

Double Vowels and Other Quirks – A Public Service Message

written by Holly

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By Holly Lisle

I like double vowels for words in the languages I design, and I was writing this morning about Uudmar and Ravii and Betraa, all Tonks, who speak Tonk, which uses a lot of double vowels, and it occurred to me that some folks are going to look at those names and in their heads they're going to hear OOD-mar and RAH-vee and BET-ra. And that ain't it. I don't use double vowels to look pretty or cool or alien – they actually change the pronunciation of the words. In my worlds, in my languages, if you see one of my conlang (constructed language) words and it has a double vowel, you only need one rule to figure out how that word is supposed to be pronounced. (Like George Carlin, I say, "My rules. I make 'em up.") Here's the rule: First vowel long, second vowel short, syllable stress on the syllable with the long vowel.

So Baanraak is not BAN-rak. It's BAY-an-RAY-ak. (Different book, different universe, same rule). Uudmar is YOU-ud-mar. Ravii is ra-VI-ih. Betraa is be-TRAY-ah. Taak (an independent city-state bound to others by tribal or clan alliances), is TAY-ack.

The doubled-vowels thing is one of my quirks – a thing that I like for some reason I can't explain and use a lot. I probably have others. If you've hit a quirk in any of my books you'd like to ask about, you can do it here. I'll be happy to answer.

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