

A Quick Primer on Dragon Age

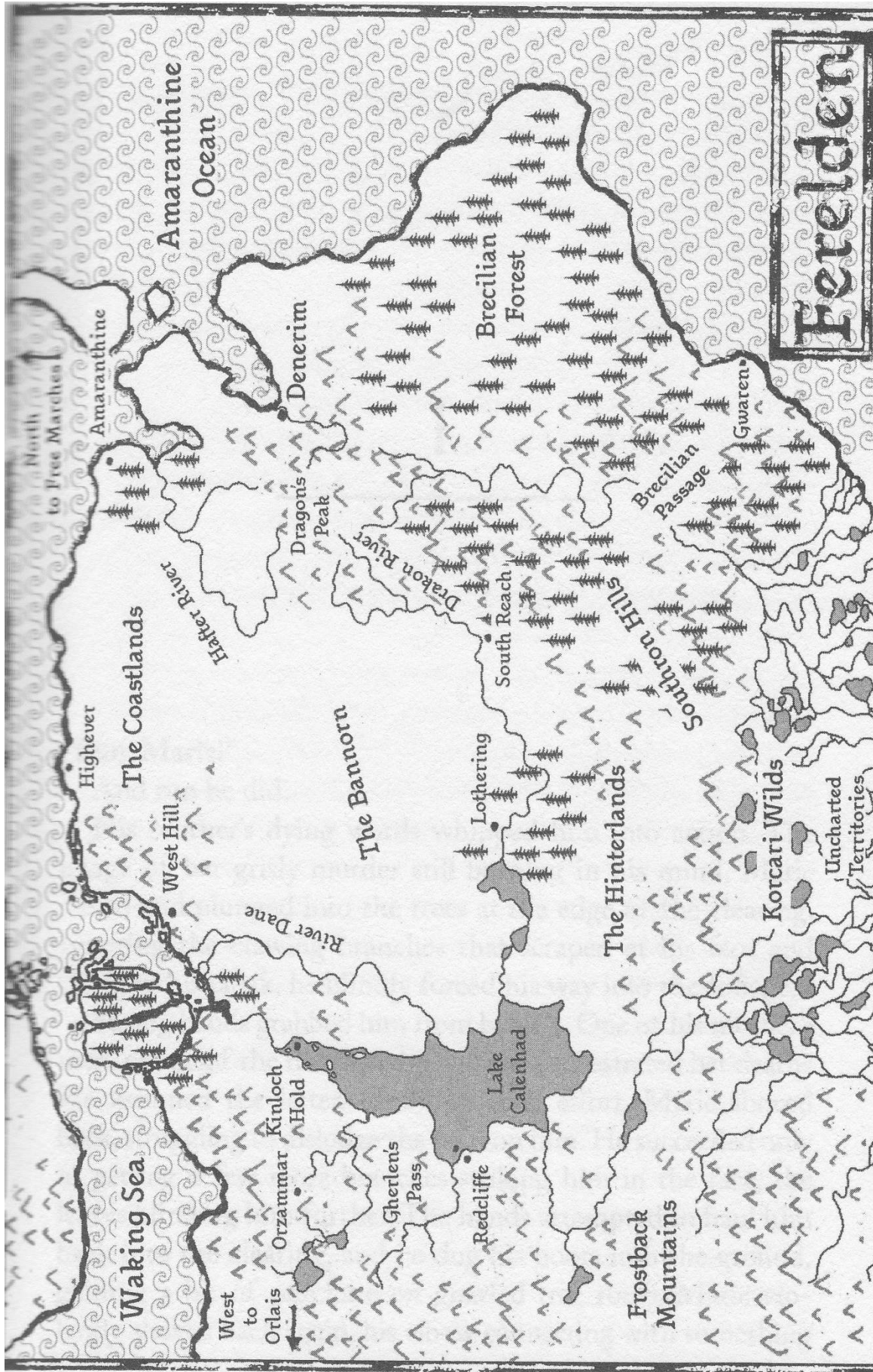
This document takes entries from the Dragon Age wiki page at <http://dragonage.wikia.com> and attempts to create a general view of the continent of Thedas, (TH)e (D)ragon (A)ge (S)etting.

Here you'll find information on the world, its calendar, the 3 playable races, the church, magic, Darkspawn, and the Blight. It also includes a map of the kingdom of Ferelden, the starting point for a Dragon Age campaign.

This primer should serve as a good starting point for DM's and players out there who have little to go on as far as information or the feel of the setting. This should complement the information given in the Game Master's Guide in the Dragon Age boxed set.

The pdf has links back to the wiki page on certain entries for further reading.

Please note that I did not write this. This is literally a cut and paste from the wiki, and I'm just making it easier for my players and thought I'd share with readers of the blog.



