

Fantasy Hero Grimoire I

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The Review:

Reviewed By Gordon Feiner

The Upside:

The Fantasy Hero Grimoire is the first book of pregenerated spells for the Fantasy Hero line. The book is written for the Turakian Age game as a default, but like all things Hero is easily adapted to any Fantasy game.

The book is divided into types of spells, or schools of magic. Each section is then further divided into Offensive, Defensive, Sensory, Movement and Miscellaneous spells.

Alchemy. This is the art of working with chemicals, creating potions, and the like. The section is divided into Potions, Salves and Ointments, Dusts, and Constructs. Mostly this section contains items common to many high fantasy games. The Constructs portion contains a write-up on creating a metal-golem and a Homonculus.

Conjuration. This school focuses on summon beings, wether mundane animals or greater demons. Most of the spells are some form of Summon Power. There are also spells for controlling summoned creatures, and defending yourself against them should they be unfriendly.

Divination. The art of seeing the future, or at least other places. These spells focus on some form of Detect or other Sense. There are no Offensive Divination spells present.

Druidry. These spells focus on nature magic, summoning plants and the like. Some of the spells have overlap with Elemental magic, and the opening paragraph states some Elemental mages learn some Druidry. The wide variety of nature focused effects are what you would expect.

Elemental Magic. This focuses on spells based on the four classic elements: Air, Earth, Fire and Water. In addition the Earth Magic section has two subsections, Crystal and Glass spells and Metal spells. Other elements are also covered, the two example spells given are for Ice Elemental spells and Light And Shadow Elemental spells, though the text notes other Lesser Elements could exist.

Enchantment. This section actually has two parts to each spell. Since this focuses on creating magical items it contains both the write-ups for those magic items, and the write-ups for the spells needed to create them. These use one of the Create Items Options from the Fantasy Hero genre book, so that is needed if you need the full rules on how the Create Item spells are made. Of note is a side bar note for using the Optional rules from Fantasy Hero is information on how to apply those rules to Power Frameworks.

Necromancy. The art over life and death. This opens with a series of spells for creating, or raising, various types of Undead. This is the second longest section, containing a large number of direct damage and undead related powers and many alternate versions of spells. A lot of the spells in this section are fairly powerful, I'd recommend a GM be careful about letting them into his game.

Sorcery. In the case of this book Sorcery has four main functions, spells of the Mind, Illusion, Telekinetic Spells and Sleep/Dream spells. Mind spells focus on mind control and memory alteration mostly, with very few spells that are directly damaging. There is an emotion spell that comes with a very good table of effects for various emotions and inflicting them on others. The Illusion spells contain a pretty standard array of illusion spells from the frivolous to the malicious. The Telekenesis spells, or Wizard's Hand Spells is really one spell. I felt there could have been more potential to this subset as was a bit shocked to find a single write-up. Oneiromancy, or Sleep Spells covers several mind and illusion like spells. In fact some of these felt like they belonged in the Illusion subset. The spells themselves however are all very good spells for a campaign, if oddly divided out.

Thaumaturgy. This set of spells are alteration and creation spells. These include things like changing characters into animals as curses, creating food, or bolstering someone's abilities. There are few that involve other effects that fit well within the group, such as altering an arrows path. They are all in one of four subsections - Self Changing, Other Changing, Creation, and Redirection.

Witchcraft. These are mostly "hedge-magic" and "black magic" spells. Not nearly as flashy as many other groups it still contains some of the books most devastating, and nicely useful, spells in the book. A few extra subsections included are Potions, which differ from Alchemical potions in that they're offensively oriented instead of beneficial. Candle Magic, an effect that nicely sets Witchcraft apart from other schools. And Black Magic, purely evil spells, these are the really powerful magic spells.

Wizardry. Wizardry is a catch-all group. These are spells that don't neatly fit in with any other school of magic but are definitely spells in many wizards repertoire. The Words Of Power subsection is of note, the spells here do not contain many of the Limitations inherent to the rest of the book. Making them both more expensive and less spell-like - though certainly in keeping with the awesome power of mighty mages. Battle Magic is a collection of spells useful to invading armies, like increasing the range of siege engines and breaching castle walls.

Divine Magic. This is magic granted directly by the Gods of the fantasy world, in this case the Turakian Age. Mechanically they are built similar to the other magic spells. Though all of them are bent towards things associated with various religious beliefs instead of outright Magic. The Healing sub section includes a number of spells to cure, heal and restore people to full health. The Deity-Specific spells are a small collection that are useful examples of how to create a Blessing Spell unique to each God instead of a generic Bless type spell.

The Index is a list of all the spells in the book in a table format providing much of the pertinent statistical information. Duration, Magic Skill Roll Penalty, Range, Endurance Cost, as well as the School Of Magic it's from and the page reference in the book.

The book contains three hundred and eighty-three separate spell write-ups, plus major variations on many of the spells for close to five hundred spells for your Fantasy Campaign.

The true usefulness of the book however is that it serves as an example of how to set up a Magic System for a Fantasy Game using HERO that is consistent and doesn't get repetitive with how it works. By far one of the more difficult undertakings when creating a consistent Fantasy Hero game, I would highly recommend this book as a guide, or simply use this system outright.

The Downside:

The Sorcery section seems a bit haphazard, in fact it seems completely erroneous to me. It appears to be an effort to simply have a school of magic called "Sorcery" instead of making it a word interchangeable with Wizardry. I would personally have simply named the section Illusion & Mind Magic, or simply Illusions, as mind effects are often associated with this effect anyways. The "Wizard's Hand Spells" section, or spell rather, also seems very out of place. It should either be Thaumaturgic (in the Redirection Spells sub section) or in the catch all Wizardry section.

Aside from the oddness I felt about the Sorcery section the book is a solid collection of well organized spells.

The Otherside:

Unless you're hunting for ideas or like conversions this book of write-ups really has no use for non-Hero gamers.

For the Hero Gamer this is, as I said, an excellent example of setting up and creating a body of spells for a Fantasy Hero Game. With almost four hundred spells in it you could simply use the book as written and have a large body of work to pull from for your game. For a Fantasy Hero game, especially one focusing on High Magic, this is an invaluable tool and definitely worth the price on the cover.

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