

ARCANE EMPORIUM, VOL. VII

WELCOME TO THIS MONTH'S EDITION OF Arcane Emporium, a monthly publication presented by Dungeon Master's Workshop. Arcane Emporium is a catalogue of homebrew rules, weapons, spells, monsters, and much more. Our mission is to provide the best content for Dungeons & Dragons, and roleplaying in general.

This month marks a milestone for our operation as we have gained our first sponsor, **Wyrnwood**. Wyrnwood is a team of talented craftspeople who build every accessory you could need for many gaming hobbies, including Dungeons & Dragons. Head over to Wyrnwood's website and enter the promo code **'DMW'** to get free domestic shipping on your purchase. Additionally, we are holding a giveaway for a Wyrnwood dice tray, the details for which can be found below.

This month's article is "Top Ten Worst Spells", which examines and revises 10 of the most unbalanced, illogical, or simply broken spells in the Player's Handbook. These revisions address the fundamental issues present in each spell, and are sure to be popular among players and dungeon masters alike.

We would also like to take this opportunity to announce that, going forward, we would like to add a section to this periodical with questions or comments from you, our reader. Unsure about why we wrote something the way we did? Like it, and have something more to add? Simply write to us at dmsworkshop@gmail.com with your comments under the subject "The Third Eye". We reserve the right to select and edit any submission, and the editor reserves the right to make any comments immediately following the letter.

As we aim to grow into a larger publication, we will continue to solicit sponsors and contributors to provide more content every month for your enjoyment. More contributors means more variation in the content provided, and thus it falls to you, the reader, to let us know what you want to see in these pages. We live in an age where it is easier than ever to let your interests be known, and we are very much interested

in hearing from you. Should we aim to have more player options like new archetypes and spells, or should we do more articles like "Top Ten Worst Spells", presented later in this issue? Should we include reviews and analyses? Fiction and concept art? What did you dislike from our earlier editions? You can let us know by leaving a comment on the page for this article, or on our Facebook page. Remember, *telepathy* may be a D&D spell, but we writers are not wizards we can only follow up on your interests if you let us know what they are.

CONTEST DETAILS

There are several ways to enter your name for the Wyrnwood dice tray giveaway. First, you can subscribe to our newsletter, which will also keep you informed about new posts. Additionally, you can reach out to us on social media using [#dmsworkshop](https://twitter.com/dmsworkshop) to tell us, in the spirit of this month's edition, which is your most hated D&D spell. For a complete list of the social media platforms that you can use to enter the giveaway, click [here](#). The contest closes July 15th, so be sure to enter before then! We'll include the results of the poll in our next issue.

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Cover art: "Bretonia" by Rado Javor

TOP TEN WORST SPELLS

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AGIC IS THE MOST CONSPICUOUS feature of fantasy, and mighty spell effects have been a staple of *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* from the earliest editions. Many spells, like *magic missile*, have long legacies, while others, like *counterspell*, are new to the

game with 5E. Having played the game for more than 15 years, I have seen my fair share of both useless and broken spells across many editions, and I am not surprised to find 5E no different.

To be fair, with 78 pages of spell descriptions in the *Player's Handbook* alone, there are bound to be spells that are not appropriately balanced. To examine all of the spells that should be revised, however, would be an endeavour far beyond the scope of this article, and so I will focus on the most egregious offenders in terms of game balance and playability, roughly in order of how badly they require reworking.

The spells examined in this article will be balanced according to three important factors: their general vs. situational use, their strength and versatility in comparison with other spells of their level, and whether they fulfill their theme. Fair warning: some revisions will be substantial.

10. SHILLELAGH

Shillelagh (from the Irish blackthorn cudgel) is the go-to spell for any druid that wants to hold their own in combat when their wild shapes are used up. At early levels, it puts you on par with other melee-oriented characters. It has no concentration component, so you can cast *barkskin* as well and have the AC, hit points, and attack bonus of a rogue. It's also a cantrip, so you have unlimited uses of it.

The Problem.

The problem with this spell is that it is only half as useful in the only practical circumstances that it will see use. Certainly, attacking using your spellcasting ability modifier is helpful, and early access to magic damage can make a big difference, but the other half of the spell is the problem. The majority of the time, a druid will cast this spell on a wooden staff that is their druid focus. Because a quarterstaff is a versatile weapon which deals 1d8 when used two-handed, and any time that you're going to attack there isn't going to be a reason to not use it two-handed, having a spell which makes it deal the same damage is rather pointless. All in all, it makes the spell somewhat less attractive for one of your very limited cantrip choices.