Ferelden

North
to Free Marches

Amaranthine
Ocean

Amaranthine

The Coastlands

Highever

Hafer River

West Hill

Waking Sea

West
to

Orlais

Orzammar

Kinloch
Hold

River Dane

The Bannorn

Dragons
Peak

Denerim

Breilian
Forest

South Reach

Lothing

The Hinterlands

Frostback
Mountains

Southern Hills

Breilian
Passage

Gwaren

Korcari Wilds

Uncharted
Territories

The World

Thedas, or (The) (D)ragon (A)ge (S)etting:

Thedas is a continent in the southern Hemisphere. It contains the [Anderfels](#), [Antiva](#), [The Free Marches](#), [Ferelden](#), [Nevarra](#), [Orlais](#), [Par Vollen](#), [Rivain](#), [Seheron](#), the [Tevinter Imperium](#), and other currently unnamed countries. The word Thedas originates from Tevinter, once referring to all lands beyond the Imperium. Eventually it came to encompass the entire continent.

A native of Thedas is referred to as a *Thedosian*.

Thedas is comparable in size to modern Europe with the Amaranthine Ocean to the east and the Boeric Ocean to the north. Ferelden lies to the far southeast and is small compared to the rest of the continent.

Beyond the [Korcari Wilds](#) to the south is a frozen wasteland that only the [Chasind Wilders](#) have explored. There's also land further west but the Hunterhorn Mountains inhibit travel - as do the jungles of Donarks in the northwest. Par Vollen lies to the north, much closer to the equator.

Ferelden:

Ferelden is a kingdom in southeastern [Thedas](#). It was conquered by [Orlais](#) a century ago, when King Darlan ruled, but was freed through the efforts of [King Maric Theirin](#), grandson of [King Brandel](#). Maric's son, [King Cailan Theirin](#), is the ruler at the start of [Dragon Age: Origins](#).

The climate of Ferelden appears to be temperate, and Ferelden along with Thedas itself is located in the southern hemisphere.

- Ferelden has two coasts. It is bordered on the north by the Waking Sea and on the east by the Amaranthine Ocean.
- To the west are Lake Calenhad, [Redcliffe](#), mountain passes, and the dwarven kingdom [Orzammar](#) at the northwest edge within the Frostback Mountains. Beyond the mountains is the Orlesian Empire.
- In the northern center is the [Bannorn](#), a large area of fertile land where the banns compete for the right to rule.
- [Highever](#) and [Amaranthine](#) sit on Ferelden's northern coast.
- To the northeast is the capital [Denerim](#), at the base of Dragon's Peak.
- The eastern part is dominated by the [Brecilian Forest](#), with the coastal city [Gwaren](#) to the far southeast, connected by the Brecilian Passage.
- To the south are the [Korcari Wilds](#) and the [Ostagar](#) ruins. The areas beyond the Wilds are uncharted.

Denerim:

"Denerim is the heart and soul of Ferelden. It was the city of King Calenhad, the birthplace of Andraste. As stubborn as a mabari, and as good to have on your side." —[Arl Eamon](#)

Denerim is the capital of [Ferelden](#). Denerim is also considered a holy city to worshippers of Andraste, as it is the place of her birth. Denerim was the teyrnir of the king, but since the king's domain is supposed to be all of Ferelden, it has been reduced to an arling. Home of both nobility and the common people. This sprawling city has much to offer the adventurer; with its market place, magic shops, armorers and bordellos. However, one cannot let one's eye rest on a single place for too long, lest a back alley brawler or thief cut one's purse strings... or one's throat.

Korcari Wilds:

The **Korcari Wilds** are a cold southern expanse of forests whose extent is not truly known. The [Chasind Wilders](#), who live within, say that a wasteland of snow and ice waits further to the south, filled only with desolate tundra and nomadic barbarians, but the northerners believe little of what the Chasind tell them.

These forests are home to the legendary "Witch of the Wilds," [Flemeth](#) and [her daughters](#).

Local legends state that the perpetual mist surrounding the Wilds is not natural, but rather the result of a curse. Long ago, when [werewolves](#) terrorized the country, a great [arl](#) ventured into the Wilds killing every wolf he could find, as well as any member of the Chasind Wilder folk. A chasind mother grew enraged at the slaughter upon finding her sons dead at the soldier's blades and used a blade that stabbed one of her sons and stabbed it into her own heart. A great mist seeped forth from his mortal wound surrounding the entire Wilds. It was so dense that the arl and his soldiers were lost inside forever.

Deep Roads:

The **Deep Roads** are an extensive network of underground roads that once belonged to the [dwarven](#) kingdom. Many people of [Ferelden](#) thought these roads lost to time, but a large number of them still exist. The dwarves closed the Deep Roads off when they fell to the [darkspawn](#) during [First Blight](#). The entrances still exist, but are all sealed by octagonal steel doors decorated with geometric patterns that may form words or patterns.

