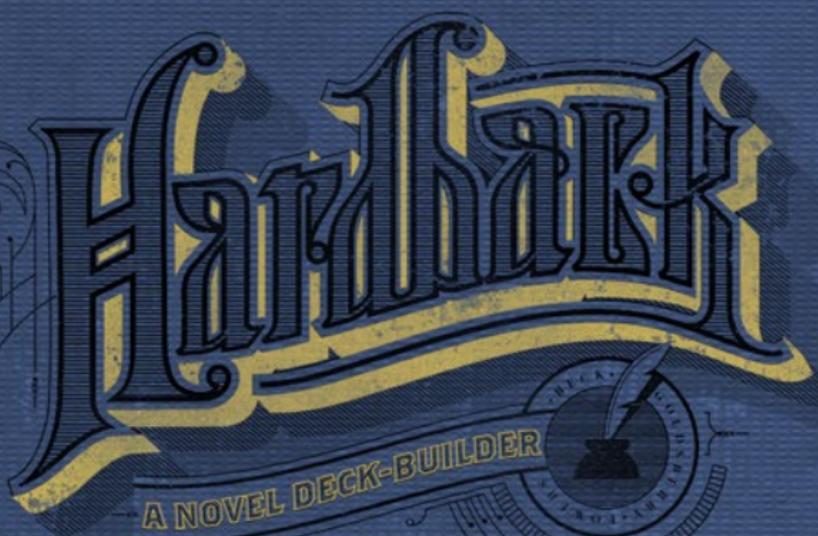


Hardback



A NOVEL DECK-BUILDER

A Game By:
Jeff Beck
&
Tim Fowers

Components:

50 Starting Cards	35 Adventure Cards
6 Literary Award Cards	35 Horror Cards
5 Player Cards	35 Mystery Cards
5 Player Power Cards	35 Romance Cards
2 Co-Op Penny Dreadful Cards	5 Advert Cards
38 Ink Tokens	25 Event Cards
18 Remover Tokens	3 Card Dividers
5 Player Tokens	1 Rulebook
1 Prestige Tracker Board	

What is Hardback?

Hardback is a deck-building word game. As an aspiring 19th-century novelist, you work to pen your next masterpiece, earning prestige along the way. You start with your own personal deck of cards, using them to acquire new cards, and reshuffle your deck throughout the game. Specialize your deck in certain genres to exploit card combinations, and press your luck to draw extra cards — but make sure you can still string a word together!

You're paid by the word to complete romance, mystery, adventure, and horror novels, earning prestige in the process. Earn enough to complete your masterpiece and be recognized as the finest novelist of the age!

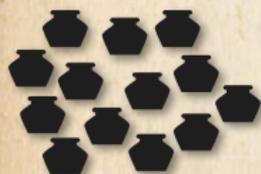
Setup

1. Give each player their own starting deck of cards, which consists of:
 - a. Eight starting Purchase cards, each providing a 1¢ Coin, consisting of the letters: A, E, I, L, N, R, S, T. You can use the small pips on the bottom of the starting Purchase cards to help divide them out.
 - b. Two starting Prestige cards, each providing 1 Prestige point, selected at random. Starting Prestige cards include the letters: B, C, D, G, H, M, O, P, U, Y.

Place any unused starting cards back in the box.



2. Set up the playing area:
 - a. Place the Prestige tracker in the center of the playing area within easy reach of all players.
 - b. Place Ink and Remover tokens to the side of the Prestige tracker.
 - c. Each player selects a colored player token and places it on the top of the Prestige tracker, above the prestige numbers. Each player takes the Player card of their associated color and places it in front of them.
 - d. Shuffle all Adventure, Horror, Mystery, and Romance cards together and place them face-down near the Prestige tracker to form your Offer Deck.
 - e. Draw the top seven cards from the Offer Deck. Place them face-up to the side of the Offer Deck to form the Offer Row.
3. Each player shuffles their starting deck and draws their first hand of 5 cards.
4. The player who most recently used a pen goes first, with play proceeding to their left (clockwise). That player places the First Player Token in front of them to help remind everyone who went first.