The Solution.

This spell appears first on the list because the solution is the easiest. All that needs to be done is for the damage to be increased by one step from what it would normally be. If your club would normally do 1d4 bludgeoning damage, it now does 1d6. If your quarterstaff dealt 1d8 bludgeoning damage when wielded with two hands, it now deals 1d10.

See the revised spell entry below for how this spell should be written.

SHILLELAGH

Transmutation cantrip

Casting Time: 1 bonus action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (mistletoe, a shamrock leaf, and a club or quarterstaff)

Duration: 1 minute

The wood of a club or quarterstaff you are holding is imbued with nature's power. For the duration, you can use your spellcasting ability instead of Strength for the attack and damage rolls of melee attacks using that weapon, and the weapon's damage die increases; a club's damage die becomes 1d6, and a quarterstaff's damage die becomes 1d8 (or 1d10 if used two-handed). The weapon also becomes magical, if it isn't already. The spell ends if you cast it again or if you let go of the weapon.

9. RARY'S TELEPATHIC BOND

Let's face it, players will meta-game. You can remind them until the cows come home that their two characters are across the room, trying to stay quiet and, therefore, cannot communicate with each other via secret whispers, and they will still shout out "No, don't do that!" as one player at the table to another, altering what the character does even if the comment is retracted.

This can make for some very frustrating situations where one character has knowledge that another one lacks, hence why this spell was created to put an end to the invariable arguments that will arise.

The Problem.

The problem with this spell is that it is a 5th-level spell. There's simply no decent reason for this. You can hurl bolts of lightning, radiate incredible amounts of healing, and even reverse death itself all with lower-level spells, and yet to project your thoughts through a telepathic link is somehow more complicated than all of that. Not only is it a waste of a 5th-level spell, it also comes far too late for its benefits to be seriously considered; by the time players are able to learn this spell, they've already been doing everything the spell allows them to do, albeit not by the game's rules.

The Solution.

This needs to be a 1st-level spell. Players need to have access to this spell immediately in order to appreciate its effects and get into the habit of using it. Now, allowing access to the spell so early will mean toning down some of its effects so as not to overshadow other 1st-level spells. There are a few ways we can do this: we can reduce the number of creatures you can affect, we can reduce the duration, and we can reduce the distance it covers. Out of these options, distance is the only thing that you can change that doesn't fundamentally alter the applicability of the spell within the circumstances you would use it.

See the revised spell entry below for how this spell should be written.

TELEPATHIC BOND

1st-level divination (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 30 feet

Components: V, S, M (pieces of eggshell from two different kinds of creatures)

Duration: 1 hour

You forge a telepathic link among up to eight willing creatures of your choice within range, psychically linking each creature to all the others for the duration. Creatures with Intelligence scores of 2 or less aren't affected by this spell.

Until the spell ends, the targets can communicate telepathically through the bond whether or not they have a common language. The communication is possible up to a range of 500 feet.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the range of the telepathic effect extends to 1 mile. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, the range of the telepathic effect becomes unlimited, though it can't extend to other planes of existence.

8. MORDENKAINEN'S SWORD

Thematically, *Mordenkainen's sword* is amazing. Everything about magic is doing what someone else can do, but bigger and better, and this spell follows that same pattern. You may have a sword, but I have a plane of force that is bigger than you are, does more damage than your puny hunk of iron, and floats. Did I mention that I can also stab you with it from 60 feet away?

The Problem.

Much like *Rary's telepathic bond*, the problem with this spell is not what it does, but that it doesn't do enough for its level. Instead of casting *Mordenkainen's sword*, a spellcaster could cast *flaming sphere* at 7th level and deal 7d6 damage (half on a successful save), almost double the average damage of *Mordenkainen's sword* if the latter even hits. Even *Bigby's hand* cast at 5th level has better average damage, not to mention more versatility. All said, this spell is simply inferior to anything else that you could be doing that would use this spell slot.

The Solution.

Unlike *Rary's telepathic bond*, this is a spell that we don't necessarily want to reduce in level to make it more appropriate. In this case, we want it to remain a 7th-level spell, but be worth taking. However, to make it appealing, we need to give the spell a mechanic beyond simply dealing damage. The best option that comes to mind is to force summoned creatures or extraplanar entities struck by the sword to succeed a save against being banished, thus allowing the sword the added chance to simply remove enemies from the field. This also means that the caster can drop *banish* from their list of prepared spells if they take this spell that day.