Chasind Wilders:

The **Chasind Wilders** dwell within the [Korcari Wilds](#) and are viewed by many [Fereldans](#) as primitive people, mired in superstition and still clinging to the ways of their shamans. They live in houses built on stilts, travelers tell, and fear the mythic [Witches of the Wilds](#) who threaten to pounce on their children. The Chasind also say that a wasteland of snow and ice waits further to the south, filled only with desolate tundra and nomadic barbarians, but the northerners believe little of what the Chasind tell them.

The Chantry

The major religious group in [Ferelden](#) and other parts of [Thedas](#). It's based on the [Chant of Light](#), a series of teachings written by [Andraste](#), the prophet of the [Maker](#), and was founded by Kordillus Drakon, the first emperor of [Orlais](#). Its followers are known as Andrastian or Andrastians. "Chantric" is also an acceptable adjective to refer to something or someone that is of the Chantry religion.

The view of the Chantry on non-humans is that they need saving -- they have turned even further from the Maker's grace than humanity has. [Elves](#) were, and in some cases still are, pagan and [dwarves](#) do not worship any gods at all. The Chantry's goal is to spread the Chant of Light to all four corners of the world, that includes non-humans as well.

While the actual priesthood of the Chantry is made up entirely of women, men are allowed into affiliated groups like the [Templars](#) and other non-ordained positions. The leader of the Chantry is the [Divine](#) who resides in the Grand Cathedral, located in the capital of Orlais. The Chantry also has Grand Clerics, whose position is similar to bishops. The head of the Chantry in Ferelden is a Grand Cleric.

The Chantry calendar is used everywhere in Thedas, save for the [Imperium](#), and is the source of the [Ages](#) the game is named after.

It was an Orlesian emperor who made the Chantry into an organized religion. Before that, those who believed in Andraste's message were scattered throughout Thedas.

The funeral rites of the Chantry involve cremation. As Andraste's body was burned, and her spirit ascended to stand by the Throne of the Maker, so too will that of her followers. It may also be to ward off the possibility of the corpse becoming the subject of demonic possession.

When not capitalized, 'chantry' refers to a building in which worship takes place.

The Maker:

The **Maker** is the being worshipped by the [Chantry](#). He is referred to as a male, and the prophetess [Andraste](#), who founded the Chantry, is considered to be His wife. While the Chantry believes that the Maker is all-powerful and created all things, He has also turned away from them. The Chantry believes this to be because of the faults of His creations. He will not answer prayers, or grant wishes or anything of the sort, until humanity proves itself worthy of His attention again.

It is said that a long time ago, the Maker created the [Fade](#) as His first world. His first children were the [spirits](#) of the Fade and the Maker believed He had made them in His own image. Yet the Maker turned away from His first children, because while they could alter their world at will, they lacked a soul, and could only copy, not create or imagine for themselves. Dissatisfied with the result, He left the Fade behind, creating the world of [Thedas](#) instead. The next realm that the Maker created was one that his new creations would not be able to change at will. He separated it from the first by putting the [Veil](#) in between them, not realizing that His first children would be able to observe His new children and grow envious of their ability to envisage new things.

The children that populated this new realm had the spark of the divine within them, which pleased the Maker. While their world was more solid than that of the spirits, these creatures were able to imagine, and dream new things because of it. But then the First Sin was committed. Malevolent beings whispered to men from across the Veil, and turned them to the worship of the [Old Gods](#). The Maker turned away from mankind, and left the [Golden City](#). Much later on, Andraste managed to convince the Maker to forgive his

creations, but Andraste was betrayed by her mortal husband [Maferath](#), and burned at the stake. The Maker turned away from mankind once more.

Now the Maker has left the world. The Chantry teaches that one day, when the [Chant of Light](#) is sung from all the corners of the world, the Maker will finally return and transform the world into a paradise. Until that day, however, He only watches for those few who follow Andraste's teachings. When they die, the Maker brings them to his side. All others wander the Fade throughout eternity, forever lost to the Maker's sight. The Chantry refers to this state as "Oblivion." The motive to create paradise in the world by spreading the Chant is often cited as the reason the [Chantry](#) called an [Exalted March](#) against the elves of the Dales, who refused to worship a 'human' god. Although a great many people believe in the Maker, not everyone does so, [Morrigan](#) and most [Dwarves](#) being the most obvious examples. Morrigan is prone to having elaborate philosophical discussions with [Leliana](#) on the matter, while [Dwarves](#) simply don't care about the superstitions of humans and other races.

[Justice](#) claims that spirits do not know whether the Maker exists, and that demons do not care. He also suggests that the spirits who believe in the Maker may do so only because they saw Him in the dreams of mortals.

The Order of Templars

The Order of Templars is a military order of the [Chantry](#) that hunts [apostates](#) and [maleficars](#) and watches over the [mages](#) from the [Circle of Magi](#). One of their most important tasks occurs during a mage's [Harrowing](#). During this, a templar watches over the body of the mage, ready to kill him or her if [demonic](#) possession occurs. To help them control mages, templars have the ability to dispel magic and to inhibit spellcasting. A group of templars is led by a Knight-Commander and each Circle and the majority of chantries in [Thedas](#) are assigned one.

