



Developing your character into someone who has a rich story can be a fun and rewarding process. You likely have an idea of what race and what class you want to play, but you might have only a general idea of what your character's life was like before you start playing the character at the gaming table. A theme can help you flesh out your character and provide some interesting options for developing his or her background.

This article details three character themes: the ordained priest, the scholar, and the seer.

## CHARACTER THEMES

Your character's theme is a career, calling, or identity that describes who he or she is in the world. Just as race and class create basic definitions about who your character is, theme adds a third character component to help refine your story and identity. For example, you might be a human cleric who chooses the ordained priest theme, but "human ordained priest" might mean many different things. You might be a village priest who guides others in the worship of one or more deities. Perhaps you're a brother or a sister in a religious order in town, and you seek an opportunity to evangelize your worship to others outside your town. Or perhaps you roam the forest or swamp, protecting its creatures from external threats because you consider the natural balance of the area to be sacred. Each theme can encompass several unique stories within the same concept.

For information on using themes as part of character creation and rules for how to gain and use theme powers and features, see "Heroes of Nature and Lore," the previous article in this series.

## Character Themes

# Heroes of Tome and Temple

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## ORDAINED PRIEST

Ordained priests are characters who are formally appointed to work in the service of a faith, a sect, or a system of worship. Although some are devout wielders of divine power, many have no magical abilities at all; the term “ordained priest” in this context means someone who holds the social position or occupation of being an ordained official of the faith. For example, typical village priests have no powers comparable to the attack and utility prayers of adventuring clerics. They hold a different sort of power: the deference of their neighbors, the trust of the authorities, and the respect of the great majority of the citizenry who rely on their counsel and good judgment. Ordained priests might serve as teachers, soldiers, confessors, advisors, students, magistrates, or powerful rulers, but whatever their role in society, they inspire and influence ordinary people to live up to the standards of their faith.

Ordained priests enjoy a bewildering variety of preferred titles. Depending on the land in which they’re found and the faith to which they belong, they might be known as curates, elders, friars, imams, lamas, prelates, shepherds, rectors, or vicars. In some realms, temples are huge, powerful states within the nation, ruling over wide estates guarded by armies of temple guards. Ordained priests in rich, influential hierarchies such as these might have duties or titles that have little to do with ministering to commoners, and instead they could wield authority as judges, lawkeepers, and bureaucrats. However, most faiths in the mortal world are smaller organizations that rarely have much influence outside their own realm or kingdom.

## Creating an Ordained Priest

Although ordained priests aren’t always clerics (or paladins, or adventurers of any sort), it’s not unusual for clerics or other heroes to be ordained priests. Ordained priests are educated by the standards of their homelands, plus they are influential and responsible. When difficult challenges or threats arise, rulers often consult with local priests and seek their advice about how to proceed. Some ordained priests are content to offer their counsel, but others more inclined to action might set out to solve problems personally, eventually taking up a career in adventuring. Naturally, adventuring ordained priests are often clerics. Druids also serve as members of the priesthood in some cultures and are a good fit for this theme. Rogues or fighters might also serve as ordained priests, employing guile or strong sword arms in the service of their faith.

## Starting Feature

Many ordinary ordained priests have no supernatural powers, but you’re not an ordinary one—you’re an adventurer. Even if you aren’t a cleric, you have studied the lore recorded in your faith’s scriptures, and you know the power the holy symbol of your faith holds. When you brandish your holy symbol, you can smite enemies while inspiring your companions.

**Benefit:** Choose *smiting symbol* or *shining symbol*. You gain that power.

## RELIGIONS IN THE WORLD

A religion or a faith in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® roleplaying game is essentially one organization of priests, and those people who recognize the authority of that priesthood in religious matters. When people speak of the Church of the Silver Flame, the Temple of Light, the Path of Truth, or the Holy Temple of Therund, they’re referring to the physical shrines and temples, the worshippers, and the hierarchy of priests associated with that faith. Ordinarily, a religion spans a kingdom or a handful of small, neighboring city-states and holdings. The next kingdom over might have a similar religion venerating the same deities in the same way, but if the priestly hierarchies are separate, then the two kingdoms effectively have two different religions. Additionally, a single realm or city can be home to several different religions, which might appeal to different areas of the kingdom or different social classes of the kingdom’s citizens. Just like secular states, neighboring religions might be allies, rivals, or bitter enemies.

