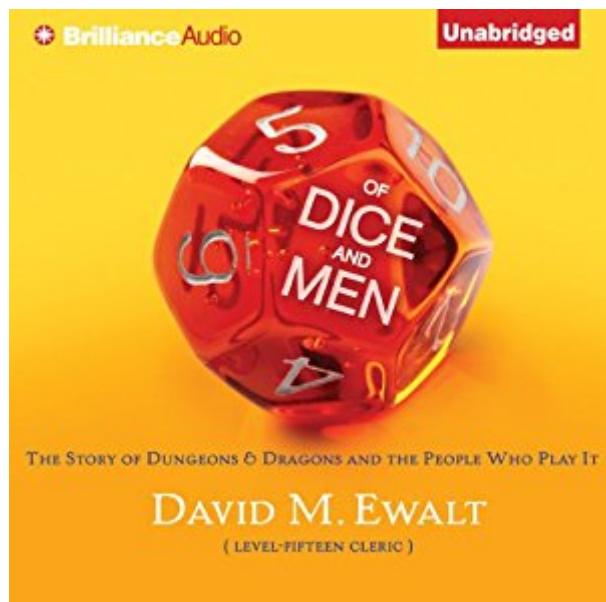


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# Of Dice And Men: The Story Of Dungeons & Dragons And The People Who Play It



## Synopsis

Here, there be dragons. Ancient red dragons with 527 hit points, +44 to attack, and a 20d10 breath weapon, to be specific. In the world of fantasy role-playing, those numbers describe a winged serpent with immense strength and the ability to spit fire. There are few beasts more powerful - just like there are few games more important than Dungeons & Dragons. Even if you've never played Dungeons & Dragons, you probably know someone who has: the game has had a profound influence on our culture. Released in 1974 - decades before the Internet and social media - Dungeons & Dragons inspired one of the original nerd subcultures, and is still revered by millions of fans around the world. Now the authoritative history and magic of the game are revealed by an award-winning journalist and lifelong D&D player. In *Of Dice and Men*, David Ewalt recounts the development of Dungeons & Dragons from the game's roots on the battlefields of ancient Europe, through the hysteria that linked it to satanic rituals and teen suicides, to its apotheosis as father of the modern video-game industry. As he chronicles the surprising history of the game's origins (a history largely unknown even to hardcore players) and examines D&D's profound impact, Ewalt weaves laser-sharp subculture analysis with his own present-day gaming experiences. An enticing blend of history, journalism, narrative, and memoir, *Of Dice and Men* sheds light on America's most popular (and widely misunderstood) form of collaborative entertainment.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a difficult book for me to review, because as a D&D nerd it's hard not to have a lot of opinions on it. My inner geek found plenty of nits to pick with this book: annoyance with the casual

dismissals of the versions of the game the author didn't personally play (2nd and 4th edition, primarily) and a wish that the author would have dived deeper into some of the historical bits (the whys and hows of the 'satanic panic' of the 80's are skimmed) are chief among them. The post-Gygax years of TSR and the release of 2nd Edition or any setting the author hasn't played (Forgotten Realms, Dark Sun, Eberron) are also conspicuous by their absence. So let me review this as a writer. From that perspective I also found this book somewhat lacking. The author centers the book around his own personal journey with tabletop roleplaying games. Chapters alternate between the history and business of the game and the author's own stories. The latter are interspersed with dramatic prose-style descriptions of games the he has played in. At first this is fun, but it quickly wears out its welcome to the point where I found myself skipping the endless paragraphs of italicized purple prose. What works well for, say, the read-aloud text for a D&D campaign is tiresome in a non-fiction book. And while I understand the David Ewalt is using his personal experiences to make the topic accessible, it has the result of making him the main character of this book. And he's one I tired of quickly. There are also the cliched 'lessons to be learned' from every single experience, something that really annoys me in non-fiction books. In life not every event is pregnant with meaning.

Y'know, being a geek is rough sometimes. Not so much as it used to be. Indeed, nerds of my age bracket have enjoyed the dubious pleasure of watching our obsessions go mainstream--this after long years of hiding, Liberace-like, deep in the closet. Dungeons and Dragons, however, still sits wearily on the pinnacle of our kingdom. Telling someone you roleplay can still bring about that face. It's the face of someone who just walked into the toilet after you. And they make the face even though you considerably lit a match. They make the face even though they can only smell sulfur. They make the face because they know what you did. So the fact that a Forbes editor wrote a fairly mainstream book about the history of the nuclear bomb of the geek arsenal is damn impressive, and my feather-adorned hat goes off to Mr. David Ewalt for even having the notion to begin such an endeavor. Of course, the very nature of writing something about geek culture leaves yourself open to criticism by geeks (something that is about as pleasant as it sounds). And while it would be a simple thing to prod here and jab there and argue esoterica until I'm blue in the face, I'll skip straight ahead to the most important point of this book: This book is about the soul of D&D. Between sharing his personal memories of the game (right down to fictionalizing moments in his campaigns) and engaging the reader in the emotional drama of the history of Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, TSR, and everyone else involved in D&D's creation, Ewalt has made it clear that he's

done this for the good feelies. Of Dice And Men is warm, friendly, and easy to read.

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