Templars also have access to the Right of Annulment. The Right of Annulment gives the Templars the right to "pacify" or kill all mages in the tower. This would be used in the event that total chaos was unleashed by the mages and there is no chance that they could be saved. [The Warden](#) has the option of using the Right of Annulment in the [Broken Circle](#) quest line.

All templars are also addicted to [lyrium](#), which is officially used to help develop their anti-mage skills and unofficially used as a control mechanism by the Chantry. A lack of [lyrium](#) causes the templar to lose touch with reality and suffer from delusions.

Templars in Thedas

While mages often resent the templars as symbols of the Chantry's control over magic, the people of Thedas see them as saviors and holy warriors, champions of all that is good armed with piety enough to protect the world from the ravages of foul magic. In reality, the Chantry's militant arm looks first for skilled warriors with unshakable faith in the [Maker](#), with a flawless moral center as a secondary concern. Templars must carry out their duty with an emotional distance, and the Order of Templars would rather have soldiers with religious fervor and absolute loyalty than paragons of virtue who might question orders when it comes time to make difficult choices.

It is this sense of ruthless piety that most frightens mages when they get the templars' attention: when the templars are sent to eliminate a possible [blood mage](#), there is no reasoning with them, and if the templars are prepared the mage's magic is often useless. Driven by their faith, the templars are one of the most feared and respected forces in Thedas.

Races

Dwarves:

Dwarves are one of the main humanoid races of the Dragon Age setting. They are a race in decline, once boasting an underground kingdom spanning much of [Thedas](#), but devastated during the first [Blight](#) and still losing both lives and territory to the [darkspawn](#) every day. In the dwarven language, they refer to themselves as the *dwarva*.

Dwarves have an innate [resistance](#) to magic, preventing them from becoming [mages](#); dwarven characters can be either [warriors](#) or [rogues](#).

Unlike many other cultures in Thedas, dwarves do not worship anthropomorphic god(s). Their beliefs are more akin to ancestor worship, and they also hold a sacred reverence for the stone that surrounds them throughout their entire life. Dwarves who lead a strong and noble life are said to strengthen the Stone when they die, becoming Ancestors. Those who are ignoble or disgraced would weaken the stone and are therefore rejected by it for all eternity.

Every once in a while there's a dwarf who is declared by the [Assembly](#), a sort of ruling council, to be particularly noble. These dwarves become [Paragons](#), and are worshipped during their lives and long after their deaths. When a dwarf is declared by the Assembly to be a Paragon, a [noble house](#) is created which bears their name. The deeds of a Paragon are carefully recorded in the [Memories](#), which record the lineage and deeds that help determine what [caste](#) a dwarf is born into. The word of a Paragon is held in such esteem that it is sometimes equal to even that of their king.

The social structure of dwarves is broken up into castes. The casteless are the lowest rung of dwarven society: outcasts in their own city, unable to take up work even as servants among the higher castes, nor to defend their honor in the [Provings](#). Dwarves who are exiled or born on the surface are also considered by the Shaperate to be casteless, but with an increase in the number of dwarves from high ranking castes choosing to live on the surface, it is becoming more difficult for some surface dwarves to be considered permanent exiles. The average dwarf will never see the surface, and often will have superstitious beliefs concerning surface-life (such as falling into the sky, or the sun falling to the ground). Those dwarves who are most commonly seen on the surface tend to be merchants, or on occasion smiths, but amongst the dwarves they might have been thieves, murderers or worse.

Above the casteless, numerous and distinct castes make their home in Orzammar, including merchants, smiths, warriors, and nobles. While it is possible for some dwarves to "better their position" within this rigid system, this is rare and very difficult.

The dwarves do have a king, but heredity is not always the determining factor in who sits on the throne. When the time comes, the noble houses fight each other for the power that the throne will bring. While the king may propose an heir to the throne, ultimately, the next ruler is determined in the noble Assembly, by a vote of the deshyrs (dwarven council members).

It has been mentioned that most of the wealth of the dwarves comes from selling processed [lyrium](#) to the mages of Thedas. While the Chantry holds a monopoly on lyrium trade with the dwarves, in order to maintain control over templars and mages, the need for lyrium on the surface promotes a great deal of illegal trade.

A great deal of importance is placed on the appearance of nobility and justice amongst the dwarves. The actions of one family member can often severely diminish an entire house's place in the social hierarchy of

the dwarves. Some disgraced dwarves will choose to go through a ceremonial "death" to clear their names and the names of their families. They walk out of Orzammar into the Deep Roads to fight darkspawn for the rest of their lives as a member of the Legion of the Dead. When one of their number dies, the Legion will bury him or her within the stone, and celebrate the fact that the fallen has finally found peace.