Usually a religion is centered on the whole pantheon; most people worship all gods, even if they just hope to avert the attention of evil gods by propitiating them at appropriate times. In some cases, a religion favors a single god or set of gods from the pantheon above the others, but even then priests of that faith acknowledge the divinity of the rest of the pantheon. In other cases, a faith is a social structure, philosophy, or behavior system that has little to do with the pantheon—for example, a system of ancestor worship or the shamanic worship of many barbarian tribes.



## Smiting Symbol

Ordained Priest Attack

*The power of your deity shields a nearby ally while you smite the foe.*

**Encounter** ♦ Divine, Weapon

**Standard Action** Melee weapon

**Target:** One enemy

**Attack:** Highest ability modifier vs. AC

**Hit:** 1[W] + highest ability modifier damage.

**Effect:** Choose one ally within 3 squares of you. That ally gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn. He or she also gains temporary hit points equal to 3 + one-half your level.

*Level 11:* 2[W] + highest ability modifier damage.

*Level 21:* 3[W] + highest ability modifier damage.

## Shining Symbol

Ordained Priest Attack

*Your holy symbol gleams with a brilliant radiance, searing your foes and dazzling them for a short time.*

**Encounter** ♦ Divine, Implement, Radiant

**Standard Action** Close blast 3

**Target:** Each enemy in the blast

**Attack:** Highest ability modifier vs. Will

**Hit:** 1d8 + highest ability modifier radiant damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn.

*Level 11:* 2d8 + highest ability modifier radiant damage.

*Level 21:* 3d8 + highest ability modifier radiant damage.

## Additional Features

### Level 5 Feature

With long study, you have come to know the holy texts of your faith like the back of your hand. You find inspiration and guidance in these ancient writings.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 bonus to Religion checks and Insight checks.

### Level 10 Feature

Strengthened and sustained by your personal faith, you reassure your companions with your simple presence. You inspire them to rise above their setbacks and injuries with your calm confidence in the eventual triumph of your cause.

**Benefit:** While adjacent to you, your allies gain a +1 bonus to saving throws.

## Optional Powers

Just as your holy symbol is a weapon against evil, so too are the familiar verses and prayers passed down through the generations. Many devout people whisper these comforting words in times of danger or grief, but when you give them the full force of your sincerity and belief, they possess the power to work minor miracles. The following features and powers are available to any character who has chosen the ordained priest theme.

### Level 2 Utility Power

By reciting a familiar prayer for comfort and help in the face of enemies, you bestow a small amount of healing on all allies nearby. Sorely wounded allies and those suffering from debilitating conditions receive more comfort from your prayer.

## Word of Comfort

Ordained Priest Utility 2

*You recite a verse offering a prayer of comfort and endurance in the face of adversity.*

**Daily** ♦ Divine, Healing

**Standard Action** Close burst 2

**Target:** You and each ally in the burst

**Effect:** Each target can make a saving throw. In addition, each target regains 5 hit points, or 10 hit points if he or she is bloodied.

## Level 6 Utility Power

Continuously repeating a prayer to avert harm, you shield yourself and allies near you from the attacks of your enemies, as long as none of you breaks the effect by striking. With *word of protection*, you can guide a small party through a dangerous area or provide a crucial respite in the middle of a pitched battle.

### Word of Protection Ordained Priest Utility 6

*You protect yourself and nearby allies with a prayer of peace.*

**Daily** ♦ **Divine**

**Standard Action** **Close burst 3**

**Target:** You and each ally in the burst

**Effect:** Each target gains a +5 power bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn. If any target makes an attack, the effect ends for all targets.

**Sustain Standard:** The effect persists until the end of your next turn.

## Level 10 Utility Power

You learn an ancient prayer for consecrating places against the trespass of evil creatures, especially undead. Good and true people making their stand on sanctified ground are protected from the attacks of their foes, and healing effects are bolstered for them. Holy light burns undead that venture into the area.

### Sanctifying Word Ordained Priest Utility 10

*Your prayer sanctifies the ground on which you stand, protecting allies and daunting foes that dare to approach.*

**Daily** ♦ **Divine, Radiant, Zone**

**Standard Action** **Close burst 1**

**Effect:** The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. While in the zone, each ally gains a +2 bonus to all defenses and adds 5 to his or her healing surge value. Any undead creature that ends its turn in the zone takes 5 radiant damage.