See the revised spell entry below for how this spell should be written.

MAGE'S MIGHTY MACHETE

7th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a miniature platinum sword with a grip and pommel of copper and zinc, worth 250 gp)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You create a sword-shaped plane of force that hovers within range. It lasts for the duration.

When the sword appears, you make a melee spell attack against a target of your choice within 5 feet of the sword. On a hit, the target takes 7d10 force damage. Until the spell ends, you can use a bonus action on each of your turns to move the sword up to 20 feet to a spot you can see and repeat this attack against the same target or a different one.

If a target that takes damage from this spell is native to a different plane of existence than the one you're on, it must succeed a Charisma saving throw or be banished with a faint popping noise, returning to its home plane. If the spell ends before 1 minute has passed, any creature banished in this way reappears in the space it left, or in the nearest unoccupied space if that space is occupied. Otherwise, the target doesn't return.

7. WALL OF FORCE

Not all magic has to be flashy. Sometimes, an invisible, impassable, unbreakable wall is the best solution to a situation. Certainly, it is one of the purest expressions of magic; something that could never exist in nature conjured with the wave of a hand. Not to say anything of the spell's comedic potential when unsuspecting creatures run face-first into an invisible barrier.

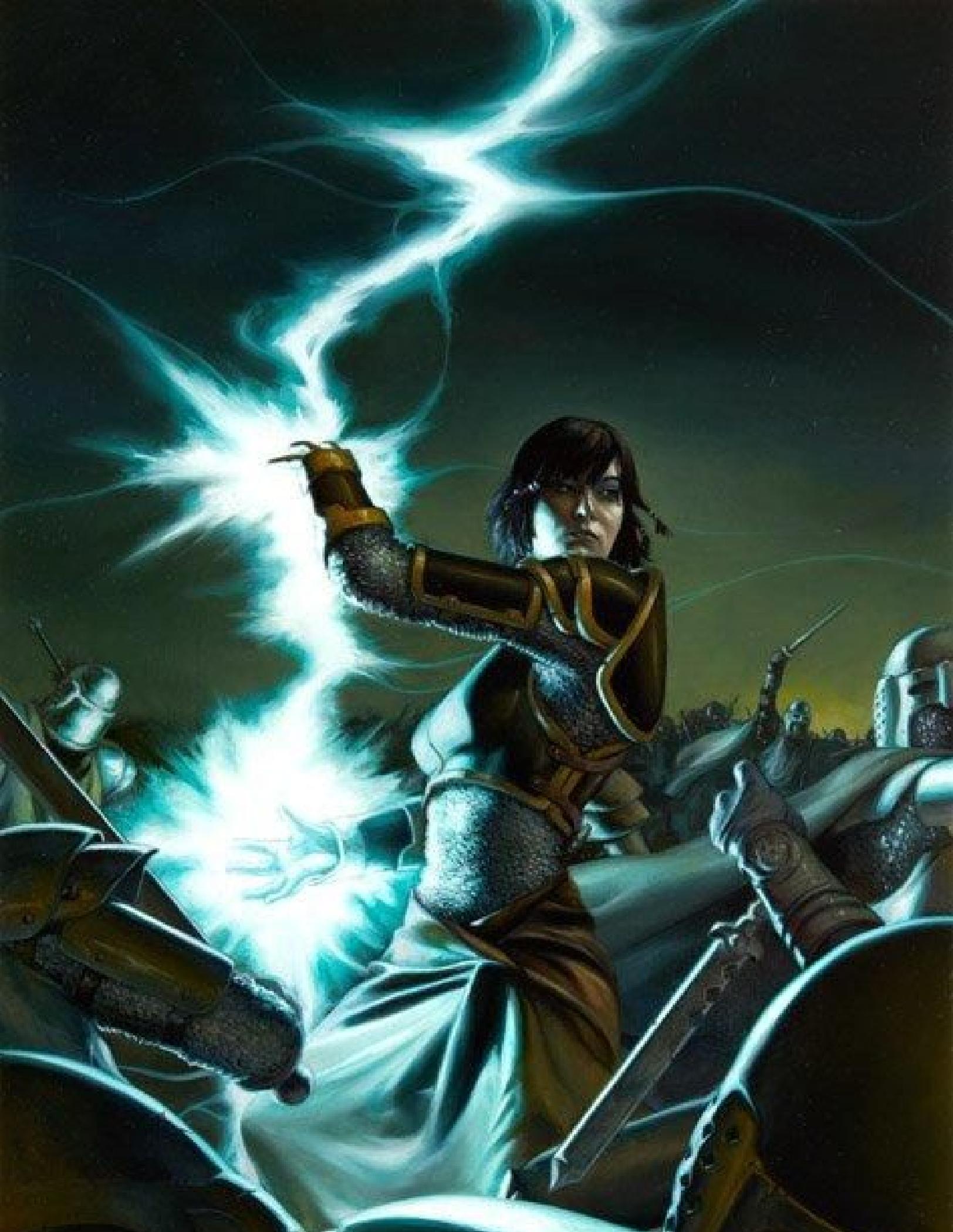
The Problem.

