

= Forgotten Realms =

Forgotten Realms is a campaign setting for the Dungeons & Dragons ( D & D ) fantasy role @-@ playing game . Commonly referred to by players and game designers alike as " The Realms " , it was created by game designer Ed Greenwood around 1967 as a setting for his childhood stories . Several years later , Greenwood brought the setting to the D & D game as a series of magazine articles , and the first Realms game products were released in 1987 . Role @-@ playing game products have been produced for the setting ever since , as have various licensed products including sword and sorcery novels , role @-@ playing video game adaptations ( including the first massively multiplayer online role @-@ playing game to use graphics ) , and comic books . The Forgotten Realms is one of the most popular D & D settings , largely due to the success of novels by authors such as R. A. Salvatore and numerous role @-@ playing video games , including Pool of Radiance ( 1988 ) , Baldur 's Gate ( 1998 ) , Icewind Dale ( 2000 ) and Neverwinter Nights ( 2002 ) .

Forgotten Realms is the name of a fantasy world setting , described as a world of strange lands , dangerous creatures , and mighty deities , where magic and supernatural phenomena are quite real . The premise is that , long ago , the Earth and the world of the Forgotten Realms were more closely connected . As time passed , the inhabitants of planet Earth have mostly forgotten about the existence of that other world ? hence the term Forgotten Realms . On the original Forgotten Realms logo , which was used until 2000 , small runic letters read " Herein lie the lost lands " , an allusion to the connection between the two worlds .

= = The world = =

The focus of the Forgotten Realms setting is the continent of Faerûn , part of the fictional world of Abeir @-@ Toril , usually called simply Toril , an Earth @-@ like planet with many real @-@ world influences . Unlike Earth , the lands of the Forgotten Realms are not all ruled by the human race : the planet Toril is shared by humans , dwarves , elves , goblins , orcs , and other peoples and creatures . Technologically , the world of the Forgotten Realms is not nearly as advanced as that of Earth ; in this respect , it resembles the pre @-@ industrial Earth of the 13th or 14th century . However , the presence of magic provides an additional element of power to the societies . There are several nation states and many independent cities , with loose alliances being formed for defense or conquest . Trade is performed by ship or horse @-@ drawn vehicle , and manufacturing is based upon cottage industry .

= = = Geography = = =

Toril consists of several large continents , including Faerûn , the western part of a continent that was roughly modeled after the Eurasian continent on Earth . Faerûn was first detailed in the original Forgotten Realms Campaign Set , published in 1987 by TSR . The other continents include Kara @-@ Tur , Zakhara , Maztica , and other yet unspecified landmasses . Kara @-@ Tur , roughly corresponding to ancient East Asia , was later the focus of its own source book Kara @-@ Tur : The Eastern Realms , published in 1988 . There is also a vast subterranean world called the Underdark beneath the surface .

Various products detailing specific areas of Faerûn , such as the 2nd edition FR13 Anauroch ( 1991 ) , FR15 Gold and Glory ( 1992 ) , FR16 The Shining South ( 1993 ) , and FRS1 The Dalelands ( 1993 ) , have been released , and through these much of the continent has been heavily detailed and documented , creating a highly developed setting .

In early editions of the setting , The Realms shared a unified cosmology with various other campaign settings called the Great Wheel . In this way each of the Dungeons & Dragons campaign settings were linked together to form one interwoven world connected by various planes of existence . With the release of the 2001 Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting , the setting was given its own distinct and separate cosmological arrangement , with unique planes not explicitly connected to those of the other settings .

## == Religion ==

Religion plays a large part in the Forgotten Realms , with deities and their followers being an integral part of the world . They do not have a passive role , but in fact interact directly in mortal affairs , answer prayers , and have their own personal agendas . All deities must have worshipers to survive , and all mortals must worship a patron deity to secure a good afterlife . A huge number of diverse deities exist within several polytheistic pantheons ; a large number of supplements have documented many of them , some in more detail than others .

Much of the history of The Realms detailed in novels and source books concerns the actions of various deities and The Chosen ( mortal representatives with a portion of their deities ' power ) such as Elminster , Fzoul Chembryl , Midnight ( who later became the new embodiment of the goddess of magic , Mystra ) , and the Seven Sisters . Above all other deities is Ao , the Overlord . Ao does not sanction worshipers and distances himself from mortals . He is single @-@ handedly responsible for the Time of Troubles , or Godswar , as seen in The Avatar Trilogy .