**Sustain Minor:** The zone persists until the end of your next turn.

## SCHOLAR

For some, the past is dead and buried, but any adventurer who has ever set foot in a trap-filled, ancient tomb or battled a terrible demon freed from some centuries-old binding knows that what happened long ago might be of crucial importance to those living in the present day. Scholars study the lore of ancient times, collecting old texts and ferreting out forgotten secrets. They seek to preserve the memories of bygone days and pass along to future generations the important lessons the past offers. As with any dungeon-delving adventurers, they are keenly interested in dormant perils and lost treasures, but scholars are just as interested in the most ordinary details of ancient realms and events. To scholars, knowledge is its own reward.

Not all cultures or societies value the musty old tales of ancient days. For many people, the study of history—or simple literacy—is an extravagance. Scholars are highly specialized professionals, and their services are not in great demand. The typical frontier town or farming village has no library or formal schooling. As a result, scholars are found only in places where books and records are collected. Large cities sometimes feature vaults or libraries dedicated to scholarship, and they might have colleges or guilds of scholars who study in them. However, large collections of books are more typically the prized possessions of temples dedicated to deities of knowledge and civilization (such as Ioun or Erathis), or of powerful noble families. Most scholars are therefore sponsored or supported by a temple or patron, and they seek to repay their benefactors by adding to their collections throughout their careers.

## Creating a Scholar

Adventuring scholars are most often wizards, since the study of the arcane arts appeals to the same sort of intelligent, meticulous individual that scholarship does. Arcane secrets are buried in ancient tomes and hidden in myth and legend much like the secrets of history and other fields of learning. Clerics also make good scholars—especially clerics devoted to deities of knowledge or magic. Any cleric of Ioun or Erathis is likely something of a scholar already. Warlocks also know the value of ancient lore, but in their traditions, knowledge is regarded as something to hoard and conceal; most warlocks are cryptic and obscure at best. Fighters, rogues, paladins, and rangers are not likely to follow the scholar's path, preferring action to contemplation. However, some heroes might have been raised to be scholars only to choose a different walk of life later. For example, a young scholar lured by the idea of unearthing forgotten hoards might become an exceptionally well-educated rogue who specializes in plundering ancient crypts.

## Starting Feature

Young scholars typically begin their studies by learning one or more ancient languages, so that they can understand the tomes and codices they hope to master. Draconic, Dwarven, and Elven are the principal languages of learning in most mortal lands; it's a rare scholar who isn't literate in at least one of these ancient tongues.

As you have increased your knowledge, you have discovered vulnerabilities of creatures that you can identify, and you know their tactics and abilities well enough to defend yourself against them.

**Benefit:** You know one additional language chosen from Draconic, Dwarven, and Elven. In addition, you gain the *use vulnerability* power.

### Use Vulnerability

### Scholar Utility

*You know the strengths and weaknesses of the creature you're facing.*

**Encounter** ♦ Arcane

**Free Action** Personal

**Trigger:** You succeed on a monster knowledge check against a monster that you can see or hear.

**Effect:** If your check result meets or exceeds the hard DC for the monster's level, you gain a +4 power bonus to all defenses against the monster's attacks until the end of your next turn. Additionally, until the end of your next turn, you gain a power bonus to damage rolls against the target equal to your Intelligence modifier, but not when you deal damage that the target resists.

If your check result does not meet or exceed the hard DC, your attacks against the target deal only half damage until the end of your next turn.