This spell, as written, is a guaranteed victory against any melee character. Short of a teleport effect or disintegrating the wall, there is no saving throw, no way to escape; the wall is utterly immune to damage and immobile. It an example of what some players call a "save vs. suck" spell, but without the save. If all that were not bad enough, the caster can then, from outside the effect, cast a spell like *chill touch* against the trapped creature for the next 100 rounds, as the wall does not prevent external sources from casting magic into it (it merely blocks physical and line-of-sight effects).

The Solution.

Thus far, all the spells we have looked at have required improvement. This one requires a liberal application of reasonability to tone down its easily-abused effects. Firstly, the spell needs an escape that is not magical in nature. Testing the caster's concentration by dealing damage to the wall, regardless of its immunity to damage, is one way that a warrior could fight back. Secondly, it needs to function as *Otiluke's resilient sphere* when it comes to blocking spell effects going in or out. You cast this spell to fit a situation, not to turn every encounter into a one-sided slaughter.

See the revised spell entry below for how this spell should be written.



WALL OF FORCE

5th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S, M (a pinch of powder made by crushing a clear gemstone)

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

An invisible wall of force springs into existence at a point you choose within range.

The wall appears in any orientation you choose, as a horizontal or vertical barrier or at an angle. It can be free floating or resting on a solid surface. You can form it into a hemispherical dome or a sphere with a radius of up to 10 feet, or you can shape a flat surface made up of ten 10-foot-by-10-foot panels. Each panel must be contiguous with another panel. In any form, the wall is 1/4 inch thick. It lasts for the duration. If the wall cuts through a creature's space when it appears, the creature is pushed to one side of the wall (your choice which side).

Nothing—not physical objects, energy, or other spell effects—can pass through the barrier, in or out, though a creature in the sphere can breathe there. The wall is immune to all damage and can't be dispelled by *dispel magic*. A disintegrate spell destroys the wall instantly, however. The wall also extends into the Ethereal Plane, blocking ethereal travel through the wall.

The barrier blocks line of sight for any spell originating from other other side, and a creature or object on one side can't be damaged by attacks or effects originating from the other.

The wall has an AC of 10. Whenever it would take damage—whether from an attack, spell, falling rocks, or any other source—you know how much damage has been dealt and may choose to end the spell (no action required). If you do not, you must make a Constitution saving throw to maintain your concentration as though you had suffered the damage yourself. On a failed save, you suffer psychic damage equal to half the amount that was dealt to the wall and the spell ends.

6. POLYMORPH

Speaking of spells that do exactly what you would expect of magic, polymorph lets you turn someone into another creature. Do you particularly dislike that mouthy servant? Now they're a churchmouse. Party member in need of some humbling? An hour as an adorable, fluffy kitten might help give them perspective.

Of course, then there's the combat applications of this spell. Tired of being a weak bookworm? Now you're a dire wolf. Or a mammoth. As long as the creature's challenge rating is not higher than your level, you can take its shape.

The Problem.

There's a reason why the druid Wild Shape ability—even the advanced version available to druids who follow the Circle of the Moon—does not allow you to transform into a beast that is of a challenge rating equal to your level. Becoming a creature that is a tough challenge for your entire party is probably the surest way to screw up your DM's careful balancing of an encounter's difficulty.

The Solution.

