= Tomb of Horrors =

Tomb of Horrors is an adventure module written by Gary Gygax for the Dungeons & Dragons (D & D) role @-@ playing game . It was originally written for and used at the 1975 Origins 1 convention . Gygax designed the adventure both to challenge the skill of expert players in his own campaign , and to test players who boasted of having mighty player characters able to best any challenge . The module , coded S1 , was the first in the S @-@ series , or special series of modules . Several versions of the adventure have been published , the first in 1978 , and the most recent , published for the D & D fourth edition , in 2010 . It also served as the basis for a novel published in 2002 .

The module 's plot revolves around the tomb of the demi @-@ lich Acererak . The player characters must battle their way past a variety of monsters and traps , with the ultimate goal of destroying Acererak . Tomb of Horrors is considered one of the greatest Dungeons & Dragons modules of all time , as well as one of the most difficult . The module has influenced later Dungeons & Dragons products , and was followed by three other (unrelated) modules in the S @-@ series : S2 White Plume Mountain , S3 Expedition to the Barrier Peaks , and S4 The Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth .

= = Plot summary = =

Tomb of Horrors is set in the World of Greyhawk , a D & D campaign setting . In Tomb of Horrors , the adventurers encounter a number of tricks and traps while attempting to penetrate the tomb of a dead wizard . As the scenario begins , the players are told that the evil wizard Acererak is said to linger in his ancient tomb in undead form . Originally a powerful lich , he has (unbeknownst to the players) become a demi @-@ lich , a more powerful form of undead that has transcended the need for any physical body apart from its skull . Player characters must survive the deadly traps in the tomb and fight their way into the demi @-@ lich 's elaborately concealed inner sanctum to destroy him once and for all .

The module is divided into thirty @-@ three encounters , beginning with two false entrances to the tomb , and ending with " The Crypt of Acererak the Demi @-@ Lich " . Example encounters are the " Huge Pit Filled with 200 Spikes " (section 20) , or encounter 22 , " The Cavern of Gold and Silver Mists " : " The mists are silvery and shot through with delicate streamers of golden color . Vision extends only 6 ' . There is a dim aura of good if detected for . Those who step into the mist must save versus poison or become idiots until they can breathe the clean air above ground under the warm sun . " The module ends with the destruction of Acererak , without any postscript .

= = Publication history = =

Tomb of Horrors was written by Gary Gygax for official D & D tournament play at the 1975 Origins 1 convention . Gygax developed the adventure from an idea by Alan Lucien , one of his original AD & D playtesters , " and I admit to chuckling evilly as I did so . " Gygax designed the Tomb of Horrors modules for two related purposes . First , Gygax explains , " There were several very expert players in my campaign , and this was meant as yet another challenge to their skill ? and the persistence of their theretofore @-@ invincible characters . Specifically , I had in mind foiling Rob Kuntz 's PC , Robilar , and Ernie Gygax 's PC , Tenser . " Second , so that he was " ready for those fans [players] who boasted of having mighty PCs able to best any challenge offered by the AD & D game . "

Tomb of Horrors was revised in late 1977 for publication as an AD & D module . In 1978 , TSR , Inc. published the module with a monochrome cover , revised and updated for use with first edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons rules . The module included a twenty @-@ page book , a twelve @-@ page book , and an outer folder ; the original printing featured a two @-@ color cover . The module features a book of illustrations to show to players as the adventure unfolds . Tomb of Horrors was republished in 1981 as a thirty @-@ two page booklet with identical text but a new , full @-@ color cover . The module has been described as the first of a series of high @-@ level scenarios , and was included as part of the Realms of Horror abridged compilation produced in 1987 .

In 1998 , the module was reprinted as part of the Return to the Tomb of Horrors module ? a substantial expansion and sequel to the original adventure , written for 2nd Edition AD & D rules . Wizards of the Coast released an updated version of the original module as a free download for Halloween 2005 , retaining much of the original content ; the updated content is from the Dungeons & Dragons supplement book Libris Mortis . This updated version was designed for use with the Dungeons & Dragons 3 @.@ 5 Edition rules . Tomb of Horrors was also adapted into a novel of the same name by Keith Francis Strohm for the Greyhawk Classics series published by Wizards of the Coast in 2002 .