## Additional Features

### Level 5 Feature

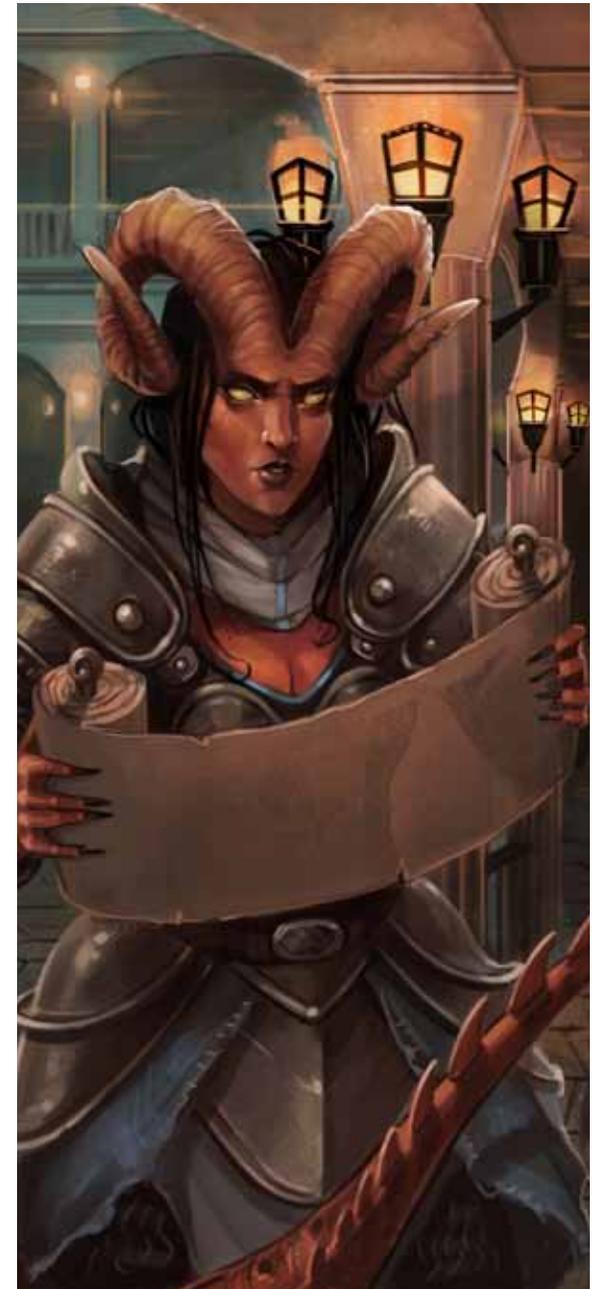
A true scholar never stops learning. Even though you're now an adventurer, you continue to add to your understanding of the world around you at every opportunity. After all, knowledge is power.

**Benefit:** Choose training in one new skill and one new language. The skill you choose must be Arcana, Dungeoneering, History, Nature, or Religion; if you already have training in all of these skills, you instead gain a +2 bonus to skill checks with one of those skills. The language you choose must be Draconic, Dwarven, or Elven; if you already know all three, choose one language from those listed in the *Rules Compendium* (page 69) or *Player's Handbook* (page 25).

### Level 10 Feature

Years of intensive study and exposure to hundreds of texts have provided you with a working knowledge of all but the most obscure languages. You can get by in conversation nearly anywhere you travel, and with a few days to acquaint yourself with local dialects or idioms, you're as fluent as a native-born speaker.

**Benefit:** You know all the languages listed in the *Rules Compendium* (page 69) and *Player's Handbook* (page 25). (At the Dungeon Master's discretion, other languages can be added to the languages you know with this feature.) You can also attempt an Arcana check (hard DC of your level) to decipher a message written in code or protected by a magical disguise.



## Optional Powers

Knowing what you're facing and its vulnerabilities is a potent weapon on its own, but you are also familiar with a handful of minor spells that can be useful in the right circumstances. Your tomes and scrolls record names of power or charms of protection that can hold a demon at bay, spells to create energy inimical to particular creatures, and clever tricks or improvisations for almost any task. It has all been written down at one point or another; with your wide reading and keen memory for detail, you can find something to help you in most situations.

### Level 2 Utility Power

You understand the theories and techniques behind most physical or mental tasks. This minor spell sharpens your recollection, bringing the most relevant details of your library to mind and making you an expert of sorts in almost anything you care to try.

#### Useful Lore Scholar Utility 2

*You recall a shining example of a hero who succeeded in a challenging task, imbuing yourself with a portion of his or her skill.*

**Daily** ♦ Arcane

**Minor Action** **Personal**

**Effect:** Choose one skill. Until the end of the encounter, you gain a +5 power bonus to checks with that skill.

### Level 6 Utility Power

The arcane tomes you have studied record the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of a wide variety of dangerous creatures, and they provide examples of spells that exploit them. This spell imbues weapons and implements with a hint of a particular magical energy—a useful trick for exploiting the vulner-

abilities of the creatures you come across in your adventures.