The problematic element of this spell can be easily resolved by reducing the maximum challenge rating to half the target's current CR (or level), rounded up. With the maximum spell level progression of full spellcasting classes, this means that the spell more closely aligns with the capabilities of a Circle of the Moon druid, trading a slightly higher CR of the new form for the reduced number of times they can transform per day.

See the revised spell entry below for how this spell should be written.

POLYMORPH

4th-level evocation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S, M (a caterpillar cocoon)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour

This spell transforms a creature that you can see within range into a new form. An unwilling creature must make a Wisdom saving throw to avoid the effect. The spell has no effect on a shapechanger or a creature with 0 hit points.

The transformation lasts for the duration, or until the target drops to 0 hit points or dies. The new form can be any beast whose challenge rating is equal to or less than half the target's (or equal to or less than half the target's level, if it doesn't have a challenge rating), rounded down. The target's game statistics, including mental ability scores, are replaced by the statistics of the chosen beast. It retains its alignment and personality.

The target assumes the hit points of its new form. When it reverts to its normal form, the creature returns to the number of hit points it had before it transformed. If it reverts as a result of dropping to 0 hit points, any excess damage carries over to its normal form. As long as the excess damage doesn't reduce the creature's normal form to 0 hit points, it isn't knocked unconscious.

The creature is limited in the actions it can perform by the nature of its new form, and it can't speak, cast spells, or take any other action that requires hands or speech.

The target's gear melds into the new form. The creature can't activate, use, wield, or otherwise benefit from any of its equipment.

5. HYPNOTIC PATTERN

There are many spells that have undergone significant revisions over the past few editions, many of which for the better. *Hypnotic pattern* is certainly not one of them.

Originally devised as an illusionist's version of *sleep*, there has been a clear, concerted effort by the developers to further distinguish the two spells in 5th edition. This makes sense, since mechanics such as specialized and forbidden schools no longer exist in D&D, and any arcane spellcaster could theoretically learn both of these spells.

The Problem.

While the intent of the revision is worth celebrating, the execution is horribly flawed. In past editions, this spell—like *sleep*—only affected a certain number of hit points (well, hit dice...) of creatures. This meant that you had to use it strategically. Do you drop it over the two larger enemies in the hopes of neutralizing the heavy hitters, or on the larger group of small creatures to even out the numbers? In 5th edition, the spell hits everything in a large area, easily turning a challenging encounter into a one-sided slaughter.

The Solution.

The easiest solution would be to add a hit point cap like *sleep*. However, as mentioned above, there is merit to making the two spells more distinct, and so another option is in order.

The first thing to do, then, is to change the spell from a ranged area attack to a close-range affair, moving this spell from offensive in use (like *sleep*) to defensive in use.

Secondly, we need to balance the absence of a hit point cap with another way for creatures to avoid triggering the spell's effects in a way that does not compromise its effects. There's already precedent for this in the way that you can avoid the petrifying gaze of a basilisk or a medusa, so let's borrow some wording from there.

See the revised spell entry below for how this spell should be written.

HYPNOTIC PATTERN

3rd-level illusion

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Close (30-foot cube)

Components: S, M (a glowing stick of incense or a crystal vial filled with phosphorescent material)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You create a twisting pattern of colours that weaves through the air as long as you maintain concentration on this spell. Each creature in a 30-foot cube originating from you must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature becomes charmed for the duration. While charmed by this spell, the creature is incapacitated and has a speed of 0.

A creature that isn't surprised can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If it does so, it can't see you until the start of its next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If it looks at you in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

The spell ends for an affected creature if it takes any damage or if someone else uses an action to shake the creature out of its stupor.

4. SILENCE

There are many times in an adventurer's life when they wish they could have just muted an area. Whether to prevent the target of your ambush from calling for reinforcements, to ensure the paladin's noisy armour doesn't give away your group's position, or even just to force the chatty elves to shut up while the rest of the group sleeps, *silence* is golden.

The Problem.

The issue with this spell is that out of all its myriad applications, the only time it is ever taken is to function as a hard counter to an enemy spellcaster, and in that way it is far, far too effective. One use of this spell covers a 40-foot-diameter area—any moderately-sized room or most of a chamber—in a zone that prevents the use of all but nine of the 361 spells in the *Player's Handbook*, including *dispel magic*. I know how many spells you can cast in a zone of *silence* because I counted them myself. I hate this spell with such a passion that it was a struggle for me not to place it at #1. It needs to be fixed.

The Solution.

