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Monster Manual II (Dungeons & Dragons D20 3.0 Fantasy Roleplaying Supplement)



Synopsis

Even Greater Threats Await! As heroes grow in power, they seek out more formidable adversaries. Whether sinister or seductive, ferocious or foul, the creatures lurking within these pages will challenge the most experienced characters of any campaign. This supplement for the D&D game unleashes a horde of monsters to confront characters at all levels of play, including several with Challenge Ratings of 21 or higher. Inside are old favorites such as the death knight and the gem dragons, as well as all-new creatures such as the bronze serpent, the effigy, and the fiendwurm. Along with updated and expanded monster creation rules, *Monster Manual II* provides an inexhaustible source of ways to keep even the toughest heroes fighting and running for their lives. To use this supplement, a Dungeon Master also needs the *Player's Handbook* and the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. A player needs only the *Player's Handbook*.

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Customer Reviews

As a DM, monster books are definitely one of my favorite kinds. I own quite a few of the d20 ones: *Monster Manual 1*, *Monsters of Faerun*, *Monsternomicon*, and the latest, *Monster Manual 2*. So let's get into it. First the good: 1) The whole first section of the book before we even get to the monsters is great. The authors explain the creature abilities, special abilities, attack routines, and monster advancement in a much more clear and concise way than *MM 1*. You understand exactly how improved grab works, right? And swallow whole does bite damage how many times? These things and more are now explained quite nicely. 2) If you're a big psionics fan as I am, *MM 2* offers something new. They have rules for how to use the *Psionics Handbook* to make the *MM 2* creatures

with psionic powers (such as the thri-kreen) truly "psionic". They have spell to power conversions, what combat modes they'd get, etc. Very cool.3) Monsters as playable classes. If a monster could potentially take class levels, there's information for ECL and preferred class. If the creature is psionic, it even further breaks down the information into psionic/non-psionic ECL.4) High CR monsters. There's a lot of baddies in this book that will challenge mid-high level parties. I was a bit worried there would be nothing for lower level groups, but there's plenty of low CR mobs too.5) Cool templates. You will like these... promise.6) Old favorites from 1E and 2E done up with 3E stats. Welcome back the Myconids! Now the bad:1) Too many damn constructs. Yes I know it's hard to make a monster that challenges a high-level group, but it doesn't have to be a construct! Really the constructs are fine. They are neat. I just feel they could have diversified a bit more.

At long last, the second Monster Manual has appeared, to give DMs and players more opponents and allies for their D&D3 games. As stated in the pre-release material, it definitely focuses on the higher end of the CR scale...the highest CR is 28, if I recall correctly. In this rather nice-looking book, you'll find many, many new and gently used monsters...all the way from the ash rat (a perpetually smokey rat who causes fires) to the phoenix (which, literally, cannot be killed if it has an action), and beyond. One entry I appreciated was the linnorms; in real life, a cryptozoological lizard from Scandinavia, but in D&D3, the most downright unpleasant types of dragons you'll run into...greedy, selfish, and downright meaner than the chromatics, though, thankfully, they don't age. Wizards has shown an interesting predilection for worms of late...first the Worm That Walks template from Epic-Level, and now the fiendwurm (the demonically-infused earthworm with a gate to Hell in its gut) and the psurlons, a race of intelligent earthworms. Also included are some monsters who've appeared before. Most of the giants were in AD&D2, as was the banshee. In fact, it appears a great number of these are from the old out-of-print Dark Sun setting. There are a few monsters that have appeared in other 3e media...like the Legendary animals, first appearing in Masters of the Wild, and the catoblepas, which just appeared in Dragon in September's issue (and is, itself, an update from earlier editions). The celestials (all two of them) appeared in Planescape, as did, undoubtedly, a number of the demons and devils as well. Finally, to round out the specific creatures, they include new templates...such as the dreaded death knight (undead warrior), the tauric (two creatures together...

Monster Manual 2 has 224 pages, 262 creatures, and 9 templates. Its CR values: mean ~8.5, mode 5, median 8, low 1/4, high 28. CR values of *MM1 3E* for comparison: mean ~5.4, mode 3,

median 5, low 1/10, high 26. It retails for \$29.95, which is an average of \$0.13 per page. Overall, this text rounds out the D&D ecosystem fairly well, and its CR values are closer to the *Fiend Folio* than to *MM1*. The introduction features advancement rules and ability explanations that are superior to those found in *MM1 3E*. Unlike the *Fiend Folio*, there is no obvious focus in this collection; however, it is definitely not a book for games that attempt to develop humanoid cultures and conflicts--indeed, there are no "humanoid" types in the text at all, besides one template (there are, of course, a dozen "monstrous humanoid" types, and several outsiders that are essentially extraplanar monstrous humanoids). Other developments include a good smattering of terrain-based creatures--more desert and swamp inhabitants (fans of the old Dark Sun setting will be pleased to see the return of the "braxat," the "dune stalker," the "sun giant," the "nightmare beast," the "thri-kreen," and the "rampager.") Also, a higher percentage of Colossal creatures and of Aquatic ones than in *MM1*. The templates are generally good--standouts include the "Death Knight," the "Half-Golem," and the "Tauric" creature (a centaur-thing made of various humanoid and animal bits--very nice). The "Spellstitched" template is decent, though it conjures images of fireball-tossing skeletons from *Diablo*.

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