Ink Tokens



Remover Tokens



Offer Deck



Prestige Tracker

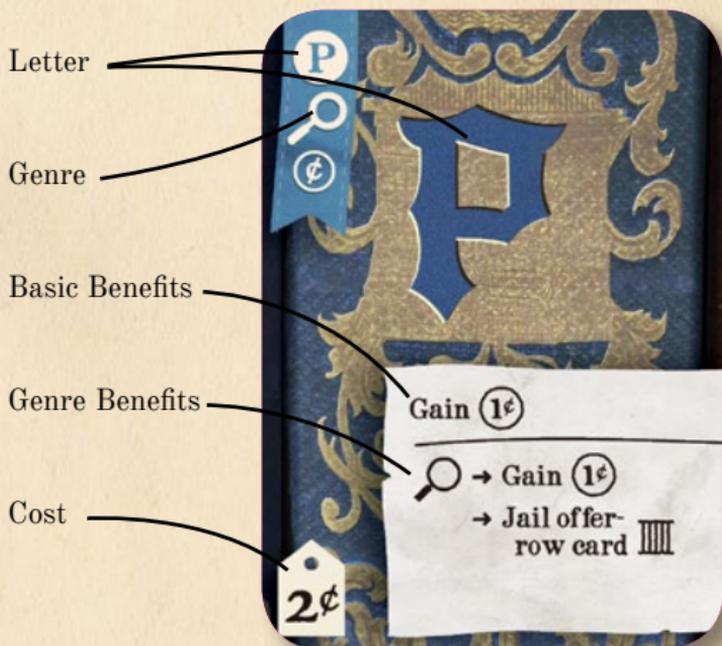


Offer Row

Card Basics

Each card in Hardback has several attributes:

- **Letter:** The large letter on each card (and repeated in the top-left corner for convenience) is used to spell a word on your turn.
- **Genre:** The icon in the top-left corner below the letter, as well as the color of the ribbon behind the icon, define a card's genre. See *Card Genres* on page 9 for a detailed list of the genres and their abilities.
- **Basic Benefits:** The instructions above the line on a card are its Basic Benefits, made up of Coins, Prestige, and Abilities that manipulate the game in some way. Basic Benefits apply each time you play the card. See *Resolve Card Benefits* on page 5 for more information.
- **Genre Benefits:** The instructions below the line on a card are its Genre Benefits, which apply only when you use multiple cards of the same genre at the same time. Genre Benefits are provided in addition to the Basic Benefits of a card; they don't replace a card's Basic Benefits. See *Resolve Card Benefits* on page 5 for more information.
- **Cost:** The number at the bottom left of the card determines how many Coins you need to spend to purchase the card.



Some cards, called Timeless Classic cards, appear printed sideways. See *Timeless Classics* on page 8 for more information.

On Your Turn

Each turn, do the following:

1. Spell a word
2. Discard unused cards
3. Resolve card Benefits
4. Purchase cards and Ink

After your turn, do the following:

5. Discard your used cards and Ink
6. Discard other players' Timeless Classic cards
7. Draw your next hand

Any time before spelling your next word, do the following:

8. Use Ink and Remover



1. Spell a Word

Create a word by placing letters from your hand face-up in front of you. Only words found in the dictionary are permitted — though it's up to the players to determine which dictionary to use as a reference.

You can use any number of cards from your hand as “wild” cards by playing them face-down. Each wild card can function as any single letter in your word, but it provides you no other benefit: it provides no Coins or Prestige, and you can't use any of its abilities.



Spelling “WORD” with the “O” letter wild.

When Timeless Classic cards are in play, you can use your and other players' Timeless Classic cards as letters in your word, too. See *Timeless Classics* on page 8 for details.

Request a Ghost Writer

Struggling to make a word? You can ask for help from other players.

If you request a ghost writer, display your cards for all players to see. Your turn continues normally. If another player suggests a word that you decide to use, that player receives a free Ink token from the general supply (not from your Ink tokens). Additionally, if your hand included cards with Ink tokens on them from pressing your luck, that player also receives those Ink tokens at the end of your turn, instead of returning them to the general supply as normal. See *Ink* on page 11 for more details.

Writer's Block

If you can't spell a word, you may choose to pass your turn. If you pass, discard your cards and used Ink, then draw your next hand.



2. Discard Unused Cards

If you have cards in your hand that you didn't use to spell your word, place them face-up next to your draw pile to form your discard pile. Each player has their own unique draw and discard piles. During the game, if you do not have enough cards in your draw pile to draw a new card, simply reshuffle your discard pile to create a new draw pile.