## == Characters ==

The setting is the home of several iconic characters popularized by authors , including Elminster the wizard , who has appeared in several series of novels created by Greenwood himself , and Drizzt Do 'Urden , the highly popular Drow , or dark elf , ranger created by R. A. Salvatore .

## == History ==

## == Early years ==

Ed Greenwood began writing stories about the Forgotten Realms as a child , starting around 1967 ; they were his " dream space for swords and sorcery stories " . Greenwood came up with the Forgotten Realms name from the notion of a multiverse of parallel worlds ; Earth is one such world , and the Realms another . In Greenwood 's original conception , the fantastic legends of Earth derive from a fantasy world , the way to which has been lost . Greenwood discovered the Dungeons & Dragons game in 1975 , and became a serious role @-@ playing enthusiast with the first AD & D game releases in 1978 . The setting became the home of Greenwood 's personal campaign . Greenwood began a Realms campaign in the city of Waterdeep , then started another group known as the Knights of Myth Drannor in Shadowdale . Greenwood felt that his players ' thirst for detail made the Realms what it is : " They want it to seem real , and work on ? honest jobs ? and personal activities , until the whole thing grows into far more than a casual campaign . Roleplaying always governs over rules , and the adventures seem to develop themselves . " Greenwood has stated that his own version of the Forgotten Realms , as run in his personal campaign , is much darker than published versions .

Beginning with the periodical 's 30th issue in 1979 , Greenwood published a series of short articles that detailed the setting in The Dragon magazine , the first of which was about a monster known as the curst . Greenwood wrote voluminous entries to Dragon magazine , using the Realms as a setting for his descriptions of magic items , monsters , and spells . In 1986 , the American game publishing company TSR began looking for a new campaign setting for the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game , and assigned Jeff Grubb to find out more about the setting used by Greenwood as portrayed in his articles in Dragon . According to Greenwood , Grubb asked him " Do you just make this stuff up as you go , or do you really have a huge campaign world ? " ; Greenwood answered " yes " to both questions . TSR felt that the Forgotten Realms would be a more open @-@ ended setting than the epic Dragonlance setting , and chose the Realms as a ready @-@ made campaign setting upon deciding to publish AD & D 2nd Edition . Greenwood agreed to work on the project , and began working to get the Forgotten Realms officially published . Greenwood sent TSR a few dozen

cardboard boxes stuffed with pencil notes and maps , and sold all rights to the Realms for a token fee . Greenwood noted that TSR altered his original conception of the Realms being a place that we could travel to from our world , " Concerns over possible lawsuits ( kids getting hurt while trying to ' find a gate ' ) led TSR to de @-@ emphasize this meaning " .

= = = Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 1st edition = = =

Although the Realms were yet to be an official campaign world , the module H1 : Bloodstone Pass , released in 1985 by TSR , is now considered to be a part of the Forgotten Realms , although it wasn't until module H3 The Bloodstone Wars was released that Forgotten Realms became the official setting for the module series . The first official Forgotten Realms product was Douglas Niles 's Darkwalker on Moonshae , the first book in The Moonshae Trilogy , which predates the Forgotten Realms Campaign Set by one month .

The Campaign Set ( often referred to as the " Grey Box " ) was later released in 1987 as a boxed set of two source books ( Cyclopedia of the Realms and DM 's Sourcebook of the Realms ) and four large maps , designed by Greenwood in collaboration with author Jeff Grubb . The set introduced the campaign setting and explained how to use it , and reserved space on the map for SSI 's Gold Box computer role @-@ playing games set in the Forgotten Realms .

The Forgotten Realms became an instant hit . The compilation module Desert of Desolation was reworked to fit into the Forgotten Realms . The module N5 : Under Illefarn bears the Forgotten Realms logo on the cover , as do the two modules released in 1988 , H4 : The Throne of Bloodstone and I14 : Swords of the Iron Legion .

The Crystal Shard was released in 1988 , and was the first novel to feature the successful character Drizzt Do 'Urden , who has since appeared in more than seventeen subsequent novels , many of which have appeared on the New York Times Best Seller list . In 1988 , the first in a line of Forgotten Realms role @-@ playing video games , Pool of Radiance , was released by Strategic Simulations , Inc . The game was popular , winning the Origins Award for " Best Fantasy or Science Fiction Computer Game of 1988 " . In 1992 , the game was ported to the Nintendo Entertainment System .