Elves:

A humanoid race, **elves** typically stand four inches shorter than their human companions and have a slender, lithe build and pointed ears. In [Ferelden](#), and many other parts of [Thedas](#), elves are second-class citizens, often referred to by humans as 'knife ears' as a racial slur.

The Elves of Thedas are mortal, but elven legends state that this was not always the case. Once, they say, they were an immortal race that lived in harmony with the natural world and followed the [elven pantheon](#). The first *shemlen* (a term meaning "quick children" that was used by the ancient elves to describe the [humans](#)) they encountered were the [mages](#) of the [Tevinter Imperium](#). They traded with the Imperium and grew friendly with humans, but soon discovered that breeding with humans produced only human babies, due to the elves' genetic adaptability, while exposure to the 'quick children' caused the elves to quicken themselves. For the first time, elves began to age and die.

In fear, the elves withdrew from human contact, but the Imperium interpreted this as a sign of hostility and invaded [Elvhenan](#), the elven homeland, and enslaved its people. The elven people lost their immortality and their gods forsook them. The exact details of the war are lost to history, though artifacts found in Imperium ruins suggest Elvhenan was looted, or that some Elves joined the Imperium bringing artifacts with them.

Elven slaves were among the most fervent supporters of the Prophetess [Andraste](#)'s uprising against the Tevinter Imperium. The elves joined Andraste in her quest to depose the Tevinter magisters, and they were rewarded for their loyalty by being granted land in the [Dales](#) upon Andraste's victory. Ironically, though the elven slaves won Andraste's favor, it was the Chantry which was responsible for the second downfall of the elves. The only known elf from the time of Andraste was named Shartan.

In the Dales, the elves created a second elven homeland and began to restore the lost lore and culture of Elvhenan, including the worship of their former Gods. For some years, humans loyal to Andraste's memory respected their elven allies. But over the generations and as the [Chant of Light](#) and the religion of the [Maker](#) spread throughout human nations, the diplomatic relationships between the Dales and surrounding human nations turned cold, as the elves refused to be converted. The [Chantry](#) eventually led an [Exalted March](#) against the elves, claiming they had been attacked by the Dales. As the Dales fell and the elves had to abandon their second homeland, their culture was irrevocably schismed. Many elves accepted the terms of their human aggressors, going to live in the Alienages inside [human](#) cities and worshipping the [Maker](#). Those elves who resisted became the nomadic Dalish, maintaining the worship of the elven gods and continuing their efforts to recover the lost culture of Elvhenan.

Alienages are closed communities of elves living in human cities. They are typically poor and survive by begging or taking on the most menial and unrewarding of tasks.

Dalish elves lead nomadic lives, wandering throughout Thedas. The clans date back to the ruling clans of the Dales and the Dalish are the descendants of the ruling houses of their destroyed homeland. Dalish elves seek to recover, inherit and preserve the knowledge and sacred treasures of the two fallen kingdoms and for that purpose they'll often seek out old elven ruins for such things in the face of danger. They still revere the elven pantheon and each member of a tribe will [tattoo](#) the symbol of their chosen god on their face.

They travel around the more remote reaches of Thedas in covered wagons called [aravels](#), special wagons with large triangular sails atop them and rudder-like devices on the back. The Dalish elves are also known for being the only race adept at forging [ironbark](#), a unique substance stronger and lighter than steel, used to make their weapons and certain other items of clothing, such as amulets.

Dalish elves tend to keep to their own and avoid humans whenever they can, but will occasionally encounter human travelers, or venture near human settlements to trade. At the threat of these encounters becoming violent, a Dalish clan will likely withdraw before any real force of humans gets involved, but they will often still be willing to stand their ground. In the long run, hostilities with humans will likely end badly for the elves, especially if a kingdom decides that a certain clan has become more trouble than it is worth. The Dalish are known to refer to their city cousins as 'flat ears', some of them believing the city elves are no more than pets for humans, and hence are 'flat ears' (humans) in spirit if not body.

Dalish elf's lifespans are slowly starting to get longer as they spend more time away from Humans. Many Dalish elves already live to be much older than their city cousins and Humans. However many think they will never truly gain their agelessness back until they have their own homeland where they can truly regain their ancient lore and culture. [\[1\]](#).

The Dalish clans themselves can also be quite different from each other. Some clans will get along fairly well with humans, and might even camp outside of settlements for long periods of time. Other clans are more infamous, living by banditry and hiding like guerrillas in the mountain passes. The Dalish of Ferelden are on a more-or-less neutral basis with its human citizens.

Dalish clans rarely encounter each other. Once a decade or so, the Dalish clans all meet together, and their [Keepers](#), the elders and leaders of the Dalish, will meet together and exchange knowledge.