Some card Benefits affect other cards in your discard pile. Because you discard unused cards before resolving Benefits, you can use those effects on unused cards from your hand in the same turn.

3. Resolve Card Benefits

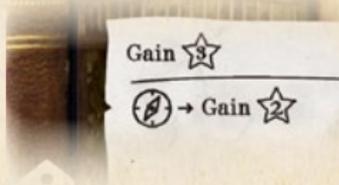
All cards provide Benefits when used face-up from your hand. Benefits come in the form of Coins, Prestige points, or Abilities. Coins, represented by a circle and the ¢ symbol, are the currency of Hardback, used to purchase new cards and Ink. Prestige points, represented by the ★ symbol, increase your score in order to win the game. Abilities

alter the state of play in several ways. If you trigger multiple Abilities in a single word, you can resolve those Abilities in any order you choose.

The Benefits listed above the line on a card are Basic Benefits. You gain all the Basic Benefits of a card each time you use the card face-up to spell a word.

The Benefits listed below the line are Genre Benefits. You only gain Genre Benefits when at least one other card of the same genre is included in your word, or when you have at least one Timeless Classic card of the same genre in-play. See *Timeless Classics* on page 8 for details.

For example, using this card will always earn 3 Prestige points. If this card is played with one or more other cards from the same Genre, it will earn a total of 5 Prestige points.



4. Purchase New cards and Ink



You can purchase new cards and Ink with the Coins you earned this turn. The price of each card is indicated in the price tag on the bottom left of the card. Each Ink token costs 1 Coin.

You can purchase any combination of multiple cards and multiple Ink, as long as you have Coins to spend. Unused Coins are lost at the end of your turn, so leftover Coins are often used to purchase Ink.

a. Purchasing Cards

To purchase a card, take the card from the Offer Row and place it in your discard pile. Immediately draw a new card from the top of the Offer Deck, and put it in the empty space on the Offer Row to replace the card you purchased. If the Offer Deck ever runs out of cards, reshuffle all non-starter cards previously removed from the game and form a new Offer Deck.

b. Flushing the Offer Row

In certain situations, you can flush the Offer Row: return all Offer Row cards to the box (removing them from the game), draw seven new cards from the Offer Deck, and place these cards to form a new Offer Row. You can only flush the Offer Row once per turn, before you have purchased any cards, and only if:

- At least four of the cards in the Offer Row cost 6¢ or more, *or*
- At least four of the cards in the Offer Row are the same genre

e. Purchasing Ink

You may purchase Ink tokens at the cost of 1¢ each. When you purchase Ink, take the appropriate number of Ink tokens from the general supply and place them in front of you. See *Ink* on page 11 for a description of how Ink is used.

5. Discard Used Cards and Ink

After scoring your Prestige and purchasing new cards, put all the cards in your word into your discard pile — except Timeless Classic cards. See *Timeless Classics* on page 8 for more information. (Remember: cards you didn't use in your word were already discarded, so you'll get a completely new hand for your next turn.)

All Ink tokens used to draw additional cards or obtain Coins are returned to the general supply of Ink next to the Prestige tracker. See *Ink and Remover* on page 11 for more information.

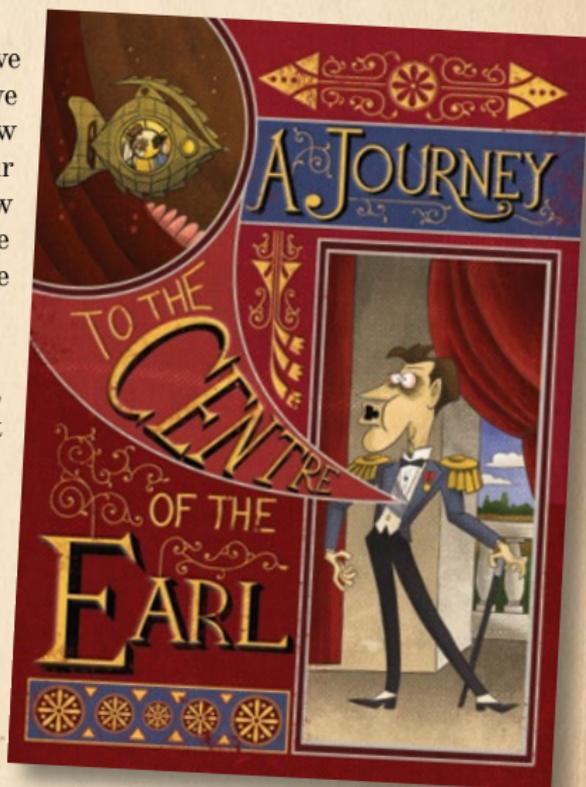
6. Discard Other Players' Timeless Classic Cards

If you used other players' Timeless Classic Cards in your word, those cards are placed in their owners' discard piles. See *Timeless Classics* on page 8.