#### Inimical Lore Scholar Utility 6

*You enhance your allies' attacks with energy that you know can devastate the foe you're fighting.*

**Encounter** ♦ Arcane

**Minor Action** **Close burst 1**

**Target:** You and each ally in the burst

**Effect:** Choose acid, cold, fire, lightning, necrotic, radiant, or thunder. Until the end of your next turn, any untyped damage each target would deal with attacks is of the chosen type instead.

### Level 10 Utility Power

Each creature in the world or the planes has certain laws and principles describing how beings of its type exist. You know magical wardings, names, or emanations that repel creatures of different types, at least for a short time.

#### Defensive Lore Scholar Utility 10

*You pronounce a word or name that is disruptive to creatures of a particular origin, causing their existence to falter for a few moments.*

**Daily** ♦ Arcane, Zone

**Minor Action** **Close burst 2**

**Effect:** The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. Choose aberrant, fey, elemental, immortal, natural, or shadow. Until the end of your next turn, creatures of that origin take a -2 penalty to attack rolls and to all defenses while in the zone, and attacks by such creatures deal only half damage to targets inside the zone.

**Sustain Minor:** The zone persists until the end of your next turn.

## SEER

Gifted with unusual abilities to perceive things hidden by distance or uncertainty, seers are prized as advisors by powerful people throughout the world. They might call themselves astrologers, fortune-tellers, readers, augurs, diviners, or soothsayers, and each employs a favored technique for prognostication. Many seers choose to complicate their viewings with flamboyant mummery designed to impress ordinary people and perhaps conceal the important secrets of their trade. But despite the confusing mystical trappings, seers aren't frauds. Their second sight is a real and powerful gift, even if it is fickle at times.

The ability to anticipate success or failure in great endeavors, to determine the most auspicious times to embark on risky ventures, or to read the secret motives of others is a valuable edge. Naturally, wealthy patrons seek out famous and successful seers so that they can gain advantage over their rivals. Retained as permanent advisors and paid generously for their services, these kept seers are at the top of their profession. Kept seers enjoy unusual access to those they serve, and they can become entangled in the petty rivalries and battles for influence that pervade most courts and noble households. To minimize such entanglements, some rulers choose to sequester their magical advisors, keeping them out of the reach of courtiers or rivals who might harbor ambitious schemes. Other seers embrace their role as important figures in the court. Competent seers with this sort of position are placed well to do great good, but they can also do serious harm if they provide their masters with inept advice or engage in disloyal behavior. After all, a "trusted" wizard has deposed more than one king.

Seers who have not yet attracted a wealthy patron or established a reputation for success settle for a meager living catering to commoners, casting fortunes for a few coppers or silvers at a turn. Ordinary people often seek the advice of augurs and diviners when contemplating major business decisions, choosing a time to travel, arranging marriages, naming a child, or seeking explanations for some sort of misfortune. In a bustling city, well-respected seers with a wealthy clientele can make a comfortable living. Seers from small or backward towns might be little better than peddlers and beggars, hard-pressed to feed themselves from day to day—a situation that makes it hard to convince potential customers that one’s powers offer useful insights. Adventuring seers fall somewhere between the extremes of royal advisor or marketplace fortune-teller; they rarely settle down in the service of a single patron, but in time their spreading fame ensures that many will come to seek their advice.

## Creating a Seer

To invoke useful visions, seers require natural talent (their gift, whatever form it takes) and ability with the magical arts. Minor spells help many seers to direct their ability. Consequently, adventuring seers are usually wizards or warlocks. Some techniques for readings and visions are divine in nature rather than arcane, so clerics are also common as seers. Cleric seers are often revered as prophets or interpreters of dreams whose visions are gifts of the gods. Seers of other classes are uncommon at best, although a few brazen rogues have been known to use the seer’s trappings to implement schemes and scams of all sorts.

## Starting Feature

You can perform a minor divination, read omens, cast a horoscope, or use another method of prediction to determine whether fortune favors an individual on this day. You know the results of your fortune-telling; whether you tell the subject the true result is up to you. Your fortune works itself out in the next significant endeavor the subject undertakes, but a single fortune-telling predicts the future only for the upcoming day.

