

Create a Language Clinic – Chapter 1

By Holly Lisle

Chapter One

Why Create Languages?

There are a few basic reasons I can come up with, including the one that has led me to create several dozen so far.

- You write fantasy or science fiction or another form of fiction that would benefit from characters speaking or writing in languages that are unique to your worlds.
- You are a role-playing game designer, game master (GM), or worldbuilder, and you need workable languages within the game.
- You are a conlanger, you love languages, and you'd like to see how someone else organizes the process of creating them.
- You want to do something really different, but you don't want it to involve the pain of tattoos or piercing, and talking with your friends in your own real language would be really, really different.
- You're a Secret Master of the Universe, and your plan to take over the world involves getting everyone on board with one language—and you want it to be one that only includes concepts of which you approve.
- It's ridiculously fun. Yes, but ...Why a language? How could a made-up language possibly add to a work of fiction, or a game universe, or your personal amusement? Consider the following:

A Language Is the Soul of Its People

We breathe language, we live language, and we dream language. Language is the way the past communicates with the present, the way the present communicates with the future, the way we form our goals and aspirations, transmit them to others, and make them come true. Shared language allows us to gather together to share our dreams and our strength; languages that we do not know drive us apart.

Language is what we have instead of telepathy, and it's a good replacement. With someone who shares our language, we can express emotion, make plans, tell stories about things that once happened and things that never will, invent new ideas, create worlds. Language is magic.

Common language is the first requirement for a people to be a people. Without shared language, there can be no comprehension, no understanding, no shared ground between two people, or between two groups of people. Ideas break in translation, concepts vanish where there are no equivalent words. The other requirements that make up a people—a shared philosophy and shared goals, die on the altar of the common tongue.

If you cannot communicate with each other, you cannot know each other...

(continued in the class)

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