7. Draw Your Next Hand

Draw your next hand of five cards. If you do not have enough cards in your draw pile, shuffle the cards in your discard pile to form a new draw pile, then continue drawing until you have five cards.

Play now proceeds clockwise, with the player on your left taking their turn.



8. Use Ink and Remover

After your turn is complete, you may immediately begin working on your next word, including using any previously obtained Ink or Remover tokens to draw more cards from your deck. See *Ink and Remover* on page 11 for details.

Ending the Game

When any player reaches at least 60 Prestige, play continues normally until reaching the player to the right of the first player. In other words, all players should have an equal number of turns by the end of the game. When the final player completes their turn, the player with the most Prestige is the winner and the finest author of the age! In the case of a tie, the player with the most ink remaining wins the game.

Card and Token Details

Timeless Classics

Timeless Classic cards are cards whose large letter is printed horizontally. They are used like normal cards, with one important difference: if you spell a word using a face-up Timeless

Classic card, the Timeless Classic card stays in play in front of you at the end of your turn. This persistent effect does not apply if you use the Timeless Classic card as a wild.

On subsequent turns after your Timeless Classic card is put into play, you continue to gain the Benefits of the card whether or not you use it in your word. You automatically gain its Basic Benefits. You also gain its Genre Benefits if your word uses another card of its same genre (or you have another in-play Timeless Classic of its genre), just like a normal card.

Your Timeless Classic card stays in play until another player uses it to spell a word, which sends it to your discard pile. Any player can use any Timeless Classic cards that are in play when spelling a word, no matter which player owns the card. When you use another player's Timeless Classic card, you don't get its Basic Benefits, Genre Benefits, or its genre for triggering other Genre Benefits in your word. Astute authors will use other players' Timeless Classic cards—even though they don't get the benefits—in order to discard the other players' Timeless Classic cards! You cannot convert an in-play Timeless Classic card into a wild card regardless of the owner.



Card Genres

There are four card Genres represented in Hardback:



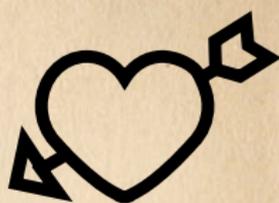
Mystery



Horror



Adventure



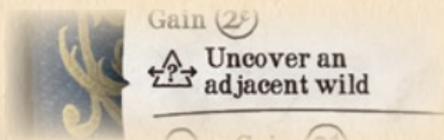
Romance

Each Genre has its own unique abilities and play style. Abilities can trigger either as Basic Benefits or Genre Benefits, depending on where the ability is listed on the card. See *Resolve Card Benefits* on page 5 for details.

Mystery: Mystery cards are represented by the magnifying glass icon and blue ribbon. Mystery cards can uncover hidden cards and remove cards from the Offer Row:

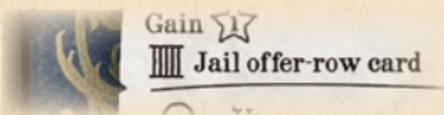


- *Uncover Adjacent Wild:* Select one face-down card to the immediate left or right of this card and “uncover” it face-up. The card still acts as a wild card, but you gain all the Benefits of the card as if you had played it face-up. If neither of the two adjacent cards are face-down, the card’s benefit has no effect.



Play this card to turn one adjacent card face-up and gain its benefits.

- *Jail Offer-Row Card:* Select one card from the Offer Row and choose to either remove it from the game or reserve it in your own personal jail near your Player card. Immediately draw a new card from the Offer Deck to replace the jailed card. While the card is reserved in your personal jail, you may purchase it, but other players may not. You may have only one card in your personal jail at any given time. If there is already a card in your personal jail, you can remove the existing card from the game in order to reserve the new card in your personal jail instead.