In July 2010 , Wizards of the Coast released two adventures bearing the Tomb of Horrors name . One is a hardcover super @-@ adventure written by Ari Marmell and Scott Fitzgerald Gray , which builds on and expands the legend of the original Tomb using the canon of Return to the Tomb of Horrors as a starting point . The second Tomb of Horrors is a conversion and update of the original module for 4th Edition rules , written by Scott Fitzgerald Gray and released to members of the RPGA as part of the DM Rewards program .

All four modules of the S @-@ series were included as part of the Dungeons of Dread hardcover collection , released on March 19 , 2013 . Lawrence Schick wrote in the foreword : " The dungeon of the demi @-@ lich Acererak was , for Gary , a kind of thought experiment : If an undead sorcerer really wanted to keep his tomb from being plundered by greedy adventurers , how would he do it ? The answer , of course , was to defend the crypt with tricks and traps designed not to challenge the intruders but to kill them dead . And furthermore , to do it in ways so horrific that all but the most determined party would give up and leave well enough alone . "

= = Reception = =

Tomb of Horrors was ranked the 3rd greatest Dungeons & Dragons adventure of all time by Dungeon magazine in 2004 . Dungeon Master for Dummies lists Tomb of Horrors as one of the ten best classic adventures , and posits that many of the adventure 's traps would kill a character just for making poor choices . Lawrence Schick , in his 1991 book Heroic Worlds , calls the adventure " A very difficult scenario " .

Don Turnbull reviewed Tomb of Horrors in issue No. 13 of the magazine White Dwarf , and gave the module a rating of 10 out of 10 . Turnbull commented on the adventure 's difficulty , noting that the dungeon is " sprinkled extensively with subtle , insidious and carefully laid traps , and it will be a fortunate adventurer who manages to avoid them " . He felt that the illustration booklet would add a great deal to the adventure 's atmosphere and felt that the pre @-@ generated character roster was useful . Turnbull noted that the module is " very hard and will be hard for the DM to learn in advance , though this is an essential prerequisite of running it properly for it is much more subtle than the G or D modules " , and he said that this module has in common with those modules an " excellent format , for instance , and the comprehensive way in which the scenario is introduced . TSR 's high quality has not been in any way compromised , and in S1 it has even been improved upon . "

Wayne MacLaurin of SF Site describes the module as " a classic " and a " must have " for gamers , saying that when he played the game in high school , most of his group 's characters quickly died . MacLaurin explains that Tomb of Horrors is a classic not because of its difficulty , but because it was the first module that did not involve killing large amounts of monsters ; it was a " collection of puzzles and maps . " Its focus on traps rather than monsters was a surprise to gamers at the time . One technique that some players used to get past the deathtraps was to drive cattle ahead of them , which Lore Sjöberg of Wired described as " a bit less than heroic " , noting that in Lord of the Rings Gandalf did not send " 50 head of cattle into the Mines of Moria to serve as Balrog bait . " David M. Ewalt , in his book Of Dice and Men , discussed the adventure 's reputation as " the deadliest game ever written " , noting that it " unloads a series of complicated puzzles and nightmarish traps " on characters , concluding that " Few survive long enough to collect any treasure , and even fewer manage to find their way back through the deadly maze and escape with their spoils . "

Something Awful presented a humorous article about the ways that Tomb of Horrors is the bane of gamers everywhere since it is basically a series of traps that kills off most of the characters . " One

of the best (worst) things about this module is that Acererak the demi @-@ lich is a huge asshole . He 's an asshole for filling his tomb with traps AND treasure , he 's an asshole because he leaves little messages throughout his tomb bragging about how he 's going to kill the players . "

Tomb of Horrors has also influenced later Dungeons & Dragons products . Jason Bulmahn used the module , as well as Indiana Jones , as inspiration for some of the traps in the 2007 D & D supplement Dungeonscape . The computer role @-@ playing game Icewind Dale , developed by Black Isle Studios , was influenced by the module ; Black Isle Studios division director Feargus Urquhart said , " We wanted something that reminded everyone of their first foray into dungeons like the Tomb of Horrors , with traps around every corner , and the undead crawling out of the walls . "

Tomb of Horrors is mentioned several times in the novel Ready Player One by Ernest Cline , which is set in a virtual reality world created by a man who was a fan of the module .