Several supplements to the original boxed set were released under the first edition rules , including FR1 Waterdeep and the North and FR2 Moonshae in 1987 , and FR3 Empires of the Sands , FR4 The Magister , FR5 The Savage Frontier , FR6 Dreams of the Red Wizards , and REF5 Lords of Darkness in 1988 . Also in 1988 came the City System boxed set , containing several maps of the city of Waterdeep . Ruins of Adventure , a module based on the computer game Pool of Radiance , was released in 1988 .

The boxed set Kara @-@ Tur : The Eastern Realms was released in 1988 , giving details of the lands of Kara @-@ Tur which had previously appeared in the 1986 book Oriental Adventures , and were now officially placed in the Forgotten Realms world . The same year , the module OA5 : Mad Monkey vs. the Dragon Claw was released for the Kara @-@ Tur setting as a Forgotten Realms product .

In 1989 , DC Comics began publishing a series of Forgotten Realms comics written by Jeff Grubb . Each issue contained twenty @-@ six pages , illustrated primarily by Rags Morales and Dave Simons . Twenty @-@ five issues were published in total , with the last being released in 1991 . A fifty @-@ six page annual Forgotten Realms Comic Annual # 1 : Waterdhavian Nights , illustrated by various artists , was released in 1990 .

= = = Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd edition = = =

An eponymous module , based on the role @-@ playing video game Curse of the Azure Bonds , was released in 1989 , as was the The Avatar Trilogy series of novels , consisting of Shadowdale , Tantras , and Waterdeep that detailed the storyline which became known as the " Time of Troubles " . A series of module adaptations for these novels ( Shadowdale , Tantras , and Waterdeep ) were released in the same year , along with the Hall of Heroes accessory , detailing many of the major

characters appearing in Forgotten Realms novels published up through that time . In early 1990 , the hardcover Forgotten Realms Adventures by Jeff Grubb and Ed Greenwood was released , which introduced the Realms setting to the second edition of the Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game and detailed how the Time of Troubles had changed the setting . The RPGA used the Forgotten Realms city of Ravens Bluff as the setting for their first living campaign . Official RPGA support for this product line included the Living City modules series . A number of sub @-@ settings of the Forgotten Realms were briefly supported in the early 1990s . Three more modules were produced for the Kara @-@ Tur setting . The Horde : Barbarian Campaign Setting , released in 1990 , detailed The Hordelands , which also featured a series of three modules . The Maztica Campaign Set , released in 1991 , detailed the continent of Maztica .

The original gray boxed set received a revision in 1993 to update it to the second edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons ( AD & D ) rules system , with the release of a new Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting boxed set , containing three books ( A Grand Tour of the Realms , Running the Realms , and Shadowdale ) and various " monster supplements " , with a new graphic look . Additional material for the setting was released steadily throughout the 1990s . Forgotten Realms novels , such as the Legacy of the Drow series , the first three books of The Elminster Series , and numerous anthologies were also released throughout the 1990s , which led to the setting being hailed as one of the most successful shared fantasy universes of the 1990s . These novels in turn sparked interest in role @-@ playing activity by new gamers .

Numerous Forgotten Realms video games were released Between 1990 and 2000 . The Eye of the Beholder PC game was released in 1990 . This game was later followed by two sequels , the first in 1991 , and the second in 1992 . All three games were re @-@ released for DOS on a single disk in 1995 . Another 1991 release was Neverwinter Nights on America Online , the first graphical Massively Multiplayer Online Role @-@ Playing Game ( MMORPG ) . In 1998 , Baldur 's Gate was released , the first in a line of popular role @-@ playing video games developed by BioWare and " considered by most pundits as the hands @-@ down best PC roleplaying game ever " . The game was followed by a sequel , Baldur 's Gate II : Shadows of Amn in 2000 as well as Icewind Dale , a separate game that utilized the same game engine as Baldur 's Gate . Pool of Radiance : Ruins of Myth Drannor was released in 2001 . Several popular Forgotten Realms characters such as Drizzt Do 'Urden and Elminster made minor appearances in these games .

= = = Dungeons & Dragons 3rd edition = = =

With the release of the 3rd edition Dungeons & Dragons rules system in 2000 by Wizards of the Coast , the Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting was released as a hardcover , in 2001 , updating the official material and advancing the timeline of the game world . In 2002 , the Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting won the Origins Award for Best Role @-@ Playing Game Supplement of 2001 .

