

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

A TOOL FOR SOLO TTRPG PLAYERS AND GMS

Often in TTRPGs you may discover an item or location, or slay a monster, but it's unclear how exactly that object or event is supposed to fit into the larger narrative of your story and campaign, or why it even matters. This tool provides a way of answering the question '*What does it mean?*'



The things you encounter in your game world sometimes won't mean anything (beyond what is already obvious). Sometimes you slay a goblin and it's just a goblin. Sometimes you find an old graveyard and it's just an old graveyard. But sometimes there should be interesting backstories and surprises in the game world. This tool helps randomize unique but meaningful qualities that can be applied to almost any object, place, or situation.

Because this tool is designed to work with nearly anything, it requires interpretation and creativity on the part of the user. Similar to some oracle tables, you'll roll for descriptors or words that will provide general guidance, but may not be very specific. Get creative with the results, and try to be flexible. Run with the first fun idea that jumps into your head.

INSTRUCTIONS

If you want to know more about something...

1. Roll on **Table 1** to find out if there's anything special about it
2. If so, roll on the other tables to find out more
3. Use the results as a creative prompt to determine what exactly is interesting about the thing

TIP

After rolling for your results, run with the first fun idea that pops into your head. If nothing has come to you after 5 seconds or so, re-roll. If, after a couple rolls, nothing has clicked at all, ignore the tables and move on with the game.

PLAYER OR GM KNOWLEDGE VS. CHARACTER KNOWLEDGE

The information these tables generate is meant to be "visible" to the GM, but not necessarily the PCs. For example, you may roll a prompt after slaying an ogre that reveals that he was carrying a secret magic item. You, as the GM, may know this, but the player characters may not. They might need to search the ogre, or roll a Perception check, etc. Or perhaps the PCs find an alchemy journal on the side of the road. You could roll to reveal that a traveling alchemist was attacked here recently by a wild animal. In that scenario, you (as the GM) may know what happened, but the PCs may perhaps only find a few basic clues (animal tracks, or a trail of blood etc.). If you are using these tables for Solo play, spend a moment to consider what has been revealed to you (with your "GM hat" on), and what information may be hidden or limited to the PCs themselves.

EXAMPLE

The PCs are exploring a swamp, when they discover a gnarled, dead tree that stands out from the others (perhaps this was rolled from a random terrain "dressing" book, or suggested by some other tool). Your adventurers are curious: **is there anything special about this tree** beyond what has already been revealed?

You roll D20 on Table 1 and get 86, so there is something interesting! So you roll on Table 2, and determine that this interesting quality focuses on the **scene** in some way. The PCs are in a swamp, so this tree will likely provide some additional backstory or information about this area. You then roll on the final tables for a Verb + Noun, and get '**Release**' + '**Pain**'. You decide you want some more info, so you roll on the optional table and get '**Scroll/Memory**'. You could combine those in a variety of ways, but here's one: *These swamps were once home to a witch. This tree is the spot where the witch attempted a dangerous magic ritual with an ancient scroll. Something went wrong, the tree and surrounding vegetation were warped and deformed by the sudden blast of necrotic energy, and a terrible fiend from the Abyss was unleashed upon this plane ('Release + Pain'). Perhaps, the fiend is still lurking about.*

1. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

IS THERE ANYTHING SPECIAL ABOUT IT?

D20	Result	Description
1-8	Nothing else special	<i>There isn't anything else special about this thing, beyond what has already been revealed.</i>
9-20	Something Interesting...	<i>There is something unique or interesting about this! (Roll on the next tables.)</i>



2. WHAT'S THE FOCUS?

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE TO THE PLAYERS?

D20	Focus	Description
1-2	Complicates Thread	<i>Hinders, complicates, or represents an obstacle to a thread, story, quest, or goal.</i>
3-4	Advances Thread	<i>Advances or moves closer to resolving a thread, story, quest, or goal.</i>
5-6	Plot Twist	<i>Introduces a spin, unexpected twist, or new detail, to a thread, story, quest, or goal.</i>
7	New Thread	<i>Introduces potential for a new thread, quest, story, or plot etc.</i>
8-11	Scene	<i>Involves or expands upon the current surroundings, environment, scene, or terrain.</i>
12-14	NPC	<i>Focused around a non-player character or creature.</i>
15-16	PC	<i>Affects or relates to one of the Player Characters, their personal interests, backstory, etc.</i>
17-18	Bane	<i>Bad news; dangerous, harmful, or has unfortunate, negative, or concerning meaning for the PCs.</i>
19-20	Boon	<i>Provides a benefit or advantage for the PCs, or carries some type of pleasant or positive meaning.</i>

3. NARROW IT DOWN

CREATIVE PROMPT / IDEA GENERATOR

Roll for a **Verb + Noun**, and combine to form a creative prompt. For additional ideas, you can roll on one or more of the other optional D20 tables to provide more creative guidance or context. To avoid getting overwhelmed by an overly-complex prompt, try coming up with an idea using the verb & noun before deciding to roll on the other optional tables. If you need more creative ideas, then roll on the other tables, or just re-roll your Verb & Noun completely.

Verb (D20)

1. Attain
2. Fight
3. Increase
4. Decrease
5. Communicate
6. Abandon
7. Move
8. Release
9. Oppress
10. Control
11. Break
12. Heal
13. Delay
14. Lie
15. Inform
16. Create
17. Release
18. Travel
19. Harm
20. Disrupt

Noun (D20)

1. Enemies
2. Allies
3. Goals
4. Good
5. Evil
6. Spirit
7. Ideas
8. Joy
9. Friendship
10. Pain
11. Pleasure
12. Lies
13. Business
14. Plan
15. Illness
16. Travel
17. Suffering
18. Misfortune
19. Death
20. Power

(Optional)

It also involves... (D20)

1. Wealth / Treasure
2. Magic / Mystical
3. Armor / Protection
4. Weapon / Aggression
5. Skills / Talents
6. Deity / Divine Powers
7. Food / Sustenance
8. Weather / Environment
9. Terrain / Land
10. Book / Knowledge
11. Scroll / Memory
12. Alchemy / Potion
13. Undead / Spirits
14. Animal / Beast
15. Government / Lord
16. Thievery / Betrayal
17. Religion / Church
18. Rumor / Legend
19. Occult / Fanaticism
20. Mystery / Secret

(Optional)

Theme / Context (D20)

1. Ancient history
2. Recent event
3. Political intrigue
4. Survival / Nature
5. Hunger / Passion
6. War / Combat
7. Darkness / Secrecy
8. Life / Birth
9. Creation / Crafting
10. Beauty / Goodness
11. Hate / Evil
12. Disease / Famine
13. Death / Destruction
14. Ideas / Imagination
15. Caves / Underground
16. City / Urban
17. Rural / Farming
18. Altruism / Love
19. Light / Goodness
20. Trap / Danger