

I am a freshman at the University of Denver and am enrolled in a writing and research class based off of the massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) World of Warcraft (WoW). In this class we research themes, topics, questions, etc, relating to WoW. Personally, I have only been playing WoW since the start of the class nine weeks ago, and most of my play time has been devoted to making new characters and researching classes, so I am still a big noob. My first character made was a night elf druid. Since she is where I have gained most of my play, and the character that I have leveled up the most, I have decided to research more in depth about the night elves.

I am looking to answer, or at least compile the answers in to one document, several questions related to night elves through my research. My questions are as follows: who are the night elves; where did they come from; what do they believe in; how do their mannerism and culture in the game portray a cohesive race? I have qualitative research and interpretive research to answer the questions, using several different sources which will be cited throughout the paper, and my own in game experience and observations.

First: Who are the night elves and where did they come from; in other words, what inspired the character of the night elf? When night elves are portrayed in fantasy or games, they are primarily based off the elves that Tolkien has created in his stories; Tolkien was thought to have modeled his elves off of Finnish mythology (JSTOR). As my research grew more and more in depth, I have found that Finnish mythology got the concept of elves from Celtic mythology, and Celtic mythology derived their concept of elves from a Teutonic origin. According to Norse mythology there were two types of elves, the light-elves and the dark-elves; the elves were seen as spirits or deities that

occupied the woodlands or households. In tradition the elves became known as a household spirit. It was the household spirits that were passed on to the Celtic myth and later to Finnish. The dark-elves were more dwarf-like creatures compared to the light-elves (Timeless Myths), making it clear that Tolkien's elves and the night elves of WoW were based off of the light-elves, and for WoW, the woodland light-elves. In WoW, based off of my observations in game, the night elves are tall in stature. They wear draped, cloth garments, with various markings on their faces. They reside in The Woodlands in the game as well. Clearly they are taking after the light-elves of the Norse myth.

Second: What do the night elves believe in? According to Norse tradition, elves were considered lesser deities, thought to live in the same area as the Vanir god Freyr; people would pray to the elves. They were thought to have the powers to protect households and homes from any evil that was to enter, and they were thought to have possessed the power of healing. In Norse mythology, elves are not discussed in great detail, nor is their background shared. They seemed to be considered religiously significant in the myth, having such powers and living close to one of the gods, but their extensive history or significance was not conceived until later in more modern lore and fantasy. The Lord of the Rings trilogy is looked at to be the major development in the cultural background of elves (Timeless Myths).

Night elves, in game, worship nature deities called Ancients, who are attune to the forest and hunt; their primary figures of worship are Elune, the moon goddess, and Malorne, the Waywatcher (WoWWiki). From my observations in game, the night elves seem be pretty religious. Their night elf song is the night elves singing to the moon

goddess Elune. They treat each other with deep respect and courtesy when they talk to each other, leading me to believe they have a deep spiritual background. Elune, the moon goddess, is the highest of all deities to the night elves. She protects all living thing. She always stopped violence whenever she found it, casting a calming influence across the land. Cenarius, the Lord of the Forest, son of Elune and patron God of the night elves, was killed, and the elves blame the orcs for this (WoWWiki). Though the night elves blame the orcs for this significant loss, they clearly value peace in the world, and are working to restore it. In my personal experience, all the quests I receive, if they have to do with killing, are to clear out the evil beings in the land, or else I am on a mission of peace, trying to help someone wounded or delivering valuable information or potions.

The very first quest I received was to kill 10 thistle boar and 10 young night sabers. It was explained to me that these evil beasts invaded the land when war broke out, and it was my duty to try and rid them of our dwelling. One of the next quests was to deliver a potion to a man who was dying in a cave nearby. The potion restored his health, making me the one to save his life. Like the Norse tradition, the night elves of WoW are given quests to protect their home or to heal others. Though I am sure much of the background of the night elves in WoW has developed from Tolkien, their religious nature can be traced back to Norse mythology.

Finally: How their culture in the game portray a cohesive race? Night elves dwell in The Woodlands, in game, just as the Norse elves habituated the woods. The first architecture that one comes across, when playing a night elf, is a large tree. This is the starting point for the elves. This tree is hollow and made into a large home in Teldressil

for the night elves to reside in. When venturing out of Teldressil, you find homes made of wood or out of trees. All materials that night elves use come from the land.

Night elves are lanky characters, dressed very modestly and down to earth. They do not adorn themselves with glitz, glamour or flashy clothing or armor. Instead they wear more smock-like garments and use leather as a defense. Their appearance is such that you can tell where they come from: the woodlands. What they wear is made out of material found from the earth that would be easily collected and made from the habitat. They wear colors that allow them to better blend in with their environment, such as various shades of browns.

The race of night elf allows one to choose from five different classes: druids, rogues, priests, warriors, and hunters. The night elf is one of two races that can be a druid, this is because, druids are able to shape shift into different animals. As these various animals, they take on different classes, such as rogues, priest and warriors. Druids are extremely powerful healers and protectors (World of Warcraft). It makes sense that the race of night elves is given the ability to become druids, not only because they have the capability to shape shift into the other classes that are available to them, but because of the extreme powers they are granted. The abilities and powers the druid night elves possess when shape shifting are very similar to those discussed earlier of the elves in Norse mythology.

The reason the elves in the game of World of Warcraft are night elves is because they are nocturnal by nature and only come out at night. This, as well as many of the other cultural characteristics discussed can only be linked back to Norse tradition by the way of the woods; both types of elves dwell in the woods or woodlands. However, as

discussed earlier, the culture of the elves in Norse mythology was never really created. Elvin culture was first thought to be brought about by Tolkien, and was developed from there. Night elves in the World of Warcraft have clearly developed much of their culture from their habitat, but also from the lore of the game, and assumingly the lore of The Lord of the Rings.

The night elves are a race with an in depth history. They can be traced all the way back to Teutonic origins and are known throughout Celtic and Finnish mythology. Most modern fantasy elves are based off of Tolkien's elves, which are also traced to the same origins, so it is safe to say that Tolkien has had a strong influence on WoW characters. The night elves main deity is Elune the goddess of the Moon, who believes in peace. The night elves work to restore peace throughout the game and have strong religious beliefs made evident in their actions, words and songs. The culture and history of the night elves is evident by their appearance, habitat and rituals in game. The night elves, like the other characters in WoW are part of the cohesive world, with a history to prove it, and can be traced all the way back to Norse mythology.

Citations

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