Play this card to jail a card from the Offer Row.

Horror: Horror cards are represented by the skull icon and green ribbon. Horror cards terrify other players by providing the only access to Remover and offering Coin and Prestige flexibility:

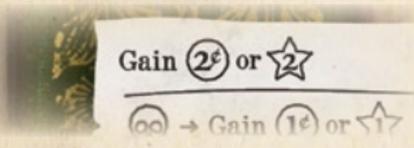


- *Take Ink or Remover:* Take either an Ink or Remover token for free. See *Ink and Remover* on page 11 for more information about how to use these tokens.



Play this card to gain an Ink or Remover token.

- *Gain Coin or Prestige:* Choose whether to take the indicated number of Coins or Prestige points. You must choose to take one or the other; you may not take a portion of each.

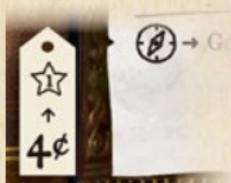


Play this card to gain either 2 Coins or 2 Prestige.

Adventure: Adventure cards are represented by the compass icon and yellow ribbon. Adventure cards are focused on quick and steady progress towards victory. Adventure cards have two primary abilities:



- *Immediate Prestige:* Some Adventure cards provide immediate Prestige points. This benefit applies only once, when you buy the card. Look for the expanded price tag at the bottom-left of the card, with an arrow pointing to a small Prestige star.



Purchase this card to immediately gain 1 Prestige point.

- *Trash This Card:* Some Adventure cards allow you to trash the card in order to gain a Coin or Prestige bonus. You must use the card face-up in your word before trashing the card and gaining the Benefit. If you choose to trash the card, gain the card's Benefits, then return it to the box and remove it from the game.



Trash this card to gain an additional 2 Coins.

Romance: Romance cards are represented by the heart and arrow icon as well as the red ribbon. Romance cards can trash other cards (they are trashy romance novels, after all) and multiply other card Benefits:

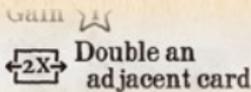


- *Trash Another Card:* Trash a card from your discard pile to gain 1 Coin. Letters currently in use in your word cannot be trashed by Romance cards. Once trashed, the card is removed from the game.



Trash a card from the discard to gain 1 Coin.

- *Double Adjacent Card:* Select one face-up card to the immediate left or right of this card and double the Coins and Prestige provided by the card. If the card provides Coins and Prestige through both Basic and Genre Benefits, you double the total values. If both adjacent cards are face-down, the card has no effect. If two cards with the Double Adjacent Card benefit surround and affect a single card, the card's Coins and Prestige are tripled.



Play this card to double an adjacent card's Benefits.

Ink and Remover

Ink: Ink tokens cost 1 Coin each and can be used in two ways:

1. One Ink token can be spent to press your luck and draw an additional card. At any time before you Create a Word, even during another player's turn, you can draw additional cards from your draw pile by spending one Ink token per card. When you draw a card this way, place it face-up in front of you and place the Ink token you spent on the card. Doing so reminds all players that this card was drawn using Ink.



You **must use all cards** with Ink tokens on them in your next word. Cards with Ink tokens on them **cannot** be turned face-down and made wild.

Pressing your luck with Ink tokens is the only way to draw additional cards in Hardback.

If you push your luck too far and can't form a word with all of your cards that are covered by Ink tokens, you must forfeit your turn: discard all your cards (including your additional cards), return all used Ink tokens to the supply, and draw a new hand for your next turn.

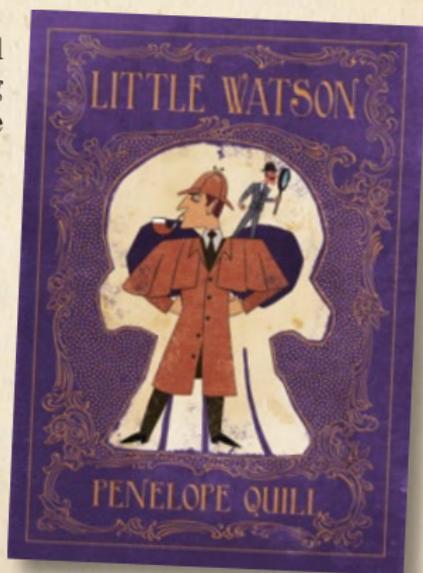
2. Three Ink tokens can be spent to gain one Coin. You can gain one Coin for each group of three Ink spent during the Purchase phase of your turn.