While the developers wisely eliminated an option that appeared in previous editions whereby you could cast this spell on a target instead of a point in space, the underlying issue still remains. Short of removing the verbal component from *dispel magic* (and about 300 other spells on which it doesn't belong), we can at least beat this spell half to death with a nerf stick by either (a) drastically reducing the area to a 10-foot cube, or (b) altering the mechanic of the spell so that it does not prevent the use of spells with verbal components. Of the two options, the latter offers more opportunity to be creative, and so we'll proceed with that.

See the revised spell entry below for how this spell should be written.

SILENCE

2nd-level illusion (ritual)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 10 minutes

For the duration, sound within a 20-foot-radius sphere centred on a point you choose within range is muted. Loud noises become no louder than whispers, and soft noises are all but impossible to hear.

Any creature or object entirely inside the sphere has resistance to thunder damage, and creatures have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing when detecting noise originating from within the spell's area.

Casting a spell that includes a verbal component inside the spell's area is difficult. Whenever you attempt to do so, you must make a DC 10 ability check using your spellcasting ability. On a fail, the spell fails and has no effect.

3. HEAT METAL

Of all the spells that are presented in the *Player's Handbook*, this is almost certainly the most utilitarian. Like *silence*, the practical applications for this spell are limitless, ranging from blacksmithing to cooking to battlefield medicine. A wizard who has this spell prepared would be an invaluable asset in many different situations.

The Problem.

Also like *silence*, almost every non-standard use of this spell comes in a very, very distant second to its most common use as a hard counter to a specific type of enemy. In this case: the armoured foe. If a thousand wizards cast this spell a thousand times, nine hundred and ninety-nine times would be to cook a knight inside their own armour. The other one time would be to make the greatsword-wielding warrior have to either drop his weapon and become useless for the fight or make his attacks with disadvantage (and, thus, be useless for the fight).

When you cast this spell on an armoured enemy, they take fire damage with no saving throw allowed every turn as long as you maintain concentration and spend a bonus action. It takes 1 minute—the spell's full duration—to doff even something as light as a chain shirt, guaranteeing that your target will take 20d8 damage if you maintain concentration for the entire duration. If you cast the spell using a higher-level spell slot, you can kill the target even more quickly and reduce your risk of losing your concentration to damage.

The Solution.

This spell's problems are many and there is no way to avoid fundamentally altering the spell's mechanic if its potential for abuse is to be curbed. Recognizing that fact, we must return to the drawing board in order to come up with a reasonable alternative to the spell's current form.

The biggest problem with this spell is that a caster can cast it from hiding and then simply leave the area, confident that their foe will simply burn to death. This can be resolved by changing the range to touch, thereby only allowing the spell to continue if the caster remains present, and requiring a melee spell attack if the object is worn or carried by a creature. The second problem is that there is no saving throw to avoid having to drop the item, which is easy enough to add. The third problem is that the spell doesn't allow for a way to avoid the disadvantage on attack rolls, which is solved by lumping that in with saving against the spell.

Of course, with this many revisions reducing the spell's effectiveness, we should also increase the damage to 5d8.

See the revised spell entry below for how this spell should be written.

HEAT METAL

2nd-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M (a piece of iron and a flame)

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You touch a manufactured metal object, such as a lock or a weapon, that is Small or smaller that you can see within range. You cause the object to glow red-hot until the start of your next turn. If the object is worn or carried by a creature that is not immobilized, you must succeed a melee spell attack against that creature. You have advantage on the attack if you are targeting heavy armour worn by the creature.

Any creature in physical contact with the object affected by this spell other than you takes 5d8 fire damage and must succeed a Constitution saving throw. A creature that failed its save must drop the object if it can. If it doesn't drop the object, it has disadvantage on ability checks until the start of

your next turn. If that item is a weapon, the creature also has disadvantage on attack rolls with that object until the start of your next turn.

Until the spell ends, you can use a bonus action on each of your subsequent turns to cause this damage again to an object you are touching. If you have released your grasp on an object worn or carried by another creature that is not immobilized, you must make a new melee spell attack roll as an action instead.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 3rd level or higher, you can affect an object that is Medium or smaller, such as a suit of heavy armour sized to a Medium creature. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 4th level or higher, you can affect an object that is Large or smaller. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 5th level or higher, you can affect an object that is Huge or smaller. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, you can affect any sized object.