Several additional rulebooks were released for the new edition , including Monster Compendium : Monsters of Faerûn ( 2001 ) , Magic of Faerûn ( 2001 ) , Lords of Darkness ( 2001 ) , Faiths and Pantheons ( 2002 ) , Silver Marches ( 2002 ) , Races of Faerûn ( 2003 ) , and Unapproachable East ( 2003 ) . Adventure modules included Into the Dragon 's Lair ( 2000 ) , Pool of Radiance : Attack on Myth Drannor ( 2001 ) , and City of the Spider Queen ( 2002 ) .

In 2002 , Bioware released Neverwinter Nights , set in the northern reaches of Faerûn and operating on the revised 3 @.@ 0 rules for D & D. It was followed by two expansion packs , Shadows of Undrentide and Hordes of the Underdark . A sequel using version 3 @.@ 5 of the rules was produced by Obsidian Entertainment in 2006 , itself followed by the expansion sets Mask of the Betrayer and Storm of Zehir . The Forgotten Realms Deluxe Edition compilation was released in 2006 , containing the Baldur 's Gate series ( excluding the Dark Alliance games ) , Icewind Dale series , and all Neverwinter Nights games before Neverwinter Nights 2 .

With the release of the version 3 @.@ 5 update to the rules , the Forgotten Realms product line continued to expand . Accessories released included Underdark ( 2003 ) , Player 's Guide to Faerûn ( 2004 ) , Serpent Kingdoms ( 2004 ) , Shining South ( 2004 ) , Lost Empires of Faerûn ( 2005 ) , Champions of Ruin ( 2005 ) , City of Splendors : Waterdeep ( 2005 ) , Champions of Valor ( 2005 ) ,

Power of Faerûn ( 2006 ) , Mysteries of the Moonsea ( 2006 ) , Dragons of Faerûn ( 2006 ) , and The Grand History of the Realms ( 2007 ) . Adventure modules released included Sons of Groumsh ( 2005 ) , The Twilight Tomb ( 2006 ) , Expedition to Undermountain ( 2007 ) , Cormyr : The Tearing of the Weave ( 2007 ) , Shadowdale : The Scouring of the Land ( 2007 ) , and Anauroch : The Empire of Shade ( 2007 ) .

== Dungeons & Dragons 4th edition ==

With the release of the Dungeons & Dragons 4th Edition , the Forgotten Realms were updated again to the new rules system , featuring a very changed Realms and moving the fictional world 's timeline 104 years into the future . The Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide , released August 2008 , is a 288 @-@ page book for Dungeon Masters . The Forgotten Realms Player 's Guide was released the following month , and contains information for players to help create Forgotten Realms characters . An adventure , Scepter Tower of Spellgard , was also released in September 2008 and can be used in combination with the adventure in the Forgotten Realms Campaign Guide to start a Forgotten Realms campaign . In 2008 , the Forgotten Realms also became the setting for the RPGA 's sole living campaign , Living Forgotten Realms , replacing Living Greyhawk . In 2011 , the Neverwinter Campaign Setting was released .

== Dungeons & Dragons 5th edition ==

With the release of the Dungeons & Dragons 5th Edition , Wizards of the Coast announced that the Forgotten Realms would continue to serve as the official campaign setting for its upcoming published adventure materials . To date four officially licensed products set in the Forgotten Realms have been published : Hoard of the Dragon Queen ( September 2014 ) , Rise of Tiamat ( October 2014 ) , Princes of the Apocalypse ( April 2015 ) and Out of the Abyss ( September 2015 ) . The official campaign guide , Sword Coast Adventurer 's Guide , was released in November 2015 . With the 5th edition the world of Forgotten Realms was again returned to its previous , 3rd edition geography , and the event called The Sundering resulted in the worlds of Abeir @-@ Toril to be split in two . Wizards of the Coast has also announced that its upcoming adventure series will also be set in the Forgotten Realms .

== Reception ==

In his book The Fantasy Roleplaying Gamer 's Bible , Sean Patrick Fannon describes the Forgotten Realms as being " the most ambitious fantasy game setting published since Tekumel " , and that it " may be the most widely played @-@ in game setting in RPG history . " Similarly , in literature , the novels written in the Forgotten Realms setting have formed one of " the industry 's leading fantasy series " . Over time these novels have gained " unprecedented popularity " , which led , as Marc Oxoby noted in his book , The 1990s , to the novels having an " extraordinary shelf life " , remaining in print for many years . This popular reception has also been reflected in public libraries . For example , Joyce Saricks states in The Readers ' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction that the novels have been among the most requested books by fans of the fantasy genre .