Remover: Remover tokens have the unique ability to cancel out an Ink token on an additional card drawn. When you have a card in front of you with an Ink token on it, you can spend a Remover token to discard the card's Ink token and add that card to your hand. The card is now treated as a normal card: you can choose whether or not to use it in your word and whether or not to make it wild. You can only get Remover tokens by playing certain cards, not by purchasing them. After you spend a Remover token, return it and the canceled Ink to the general supply.

There is no limit to the number of Ink and Remover tokens you can stockpile during the game; they are not limited by the components included in the box.

Advice from the Editors

- Don't worry too much about using all your letters. Any card can be a wild card, and you'll get a fresh hand on your next turn regardless of how many letters you use.
- Work to specialize in one or two genres so that you have a better chance of drawing multiple cards of the same genre in a single hand.
- Use your opponents' Timeless Classic cards in your words before their next turn! Even though you don't get their Benefits, it's often worth the effort, because it's the only way to prevent their owners from gaining their ongoing effects.
- Pressing your luck with Ink is a great way to get more Benefits and buy more powerful cards. But because you have to use all the letters you draw with Ink, be careful how much Ink you use in a single turn.
- Don't be afraid to accept a Ghost Writer. Ink is plentiful, and besides, even the best writers can improve by collaborating with others.



Fanfiction: Rules for Variant Play

These optional rules provide variants for Hardback. You can choose to use any combinations of the following variant rules to add complexity and challenge to the standard Hardback rules.

Literary Awards

Literary Awards are optional Prestige bonuses that you can add to the game to encourage players to compete more directly and spell longer words.

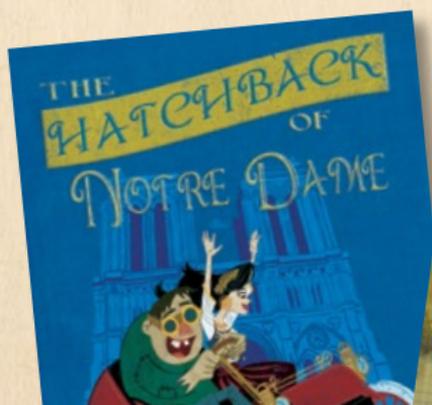
Setup changes: During setup, stack the Literary Award cards next to the Prestige tracker board. Stack the Literary Awards face-up in order, with 7 on the top and 12 on the bottom.



Gameplay changes: When you spell a word with the number of letters on any Literary Award cards in the stack, you receive that Award card. Take it from the stack and place it in front of you. Remove all Literary Awards cards with a lower number and return them to the box — including those in the stack as well as those claimed by other players. There can be only one claimed Literary Award card at a time.

For example, Edgar spells a word with 7 letters and claims the 7-letter Literary Award card. Later, Jane spells a 9-letter word. Jane removes both the 7-letter and 8-letter Literary Award cards from the game, and Jane claims the 9-letter Literary Award.

Literary Award cards are worth the amount of Prestige points shown on the bottom-right corner of the card, but only at the end of the game. When you claim a Literary Award, do not advance your token on the Prestige tracker — your Literary Award might be outperformed by another player at any time! In the same way, Prestige points from Literary Awards do not count toward the 60 Prestige points needed to end the game, but these points will certainly help improve your total Prestige in order to win.



Adverts

Even the most seasoned authors occasionally need help building their public image. Adverts allow you to purchase Prestige with Coins earned during the game.

Setup changes: During setup, give each player an individual Advert tracker. Each player should then place an Ink token on top of the card, above the 6¢ option.



Gameplay changes: Purchase Adverts during the Purchase phase of your turn. To purchase an Advert, pay Coins equal to the next available Advert slot on your Advert tracker. You immediately gain the number of Prestige points indicated on the Advert tracker next to the Advert you just purchased. Then, move the token on your Advert tracker one space down.

Each Advert can only be purchased once and must be purchased in order as listed on the Advert tracker. You can buy multiple Adverts (in order) during your turn.

For example, after purchasing the Advert for 6¢, add 3 Prestige points to your score on the Prestige tracker and place your token on the 6¢ slot on your Advert tracker card. The 9¢ Advert is now available for you to purchase.