The Dalish live by a code known as Vir Tanadahl, meaning "Way of Three Trees." It is made of three parts, which are:

- Vir Assan ("Way of the Arrow") - fly straight and do not waver
- Vir Bor'Assan ("Way of the Bow") - bend but never break
- Vir Adahlen ("Way of the Forest") - together we are stronger than the one

The three parts of the philosophy are often strung together as a sort of mantra, which the Dalish will often end with the phrase "We are the last of the elvhenan, and never again shall we submit."

When Dalish elves die, their clan will bury them and plant a tree over their remains.

Human:

Humans are the most numerous, yet also the most contentious of all the intelligent races of [Thedas](#). Only four times have they ever united beneath a single banner, the last being centuries ago. The monotheistic faith of the [Chantry](#) plays a major role in human society.

Ferelden:

The humans in [Ferelden](#) control both the nation's royal family and its nobility. The [elves](#) of Ferelden are considered second-class citizens by the majority of human [Fereldans](#).

Orlais:

[Orlais](#) is a powerful state of Thedas, where humans also serve as the dominant intelligent race. Like their Fereldan neighbors, the Orlesians treat the elves of their nation as a lower caste.

Tevinter Imperium:

The [Tevinter Imperium](#) is the formerly dominant power of Thedas. The Imperium conquered the first homeland of the elves and reduced them to their servile status in most of the human-ruled lands of Thedas in the current age.

Calendar

The calendar in [Thedas](#) consists of twelve thirty-day months. Four annums split the year, signifying the transition between seasons. A fifth annum celebrates the start of a new year. Although each month has a name in the language of Ancient Tevinter, the people of [Ferelden](#) commonly use the "low" names, shown below.

Months and Annums

- Annum: First Day
- First Month: Wintermarch
- Annum: Wintersend
- Second Month: Guardian
- Third Month: Drakonis
- Fourth Month: Cloudreach
- Annum: Summerday
- Fifth Month: Bloomingtide
- Sixth Month: Justinian
- Seventh Month: Solace
- Annum: Funalis
- Eighth Month: August
- Ninth Month: Kingsway
- Tenth Month: Harvestmere
- Annum: Satinalia
- Eleventh Month: Firstfall
- Twelfth Month: Haring

For most good folk, the details of our calendar have little purpose. It is useful only for telling them when the Summerday festival will be held, when the snows are expected to begin, and when the harvest must be complete. The naming of the years are a matter for historians and taxmen, and few if pressed could even tell you the reason that our current Age is named after dragons.

It is 9:30 Dragon Age, the thirtieth year of the ninth Age since the crowning of the [Chantry's](#) first [Divine](#).

Each Age is exactly 100 years, with the next Age's name chosen in the 99th year. The scholars in [Val Royeaux](#) advise the Chantry of portents seen in that 99th year, and Chantry authorities pore over the research for months before the Divine announces the name of the imminent Age. The name is said to be an omen of what is to come, of what the people of [Thedas](#) will face for the next hundred years.

The current Age was not meant to be the Dragon Age. Throughout the last months of the Blessed Age, the Chantry was preparing to declare the Sun Age, named for the symbol of the [Orlesian Empire](#), which at that time sprawled over much of the south of Thedas and controlled both [Ferelden](#) and what is now [Nevarra](#). It was to be a celebration of Orlesian imperial glory.

But as the rebellion in Ferelden reached a head and the [Battle of River Dane](#) was about to begin, a peculiar event occurred: a rampage, the rising of a dreaded [high dragon](#). Dragons had been thought practically extinct since the days of the Nevarran dragon hunts, and they say that to see this great beast rise from the [Frostbacks](#) was both majestic and terrifying. As the rampage began and the high dragon decimated the countryside in its search for food, the elderly Divine Faustine II abruptly declared the Dragon Age.

Some say the Divine was declaring support for Orlais in the battle against Ferelden, since the dragon is an element of the Dufayel family heraldry of [King Meghren](#), the so-called Usurper King of Ferelden. Be that as it may, the high dragon's rampage turned towards the Orlesian side of the Frostback Mountains, killing hundreds and sending thousands more fleeing to the northern coast. The Fereldan rebels won the Battle of River Dane, ultimately securing their independence.

Many thus think that the Dragon Age will come to represent a time of violent and dramatic change for all of Thedas. It remains to be seen.

Magic

Most mages in [Thedas](#) belong to the [Circle of Magi](#). As such, they are taken from their families while still children, and highborn children who are able to use magic will lose all claims to their family's estates and titles when they are taken to the Circle. This helps to create a bond stronger than social class or race, since everybody in the Circle is raised and taught the same way.

All mages undergo a process of having their blood taken while apprentices and placed in a [Phylactery](#). This ensures the mages' compliance as well as the ability to track down any mage who decides to run away, since a [Templar](#) can track anyone through their blood.

Some mages manage to escape the notice of the [Chantry](#) and the Circle, and grow up without the training that those who are taken from their families will have. Any mage not a part of the Circle is considered to be an [apostate](#), and will be hunted by [templars](#) if discovered.