**Benefit:** You gain the *cast fortune* power.

### Cast Fortune

Seer Utility

*You perform a minor augury or reading that reveals to you what fortune holds for the subject this day.*

Encounter ♦ Arcane

Standard Action

Ranged 5

Target: One ally

**Effect:** Roll a d20 three times when you use this power, and note the results, in order. These results replace, in order, the next three d20 rolls the target makes for any of the following types of rolls: attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks. At the DM’s discretion, trivial rolls and rolls that the target makes in nondangerous or nonstressful situations can’t be replaced by your recorded results. When all three results have been used or when you next take an extended rest, the effect ends. The target doesn’t know if his or her fortune is good or bad unless you tell the target.

**Special:** Once you’ve used this power on a specific ally, you cannot target that ally with this power again until after you finish your next extended rest.

## Additional Features

### Level 5 Feature

Your second sight is a useful tool, but it’s only one part of your arsenal. You are also a keen observer and an experienced judge of character. Many problems don’t require supernatural guidance; the difficulties and their solutions are apparent to anyone who pays attention. Likewise, your supernatural sources might be silent on some thorny questions, but if you project a little confidence and certainty, you can convince people to do what they already know is right.

**Benefit:** You gain a +2 bonus to Bluff checks and Insight checks.

### Level 10 Feature

You have developed the mystic’s third eye—an invisible, intangible sensory organ in the center of your brow. With the eye of your mind, you perceive auras, impressions, and psychic energies. Your third eye allows you to see things your companions don’t notice.

**Benefit:** Whenever you make a Perception check, you can roll twice and use either result.

## Optional Powers

With careful training and self-discipline, you can harness your second sight to see places beyond normal sight, anticipate moments of danger, and perceive hidden things.

### Level 2 Utility Power

Closing your eyes, you use your mind to peer around a corner, behind a closed door, or into a room a hundred feet from where you sit.



## Clairvoyance Seer Utility 2

*In your mind you see a vision of a place beyond the perception of your own eyes.*

**Daily ♦ Arcane**  
**Standard Action** **Personal**

**Effect:** You gain darkvision until the end of your next turn. Choose any spot within 20 squares of you. You need not have line of sight or line of effect to the spot you choose. You can see from both your location and that spot until the end of your next turn. You can attempt Perception checks to notice small details, such as reading a letter lying on a desk near your point of observation. Sight is the only sense your clairvoyance conveys—you can't hear or smell from your point of observation.

**Sustain Standard:** You continue to observe from your chosen spot until the end of your next turn.

## Level 6 Utility Power

You are not limited to predicting the fortunes of others; you can also gain glimpses of your own future, including moments of deadly peril. Sometimes your visions don't help you to avoid the dangers that wait, but sometimes they do. You've seen this moment before, and you can duck or dodge at just the right instant to avert disaster.

## Moment of Peril Seer Utility 6

*You recognize an enemy's attack as a moment of peril that you've already foreseen.*

**Encounter ♦ Arcane**  
**Immediate Interrupt** **Personal**

**Trigger:** You are hit by an attack.  
**Effect:** You gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until the end of your next turn. After the attack is resolved, you can shift 1 square as a free action.

## Level 10 Utility Power

A murmured spell awakens your third eye to its full powers of perception for a time. Things that you normally perceived as the merest hints, shadows, or auras now leap into perfect clarity. At a glance you note the presence of invisible creatures, pierce magical guises, or perceive the deepest secrets of those around you.

## Eye of Seeing Seer Utility 10

*An invisible, intangible third eye opens on your brow, enabling you to perceive truths that are normally hidden.*

**Daily ♦ Arcane**  
**Minor Action** **Personal**

**Effect:** Until the end of your next turn, you see invisible creatures and objects. In addition, you gain a +5 power bonus to Insight checks and Perception checks.

**Sustain Minor:** The effect persists until the end of your next turn.

### About the Author

Richard Baker is an award-winning game designer who has written numerous adventures and supplements, including *Manual of the Planes™*, the *DARK SUN® Campaign Setting*, and the *Gamma World® Roleplaying Game*. He's a *New York Times* bestselling author of *FORGOTTEN REALMS®* novels such as *Condemnation*, the *Last Mythal* trilogy, and the *Blades of the Moonsea* series. Rich is currently the Design Manager for the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®* game at Wizards of the Coast.