Player Powers

Every author is different, with their own unique flair. Your player power provides you with a literary advantage you can use to out-wit your opponents.

Setup changes: During setup, all players decide together whether to use the Passive or Aggressive player powers. Passive player powers are on the side with the brown wood, and Aggressive powers are on the side with the gray wood. Each player selects a Player Power card and places it on their Player card. Alternatively, Player Power cards may be distributed at random to each player.

Gameplay changes: On your turn, you may pay your power's cost in Ink tokens as shown on your card to use the power. The cost is the same no matter how many players it affects. Passive powers can be used multiple times per turn, while Aggressive powers can be used only once per turn.

List of Passive Powers

- *Unnatural Creation* (3 Ink): You can use a card from the Offer Row in the word you spell. You gain all of that card's Benefits as if the card had come from your hand. Unless purchased, the card remains in the Offer Row at the end of your turn.
- *Lyrical Prestige* (2 Ink): Immediately gain one Prestige point.
- *Deck Exploration* (3 Ink): Name a genre. Draw cards from your draw pile until you draw a card of that genre. Place an Ink token from the general supply (not from your supply) on that card — it must be used in your word. Shuffle the other drawn cards and place them on top of your draw pile.
- *Unsightly Card* (2 Ink): Draw a card from your draw pile and use it face-down as a wild card in your word.
- *Pint-Sized Proficiency* (1 Ink): Look at the top card of your draw pile, then choose to either put it back on top of your deck or discard it.



List of Aggressive Powers

- *Bizarre Love Triangle* (3 Ink): Select a card from each opponent's discard pile and temporarily remove it from play. When its owner shuffles their discard pile, return the card to their discard pile.
- *Disfigured Letter* (3 Ink): Flip over the top card from the Offer Deck. All opponents must use that letter in their next word. They do not receive any Benefits provided by the card. Once each opponent has used the card, it is returned to the box and removed from the game.
- *Miniaturize Supplies* (X Ink): Discard any number of Ink tokens from your supply. All other players must discard twice as many Ink tokens (or simply discard all their Ink, if they don't have enough).



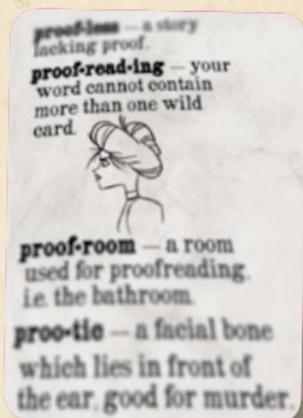
- *Mechanical Rap Battle* (2 Ink): The next time each opponent draws their hand, randomly select one card from their hand and place it in their discard pile.
- *Wild Journey* (3 Ink): For each opponent, look at their hand and choose a card. They must use that card face-down as a wild card in their next word.

Events

Events provide an added challenge and are ideal for the veteran group looking to test their authorial skills.

Setup changes: During setup, shuffle the Events deck and place it next to the Prestige tracker board.

Gameplay changes: For each individual player, each time you enter a new decade on the Prestige tracker (10s, 20s, 30s, ...), draw an Event card from the deck and discard your current Event card, if any. Keep your event card face-up in front of you.



When you draw an Event card, review it and choose whether to keep it or exchange it with the current Event card of any player who is ahead of you on the Prestige tracker. As long as an Event card is in front of you, you must adhere to its requirements.

Cooperative Anthology

In this cooperative variant, 1–4 players work to win or lose together against your archrival, Penny Dreadful.

Setup changes: During setup ...

- Instead of placing a Prestige token for each player on the Prestige tracker, place one token for all the players together and one for Penny Dreadful. Additionally, track which lap each team is on by placing an Ink token and a Remover token on the first circle at the top of the Prestige tracker — the Ink token for the players and the Remover token for Penny.
- Select one of the following genres to be Penny's signature genre:
 - **Adventure:** any time at least one Adventure card is on the Offer Row, Penny receives one Prestige point for each card the players purchase.



- *Horror*: any time at least one Horror card is in the Offer Row, Penny gains one Prestige point for each Ink the players use.
- *Romance*: each time Penny removes a Romance card from the Offer Row, Penny gains double the Prestige points earned for that card. See below for an explanation of how Penny earns Prestige.
- *Mystery*: each time Penny removes a Mystery card from the Offer Row, Penny also removes the lowest priced card in the Offer Row. Penny does not gain Prestige for the second card. Replace both cards following the normal rules below.
- *None*: Penny gains no additional effect.