Some groups, such as the Dalish, are, for all intents and purposes, outside of the jurisdiction of the Chantry and the Circle, and will carry on their own magical traditions. A Dalish Keeper has considerably different training than a Circle Mage, as their tradition is supposedly based on the old elven magics. A Keeper typically has a First, the Dalish term for an apprentice.

Another example of an extra-traditional mage organization are the [Witches of the Wilds](#), to which [Flemeth](#) and [Morrigan](#) belong.

In Thedas, magic is a natural phenomenon like air pressure, gravity, inertia, or anything else. Some people are born with the ability to interact, control, and shape it.

Magic originates from the [Fade](#), the realm where [Spirits](#) dwell and humans and elves visit when they dream. As such, using it can draw the attention of the beings on the other side of the [Veil](#), leading to an increased risk of demonic possession. A possessed mage becomes a distortion of their former self, a twisted monster known as an [Abomination](#).

What a mage is able to do with magic in Thedas is somewhat limited when compared to other fantasy worlds, namely those used by Dungeons and Dragons. Interdimensional travel (discounting interaction with the Fade) and teleportation are non-existent although occasionally attempted, and the average person will rarely ever see any true example of magical power.

Mages are, however, capable of manipulating the basic elements, such as conjuring gouts of flame and small localized ice and electrical storms. There are also spells that allow for the temporary reanimation of corpses and the draining of an opponent's life-force.

Forbidden Magic

Some uses of magic are strictly forbidden by the Chantry, and, by extension, the Circle. [Blood Magic](#), an offshoot of magical abilities that allow for things like using life-energy to power one's spells and the ability to penetrate the very mind of an enemy, is one example. The [Circle](#) has judged these abilities as evil (and certainly, they tend to be abused by practitioners) and has adopted a strict no-tolerance policy on the use of these abilities, to protect non-mages from their abuse, and mages from the fear generated by the common use of such powers. Most blood magic stems from demonic influence, according to blood mages such as Avernus. (Grey Wardens are known to use forbidden magic to fight the darkspawn. It is unclear whether they are legally allowed to use it, or if people simply view the Grey Warden mission as more important than these laws.

The Fade

The **Fade** is a metaphysical realm that is part of [Thedas](#) yet separated by [the Veil](#). The Fade is split up into fiefs belonging to the [spirits](#) that live there, and they change the landscape of the Fade to emulate what they see in the minds of mortal dreamers. According to the [Chantry](#), the Fade is the first realm created by the [Maker](#), which he populated with the spirits, the first of his creations.

Every living being, with the exception of [dwarves](#), enters the Fade mentally when they dream and [mages](#) tap into it when they cast [spells](#). Most people do not remember their time in the Fade, but mages are forced to recall. Killing a mortal dreaming in the Fade is a shock to their living bodies, but not lethal. The person merely wakes up. Mortals have entered the Fade physically only once, which caused the [First Blight](#). Mages of the [Circle](#) frequently visit the Fade with the aid of [lyrium](#) and during their [Harrowing](#), a mage is projected into the Fade to resist the attack of a [demon](#).

Unlike other living beings, dwarves are not connected to the Fade and do not naturally enter it when they dream. Whether this grants them their natural resistance to magic or is a result of it is unclear, but under certain conditions a dwarf can be forced into the Fade in a dream state.

There is one constant feature in the Fade, the Black City (which, according to the Chantry, was once the [Golden City](#) until the [Tevinter Magisters](#) set foot within it). No one has yet found a way to reach it, though if one looks to the sky, they can see the Black City, forever in the distance.

The Chantry also holds that when a person dies, their spirit passes through the Fade to the afterlife. Those who have turned away from the Maker are doomed to wander the Fade forever as lost souls.

The Blight & Darkspawn

Blight:

A **Blight** refers to a period when [darkspawn](#) find and corrupt one of the [Old Gods](#), which is transformed into an [archdemon](#) and leads the horde to attack the surface world. The world has seen five Blights to date; as *[Dragon Age: Origins](#)* begins, the [fifth Blight](#) has just begun.

A Blight is distinct from the occasional darkspawn raids, in which the darkspawn are few, scattered, and disorganized, plaguing only the [Deep Roads](#), underground highway tunnels constructed by the [dwarves](#) at the height of their empire. These tunnels—and natural caverns connected to them—extend throughout [Ferelden](#), and possibly elsewhere in [Thedas](#).

When the darkspawn discover one of the Old Gods—ancient [draconic](#) creatures slumbering in the depths of the earth—they infect it with their taint, and it rises as an archdemon. Unified by its will, the darkspawn surge up from their tunnels and spread across the surface of the lands, destroying all in their path. Survivors are dragged underground to be eaten or turned into [Broodmothers](#), water sours, crops are spoiled, the land is poisoned and animals sicken. With each passing day, a blight grows. The earth itself withers and dies; the land is leeched of moisture, turning everything dry and brown. The sky fills with rolling, black clouds that block out the sun, making it easier for the darkspawn to surface. As this wasteland spreads, the disease of the blight spreads with it, corrupting all in its path.