2. ANIMATE OBJECTS

There have been many effects on this list which evoke the image of an archetypal spell, but none quite so much as this. From the magician's apprentice's exuberant cleaning supplies to the suit of armour that comes to its master's defence, *animate objects* brings the stuff of fantasy to your spellcasting repertoire.

The Problem.

Like *heat metal*, the developers felt that requiring this spell to use a bonus action every turn was a sufficient drawback for the spell's benefit. And, like with *heat metal*, they were mistaken. This spell is capable of outdamaging practically every other spell aside from the heaviest hitters (like *meteor swarm*). Simply carry around 10 tiny objects (such as daggers) and, with a single use of this spell, you can dish out an average of 65 damage per turn on top of what you can achieve with other spells that you can cast with your remaining action.

The Solution.

To resolve this spell's issues requires extensive revision. Firstly, the damage has to be drastically reduced such that the spellcaster can't outdamage everyone else combined with just a bonus action. As part of this, we will also equal out the damage so that whatever combination of objects you pick up will be roughly as effective as any other, which is a circuitous way of saying "so that everyone else at the table is not kept waiting quite as long for the wizard to cast his spell".

Secondly, we will adjust the spell so that the damage that the objects deal to their target is also done to them, causing them to break if they are dealt their total hit points in damage in any single occurrence (ignoring any damage they receive that does not equal or exceed their hit points). Thirdly, we will adjust the hit points of the items so that if they land a critical hit, they are likely to break, building in a drawback to the otherwise advantageous option of animating numerous small objects that allow you to roll a greater number of attacks. Finally, we will remove the ability to cast this spell at higher levels in order to prevent this careful balancing from being utterly abused.

See the revised spell entry below for how this spell should be written.

ANIMATE OBJECTS

5th-level transmutation

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 120 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Objects come to life at your command. Choose up to ten nonmagical objects within range that are not being worn or carried. Tiny targets count as 1/2 an object, Medium targets count as two objects, Large targets count as four objects, Huge targets count as eight objects. You can't animate any object larger than Huge. Each target animates and becomes a creature under your control until the spell ends or until reduced to 0 hit points.

As a bonus action, you can mentally command any creature you made with this spell if the creature is within the spell's range of you (if you control multiple creatures, you can command any or all of them at the same time, issuing the same command to each one). You decide what action the creature will take and where it will move during its next turn, or you can issue a general command, such as to guard a particular chamber or corridor. If you issue no commands, the creature only defends itself against hostile creatures. Once given an order, the creature continues to follow it until its task is complete.

ANIMATED OBJECT STATISTICS

Size	HP	AC	Attack	Str	Dex
Tiny	2	18	+8 to hit, 1 damage	4	18
Small	5	16	+6 to hit, 1d4 damage	6	14
Medium	15	13	+5 to hit, 1d8 damage	10	12
Large	25	10	+6 to hit, 2d6 + 2 damage	14	10
Huge	50	8	+8 to hit, 3d12 + 4 damage	18	6

An animated object is a construct with AC, hit points, attacks, Strength, and Dexterity determined by its size. Its Constitution is 10 and its Intelligence and Wisdom are 3, and its Charisma is 1. Its speed is 30 feet; if the object lacks legs or other appendages it can use for locomotion, it instead has a flying speed of 30 feet and can hover. If the object is securely attached to a surface or a larger object, such as a chain bolted to a wall, its speed is 0. It has blindsight with a radius of 30 feet and is blind beyond that distance. An animated object has a damage threshold equal to its health; any damage dealt by an attack that does not equal or exceed the object's health is ignored. When the animated object drops to 0 hit points, it reverts to its original object form, and any remaining damage carries over to its original object form.

If you command an object to attack, it can make a single melee attack against a creature within 5 feet of it. It makes a slam attack with an attack bonus and bludgeoning damage determined by its size. The DM might rule that a specific object inflicts slashing or piercing damage based on its form.

Whenever the object deals damage, the amount of damage it deals to its target is also dealt to the object. An object which deals more damage than it has hit points therefore reverts to its original object form.

1. CONTAGION

We finally arrive at the top of our list with this terrifying 5th-level spell. With a single touch, you afflict a creature with a debilitating disease of your choice, ranging from a blindness that clouds even the mind to a slow decay of the flesh. Each version grants disadvantage on checks and saves based on one ability in addition to another effect.

The Problem.