Gameplay changes: Each player takes a turn as normal. After each player's turn, Penny Dreadful takes her turn. On Penny's turn:

1. Remove the card in the Offer Row furthest from the Offer Deck. Slide the remaining cards in the Offer Row away from the Offer Deck, then draw a replacement card.
2. Move Penny Dreadful's token on the Prestige Tracker board the number of spaces equal to the removed card's price.

During cooperative play, there are a few core game rules that are altered:

1. Players are unable to flush the Offer Row, and must work with the Offer Row cards as they are dealt.
2. Another player can use your Timeless Classic cards without discarding them. Instead, a Timeless Classic card is sent to your discard pile if a card of the same genre is drawn from the Offer Deck on your turn or on Penny Dreadful's turn immediately following your turn.

The game continues until one side—either the players or Penny Dreadful—completes the Prestige tracker a number of times equal to the number of players (not including Penny). Each time a side crosses 60 Prestige points, advance their Ink or Remover token to the next circle on the Prestige Tracker board, place their player token on the number of Prestige points past 60 they obtained, and begin their next lap.

If the players complete their final lap first, they win the game—their collected writings become instant classics! However, if Penny Dreadful completes her final lap first, the players lose—and suffer the shame of seeing Penny's name on the best-seller list.

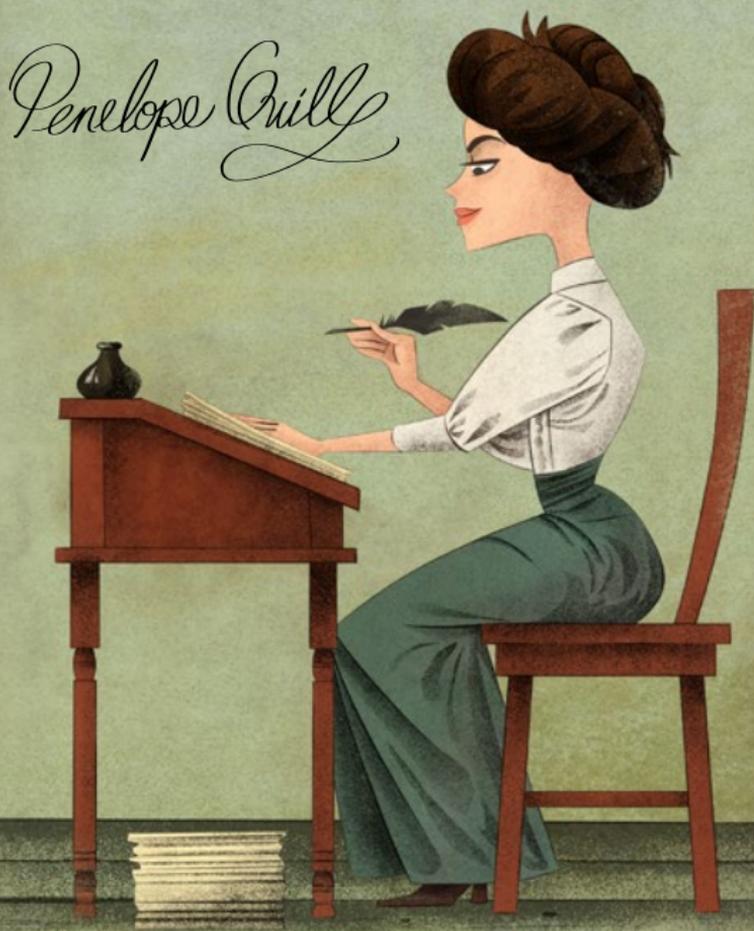
Hardback was designed by Jeff Beck and developed by Tim Fowers. Illustrations by Ryan Goldsberry. Lettering and iconography by Andrew Colin Beck. Initial prototype cards hand-drawn by Brooklyn Beck. Rulebook copyediting by Scott Post.

Special thanks to all our playtesters, backers, and especially wives for helping and supporting us throughout this process.

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About the Author:

Penelope Quill has written five best-selling novels, for which she has received numerous literary awards. Before launching her authorial career, Penelope worked as a teacher, private investigator, and wild animal tamer. She lives in New England with her pet hamster, Archie.



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