationships based on the collaborative work and mutual respect that lead to success in the game.

Promoting those relationships is remarkably simple and boils down to two principles: encouragement and common ground.

When a teen experiences encouragement from adults communicating to them that they're lovable, capable, and worthwhile, it builds their self-worth and helps cement those relationships. Adults can communicate this by asking the teens for help and complimenting them on their accomplishments. They also experience support when they find others experiencing the same feelings, even in different circumstances (common ground). At the same time, this helps adults recognize the unique contributions that teens bring. And all of this comes from sincere care and camaraderie.

While I've specifically focused on adult-teen relationships here, these same principles apply to any number of cross-cultural relationships, whether racial, socio-economic, political, or any other dynamic, even if all participants are the same generation.

have moved toward breaking down in-game racial boundaries, which the Caphora campaign setting did from its inception, and if we're to get stronger in real life, we can follow this example. Maybe elves and orcs can respect each other after all.

Random Fantasy City Magical Feature Generator

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Wanting to add magical elements to the cities to my high fantasy Dungeons & Dragons campaign, since it's difficult to just think of elements out of the blue, I came up with this list as an idea generator. Here's how it works:

1. Choose how many features to include. This will be determined by the level of magic in your world. For my high fantasy world, you can use the Number of Features formula below.
2. Roll D100 on the Feature Type table. That will tell you which table of features to roll on.
3. Roll on the corresponding Feature table (Natural, Man-made, or Supernatural)

4. Then, roll D100 on the Phenomenon table to determine the type of phenomenon.
5. If it tells you to roll again, combining, roll on the same table unless otherwise instructed, and figure out how to combine the two items.
6. Use your imagination to combine feature & phenomenon to determine what fits best in your campaign world. Don't forget the history of the feature and how it has affected the city and its residents.

Number of Features

For every 1000 people in a city, roll 1D6. Every 6 indicates one magical feature. (This can also be used for rural regions, but I suggest 1D6 for every 3000-5000, but note that the feature may be hidden and unknown to the populace, and the party could travel through the region and never know it's there.)

Feature Type (D100)

01-35 Natural
36-80 Man-Made
81-95 Supernatural
96-00 Roll twice, combining

Feature

Natural (2D20)

2. Stream
3. Hill
4. Falls

5. Valley
6. Tree
7. Grove
8. Sky
9. Large stone / Obelisk
10. Grass
11. Weed/wildflower
12. Dirt
13. Cave
14. Pond
15. Mud/lava/geyser/tar
16. Weather
17. Vines
18. Pit/chasm
19. Footprint(s)
20. Nest/Den
21. Rock formation
22. Dam
23. Crater
24. Ridge
25. Orchard
26. Dry bed (river/lake)
27. Local flora
28. Local fauna
29. Spring
30. Chain of ponds/lakes
31. Underground tunnel network
32. Local fungus
33. Fossils
34. Woods
35. Dead Flora
36. Dead Fauna
37. A formerly prevalent local creature
38. A plot of land

39. Roll again, combining
40. Roll again, 1 Man-Made & Roll again on Feature Type Table

Man-Made Feature (2D20)

 2. Shop Cart
 3. One building
 4. Wall
 5. Arboretum
 6. Garden
 7. Hanging garden
 8. Well
 9. District
10. Road
11. Sewer
12. Monument
13. Cemetery
14. Field
15. Dock
16. Farm
17. Mine
18. Quarry
19. Fountain
20. Entire City
21. Military/guard
22. Dump/Junkyard
23. Bridge
24. Altar/shrine
25. Aqueduct
26. Zoo
27. Statue/sculpture
28. Museum
29. Crossing
30. Dam

31. Path/trail
32. Park
33. A city block
34. Tent
35. Gazebo
36. Every one of a certain kind of building in town
37. The marketplace
38. Dungeon
39. Roll again, combining
40. Roll again, 1 Man-Made & Roll again on Feature Type Table

Supernatural Feature (2D8)

2. Meteor
3. Portal
4. Magical technology
5. Undead
6. Light
7. Darkness
8. A paired location (2 places magically connected)
9. Magical inscription / circle
10. Spacial / Dimensional anomaly
11. Laboratory
12. Ancient magical site
13. Crash site
14. Magical juncture
15. Site of magical event with residual effects
16. Supernatural Being

Phenomenon (D100)

1. Has layers
 2. Glows
 3. Defies physics
 4. Wards off something
 5. Is higher than expected
 6. Is lower than expected
 7. Is in an odd part of town
 8. Is a source of conflict
 9. Is carnivorous
10. The city depends on it
11. Oppresses someone
12. Associated with a curse
13. Houses a special species
14. Houses a celebrity
15. Is ruins
16. Burns
17. Is wetter than expected
18. Offers a unique resource
19. Is built in the shape of something
20. Roll twice
21. Floats
22. Is a location of a sport or game
23. Is bigger on the inside
24. Is the location of a tragedy
25. Is a hive-like network
26. Is a center of criminal activity
27. Is not what it seems
28. Is an unexpected color
29. Has an unexpected odor
30. Has an unexpected sound / music
31. Is believed to be haunted
32. Is shrouded in fog
33. Splits the city
34. Is an unexpected shape

35. Is associated with a specific creature
36. Is unexpectedly lacking/missing
37. Is a source of transportation
38. Is much larger than expected
39. Is much smaller than expected
40. Is a canopy
41. Is an unexpected temperature
42. Is difficult to access
43. Is domed
44. Is much more numerous than expected
45. Disappears
46. Is a source of knowledge
47. Is alive/animate
48. Explodes
49. Has unique walls
50. Is unexpectedly indoors/outdoors
51. Transforms something
52. Is made from a carcass/skeleton/shell/Carapace
53. Inhibits some magic
54. Augments some magic
55. Is a holy site
56. Used to be something else
57. Is carved out of something
58. Is guarded
59. Is an impossible shape
60. Has different gravity
61. Is made of an unexpected material
62. Is slowly being destroyed
63. Is sideways or upside-down
64. Has smaller parts coming from it
65. Is crystalline
66. Changes into something else
67. Is longer than expected
68. Is impassable

69. Is unexpectedly flat
70. Is burned
71. Previously housed something else (hive, web, etc.)
72. Is toxic
73. Is held up by something
74. Is associated with another plane (outer or inner)
75. Is full of something
76. Is frozen or petrified
77. Is in something unexpected
78. Is under something
79. Is aware
80. Is clockwork
81. Is hollow
82. Wild magic
83. Unexpectedly controlled / uncontrolled
84. Associated with a unique magical material
85. Moves
86. Corrosive
87. Controls minds/emotions
88. Mimics a spell
89. Drains something
90. Is invisible
91. Changes size
92. Something will come/hatch/spawn from it
93. Affects one or more senses
94. Causes disappearances
95. Is unexpectedly tough
96. Is unexpectedly vulnerable
97. Is a location of a valuable resource
98. Most people don't know it's there
99. Is a treasured landmark
100. Roll twice, combining