The main problem with this spell is the final disease option, "Slimy Doom". Throw this on any creature—even the mighty tarrasque—and you have a guaranteed three rounds in which that creature is stun-locked. This means that it automatically fails Strength and Dexterity saving throws and all attacks against it have advantage, not only increasing your likelihood to hit, but also nearly doubling your chance to land a critical, and the creature cannot do anything to you in the mean time. It requires no concentration and the effects begin before the creature gets an opportunity to save.

The Solution.

The developers know that there is a problem with this spell, but their solutions have been less than ideal. Jeremy Crawford confirmed the official ruling that the effects of the spell are intended to only take effect "after three failed saving throws", and that enough groups were already homebrewing that solution that this wasn't included in the official PHB Errata, but that still leaves the spell in need of proper balancing because now, instead of always taking effect, it will likely never come into effect at all. While it is important that spells are thematic, it is also important that they are practical, and so we have to fundamentally revise this spell to make it function properly.

The first thing to do is to make this spell concentration-based, up to 1 minute. If concentration is maintained through the full duration, and the spell does not end prematurely by the creature making three successful saves, the spell effects persist for 7 days (no concentration required). Then, we can expand on the theme of the spell by adding a provision to make it last longer at higher levels. With these changes, the spell requires that the caster appropriately commits to casting such a powerful spell.

The second thing to do is to address how the spell manifests. Rather than coming into effect immediately, which was never the intention of the spell, and having creatures save at the end of their turn for no apparent reason other than to accumulate three successful saves as quickly as possible, we will change the spell to call for the save at the beginning of the creature's turn, and allow the creature to resist the effects of the disease until the start of their next turn on a successful save. In this way, you might not successfully afflict your legendary target with the disease, but you will still burn through their legendary resistances.

The final thing to do is to fix the "Slimy Doom" option. Even with our adjustments to the spell so far, it is really the only good choice. It gives disadvantage on the saving throw that applies to this spell and it stun-locks the creature with a single point of damage. This option needs to be completely overhauled into something on par with the other options.

See the revised spell entry below for how the spell should be written.

CONTAGION

5th-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute (or 7 days, see text)

Your touch inflicts disease. Make a melee spell attack against a creature within your reach. On a hit, you afflict the creature with a disease of your choice from any of the ones described below.

As long as you concentrate on this spell, at the beginning of each of the target's turns, it must make a Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, the target resists the effects of the disease until the start of its next turn, when it must repeat the saving throw. The creature stops making saving throws if it has either made three successful saves or failed three saves (whichever happens first). After succeeding on three of these saving throws, the creature recovers from the disease, and the spell ends. If the creature fails three saving throws, the disease affects them as long as you maintain concentration. If you concentrate on this spell for the full duration, the spell effects persist for 7 days.

Since the spell induces a natural disease in its target, any effect that removes a disease or otherwise ameliorates a disease's effects apply to it.

Blinding Sickness. Pain grips the creature's mind and its eyes turn milky white. The creature has disadvantage on Wisdom checks and Wisdom saving throws and is blinded.

Filth Fever. A raging fever sweeps through the creature's body. The creature has disadvantage on Strength checks, Strength saving throws, and attack rolls that use Strength.

Flesh Rot. The creature's flesh decays. The creature has disadvantage on Charisma checks and vulnerability to all damage.

Mindfire. The creature's mind becomes feverish. The creature has disadvantage on Intelligence checks and Intelligence saving throws, and the creature behaves as if under the effects of the *confusion* spell during combat.

Seizure. The creature is overcome with shaking. The creature has disadvantage on Dexterity checks, Dexterity saving throws, and attack rolls that use Dexterity.

Slimy Doom. The creature begins to bleed dark ichor uncontrollably. The creature has disadvantage on Constitution checks and cannot regain hit points through nonmagical means (such as healing surges or regeneration).

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 6th level or higher, the spell effects persist for 1 year if you maintain concentration for the spell's full duration. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 7th level or higher, the spell effects persist until dispelled if you maintain concentration on the spell for the full duration.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Taylor is the self-styled 'archmage' of Dungeon Master's Workshop. When he is not coming up with homebrew content or arguing on the internet, he can be found doing other, less interesting things that pay the bills. We at Dungeon Master's Workshop admire and respect our fearless, handsome, intelligent leader, who is certainly not also the author of this short biography.

CREDITS

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ARTIST CREDITS

The following art was used in this article.

- "Battle Mage" by David Palumbo