The only way to end a Blight is to slay the archdemon, and the only ones who have ever managed such a feat are the [Grey Wardens](#). For this reason, the order holds the respect of most nations, though their presence in Ferelden is the weakest of them all. The chilling thought is that this Blight has begun to spread from Ferelden for precisely that reason.

The Blight Disease

The Blight disease is the corruption spread by the darkspawn. It twists and corrupts all living organisms. Surviving animals and humanoids are driven mad and develop physical deformities if they do not perish from the disease. Humanoids are transformed into [ghouls](#), while animals result in mutations such as [bereskarn](#), [blight wolves](#), and [corrupted spiders](#). In some cases animals (e.g., the [mabari dog](#) helped by [the Warden](#) in *[Ostagar](#)*) can make a full recovery if given early care; however, most have to be put down to prevent them from spreading the disease further.

Even corrupted animals will eventually be killed by the disease, leaving whole areas completely lifeless.

The Thaw

The Thaw is the period at the ending of a Blight, when the archdemon is defeated and darkspawn are fleeing back into the Deep Roads. When Grey Wardens have defeated the Blight, they often seek out remaining darkspawn in what is called the Thaw Hunt.

Darkspawn:

Darkspawn are tainted creatures that dwell in the [Deep Roads](#). When they uncover one of the [Old Gods](#) they expose it to the taint, changing it into an [archdemon](#), which then leads them in an attack against the surface world called a [Blight](#).

The darkspawn horde is connected through the taint, functioning as a hive-mind similar to ants. While high ranking darkspawn (like [Emissaries](#) or [Alphas](#)) have a limited influence upon small groups, and while [The Architect](#) and [The Mother](#) also command larger groups yet, only an [archdemon](#) can command the entire horde.

Territory conquered by the darkspawn becomes diseased, a rotting place of twisted creatures infected by the [blight](#). Creatures that come in close or frequent contact with the darkspawn often become diseased themselves. Examples include [blight wolves](#) and [ghouls](#). While the blighted creatures often work alongside the darkspawn, most often because of force, their lifespan is such that their use is severely limited. Even a ghoul's lifespan can usually be measured in months.

According to the [Chantry](#), it is the hubris of men that brought the darkspawn upon the world. They teach that when the [magisters](#) of the old [Tevinter Imperium](#) entered the [Golden City](#), they offended the [Maker](#), and brought corruption to it. They were cast out, transformed into the hideous monsters known as darkspawn, and forced to flee the light of the sun, retreating into the [Deep Roads](#).

The [dwarves](#) give little credit to Chantry beliefs, but they themselves have no known origin story for the darkspawn. As far as the dwarves are concerned, the darkspawn simply appeared. The darkspawn hordes that invaded the Deep Roads ended up crippling the dwarven empire, leaving only [Orzammar](#) and [Kal-Sharok](#), the latter of which was completely isolated from the outside world until recently.

Whether the Chantry's information on the origin of the darkspawn is correct or not is uncertain, but no opposing story of their origin has been put forward.

The Grey Wardens

The Grey Wardens are an ancient organization of warriors of exceptional ability dedicated to fighting [darkspawn](#) in all of [Thedas](#). They are headquartered in the very place of their founding, the [Weisshaupt Fortress](#) in the [Anderfels](#), but maintain a presence in most other nations as well. The Grey Wardens are known for ignoring a recruit's racial, social, national, and even criminal background if they deem the person valuable in terms of character or ability.

Despite their small numbers, the Grey Wardens have been instrumental in defeating each [Blight](#) so far, and thus vital to the survival of the world as a whole.

The order of Grey Wardens is commanded by the [First Warden](#) in Weisshaupt. The hierarchy seems to follow a system of national branches, each commanded by a local officer referred to as a [Warden-Commander](#) or a [Commander of the Grey](#). Apparently, small numbers make for a simple hierarchy, as no other ranks have been mentioned; the other members appear to follow a less formal "pecking order" determined by seniority (decided by time of Joining). At the time of [Dragon Age: Origins](#) in 9:30 Dragon, the strength of the Grey Wardens is estimated at over 1,000 in the Anderfels, several hundred in Orlais, and around two dozen in Ferelden.

Should they need to, the Grey Wardens possess the Right of Conscription; they may demand that any individual from king to criminal be drafted into their ranks. However — especially in Ferelden — this right is used sparingly for fear of political reprisal. Further complicating matters, the Grey Wardens don't accept just anyone. Only the best and brightest are invited, regardless of race or social standing.

The words written here are the work of the fine folks who put together the Dragon Age Wiki at <http://dragonage.wikia.com> This pdf is just a compilation of material from the wiki. For more on Thedas, visit that page, as it is a great resource.