2025-05-15 Hiraeth Update - Revised Races, Langues, & Maps Annoucment

Alae, adventurers!

We delve deep into the very foundations of character identity, exploring alternative systems for two core elements: Language and Ancestry plus MAPS! The rules presented here are designed to offer greater depth, customization, and connection to the campaign world, moving beyond the standard assumptions to provide a richer fabric for our stories.

For years, the way Dungeons & Dragons handles language and race has served as a functional baseline. "Common" provides easy communication, and racial traits offer distinct mechanical identities. However: what if language was more than just a binary "known" or "unknown"? What if your character's heritage was less about picking a predefined package and more about assembling the specific traits that define your unique vision?

These questions sparked the development of the systems presented in this document. They represent a departure, an experiment aimed at empowering players to build characters and worlds with more intricate detail and personal expression.

Why New Language Rules?

The standard approach often treats language as a simple checkbox. While functional, this can flatten the diverse cultural landscape of a fantasy world. The goal of this new language system is threefold:

1. **Enhance Immersion:** By removing a universal "Common" and tying languages more closely to origin and culture, the world feels larger, more diverse, and more realistic. Communication becomes a tangible challenge and a rewarding aspect of exploration and social interaction.
2. **Introduce Nuance:** Fluency levels allow for degrees of understanding, creating opportunities for miscommunication, reliance on translators, or the satisfaction of gradually mastering a new tongue. It reflects the real-world experience of language learning.
3. **Provide Meaningful Choices:** Language selection becomes a more significant part of character background and development. Learning new languages offers a concrete and valuable downtime activity, representing a character's growth and interaction with the world.

Representing a character's growth and interaction with the world. Explore the full details of the proposed language system, including fluency levels and learning mechanics, here: Hiraeth Experimental Rules - Revised Language

Why a New Ancestry System?

The concept of "race" in D&D provides iconic archetypes, but the standard model can sometimes feel restrictive. Players often envision characters that blend traits or defy typical expectations. Inspired by conversations with

Zavi about their exploration into the Pathfinder race system, and its shortcomings, we decided to pull inspiration from DC 20 leading us to the pitch we have now. This Ancestry system aims to:

1. **Maximize Customization:** By using a point-buy system (Ancestry Points) to select specific Ancestry Traits, you gain granular control over your character's inherent abilities. You can mix and match traits from one or two chosen Ancestries to precisely match your concept.
2. **Support Mixed Heritages:** The system inherently supports characters with parents from different backgrounds, allowing players to mechanically represent that blend without being locked into predefined templates.
3. **Offer Scalable Complexity:** Default Trait packages provide a quick-start option for players who prefer the traditional approach, while the Expanded Traits offer a deep pool of options for those who love to tinker and customize.

Those who love to tinker and customize. You can find the complete Ancestry Point system, trait lists, and examples here: Hiraeth Experimental Rules - Revised Races

A Note on Implementation in Ongoing Campaigns

These systems represent fundamental shifts in character creation and interaction. Introducing them into an established campaign should be approached with care. **We will only implement them if the desire is player-driven and receives unanimous consent from the group.** We are presently testing some of these new mechanics with the Wednesday group - they have been helpful.

Explore Hiraeth: New Interactive Maps!

Beyond the rule explorations, I'm incredibly excited to share another new tool I have designed to enhance our adventures: **a brand-new interactive map website!**

I've poured a lot of effort into this, and I'm genuinely proud of how the first map – **Icebeach** – has turned out. My hope is that this becomes a valuable resource for visualizing the world and accessing information quickly.

Here's a glimpse of what the new map site offers:

- **Navigate Multiple Maps:** Easily switch between different maps of Hiraeth using the sidebar.
- **Toggle Dark/Light Mode:** View the map comfortably day or night with a theme toggle.
- **Clickable Points of Interest (POIs):** Hover over or click markers on the map to get descriptions and details about specific locations right there.
- **Achieve:** See some of the "*Dev Maps*" I have used over the years dating almost a decade back!
- **Wiki Integration:** Many POIs link directly to their corresponding Wiki pages for deeper lore dives!
- **Region Overlays:** See political or terrain regions visually represented on the map.
- **Filter Your View:** Show or hide Points of Interest and Regions based on their type using the filter panel.
- **Search Locations:** Quickly find specific points by name using the search bar.
- **Measure Distances:** Use the handy measurement tool to calculate distances between points, including estimated travel times.
- **Toggle Layers:** Easily hide or show all markers and region overlays with a single button.
- **Ambient Sounds:** Immerse yourself with background audio that changes with the theme (and includes a mute button!).

This is just the beginning, and I can't wait to add more maps from across Hiraeth as our adventures continue. Not all points have wiki links and not all places have been added to the map. Maps are being constantly updated. During times of downtime the content map is being worked on. Right now the main focus in our Curse of the Bloodwrite (our rendition of Curse of Strahd). Players for that mostly unexplored map can be seen here...

Please take a moment to check it out and let me know what you think:

- Explore the Map Site Here

I'm eager to hear your first impressions!

https://maps.hiraeth.wiki/?embed=true#IceBeach-s=c

Your browser does not support iframes. Please visit https://maps.hiraeth.wiki/ for the whole map.

Playtesting and Feedback

These systems are presented for playtesting and feedback. We encourage you to try them out. Consider how they impact social encounters, exploration, character creation, and downtime. Does the language system create interesting scenarios? Does the ancestry system allow for character concepts you couldn't easily build before? Is the Ancestry Point system balanced?

As always, your feedback is invaluable. We look forward to hearing about your experiences with these new foundations for character identity!

Please share your thoughts and playtest experiences in the channel on Discord (here) or reply to this post with your feedback.

Other Small Updates

The Wiki software we use is called BookStack and we have updated to version v25.02.2 which gives us access to a new WYSIWYG (**W**hat **Y**ou **S**ee **I**s **W**hat **Y**ou **G**et) editor allowing for better editing. BookStack is managed by a great developer and we are excited to see what other features come down the line. We are also testing out a new campaign system for managing meta level session notes, check out one of the current Curse of the Bloodwrite, the campaign inspired by the classic D&D campaign - **Curse of Struahd**. Upcoming limited series inspired by coming of age in an adventuring Camp in Icebeach.

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