



Home > Games > D&D > Articles

10/02/2006

Home

D&D Archive

Living Spells

**Dust, Storm, and Confusion****Part 2 of 4**

By Sean K. Reynolds

-  Printer Friendly
-  Email A Friend
-  Discuss This Article
-  Download This Article

One of the innovative new ideas in the Eberron campaign is that of the living spell--a spell giving permanent form and semblance of life during the terrible battles of the war that eventually created the Mourmland. This unique use of the template mechanic applies a template to a spell rather than an existing creature, opening up a vast number of possibilities for new creatures. In this series we'll create stat blocks for various "common" living spells (saving you the work of doing so) and explore the boundaries of the living spell template by applying it to unusual spells or those that don't quite fit its requirements. The end result for you is a series of useful living spells, some of them less predictable than others.

Living Glitterdust

Any spell capable of blinding large numbers of opponents is valuable in war, and *glitterdust* saw heavy use in Cyre, especially against enemy leaders and spellcasters, whose blindness greatly interfered with their ability to direct troops and target enemies. The spell was also used defensively (to check an area for invisible assassins and saboteurs) and as a long-range signal (as the sparkling dust is visible at great distances). Its frequent use during the Last War means that living glitterdusts are not uncommon in the Mourmland, though they are more of an annoyance than a significant threat, particularly as most of them were cast by low-level spellcasters. This living spell was formed by a *glitterdust* spell with caster level 4.

This thing looks like a faintly sparkling cloud of golden dust, some parts drifting lazily and others whirring with mad speed. It leaves a trail of golden dust behind it as it creeps forward, feeling its way with ropelike pseudopods.

Living Glitterdust CR 4

N Medium Ooze

Init -1; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen -1, Spot -1**AC** 11, touch 11, flat-footed 12

(+2 deflection, -1 Dex)

hp 26 (4 HD); DR 10/magic,**Immune** critical hits, flanking, gaze attacks, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, and effects that rely on sight**SR** 14**Fort** +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +2**Speed** 40 ft. (8 squares)**Melee** slam +4 (1d4+1 plus glitterdust)**Base Atk** +3; **Grp** +4**Atk Options** engulf, glitterdust**Abilities** Str 12, Dex 9, Con 12, Int --, Wis 9, Cha 12

Glitterdust (Su) A creature hit by a living glitterdust or engulfed by it is affected by the *glitterdust* spell; the creature is outlined in glowing particles (even if invisible), has a -40 penalty to Hide checks, and must make a Will saving throw (DC 13) or be blinded. These effects last 4 rounds.

Engulf (Ex) A living glitterdust can flow around a Medium or smaller creature as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The living spell merely has to move over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the living spell, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw against the engulf attack. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must succeed at a DC 13 Reflex save or be engulfed; on a success they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the spell moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the full normal effect of the *glitterdust* spell each round on the living spell's turn, and are considered to be grappled.

Sometimes it's a good idea to tweak a templated creature's abilities to suit its unique nature in a way that the general template doesn't address--by changing or adding abilities that are thematically appropriate, the creature becomes more well-rounded and less predictable to players who memorize monster statistics. In the case of this creature (which is based on a spell that illuminates invisible creatures) it would be reasonable to give it the ability to see invisible creatures, but as the template gives the creature the ooze type (which has blindsight) this customization is not necessary.

Living Ice Storm

The *ice storm* spell saw much use during the War, especially against enemy groups containing fire creatures such as fire elementals. A cadre of Cyrran mages calling themselves the Frost Battalion used it in almost every

battle, coupled with conjured ice para-elementals. Unfortunately they were almost entirely wiped out when three of their *ice storm* spells transformed into living spells and devoured them. A warforged called Ironjaw now living in Sharn was witness to this event and can describe what happened in detail. Living ice storms are especially dangerous in the winter months, as they easily blend in with the strange weather in the Mourmland. Sometimes they lay dormant in lakes or pools, freezing solid a small area around them, breaking free when they choose to move again. This living spell was formed by an *ice storm* spell (sorcerer/wizard version) with caster level 8.

This flurry of falling hail and snow does not follow the wind and seems more intense than the surrounding weather.



Living Ice Storm CR 8

N Large Ooze

Init +0; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 13

(+4 deflection, -1 size)

hp 60 (8 HD); DR 10/magic

Immune critical hits, flanking, gaze attacks, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, and effects that rely on sight

SR 18

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

Spd 60 ft. (12 squares)

Melee slam +7 (1d6+3 plus ice storm)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +12

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Atk Options engulf, ice storm

Abilities Str 14, Dex 11, Con 14, Int --, Wis 11, Cha 14

Ice Storm (Su): A creature hit by a living ice storm or engulfed by it is affected by the *ice storm* spell, taking 3d6 bludgeoning damage and 2d6 cold damage.

Engulf (Ex): A living ice storm can flow around a Large or smaller creature as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The living spell merely has to move over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the living spell, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw against the engulf attack. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must succeed at a DC 16 Reflex save or be engulfed; on a success they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the spell moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the full normal effect of the *ice storm* spell (see above) each round on the living spell's turn, and are considered to be grappled.

Designer's Notes: The core concept of the living spell template is that it is an ooze-like creature that creates a spell effect when it attacks. One of the problems with applying templates is that the resulting creature may be unexpectedly more or less powerful than the CR adjustment of the template would indicate, simply because of how the base creature's and template's powers complement or interfere with each other. It's possible to rigorously playtest each living spell, but this is time-consuming and most DMs simply don't have the resources to playtest new monsters before using them in an ongoing campaign. In some cases it is helpful to compare the resulting living spell to an existing monster with similar abilities. As published monsters are playtested more than a quickly-built templated creature for a home game, this comparison helps make sure the living spell's abilities are appropriate for a creature of its CR, especially if you're using a spell that the template doesn't normally allow.

We'll test this method with the third living spell presented here: *confusion*. The *confusion* spell technically can't be used with the living spell template -- it affects targeted creatures rather than an area (although it's actually targeting all creatures *within* an area, so it's almost like an area spell). However, *confusion* is a neat idea for a living spell monster -- it keeps beating on its enemies until they're all dead or have wandered away. As it turns out, the gibbering moulder is a creature that has an at-will *confusion* ability, plus it is amorphous and therefore immune to critical hits just like a living spell, making it a perfect candidate for this exercise.

It is possible to take this method to an extreme conclusion: building a living spell by adapting an existing monster and adjusting its abilities to make it more like a living spell, rather than applying the template to a spell. An example of this is [Stohpo-Ahk](#), which is a "living spell" based on a phasm but customized to reflect its "origin" as a meld of living spells involving polymorph, acid, and stone. Reusing existing game mechanics -- in this case, an entire monster's statistics -- is a quick way to make a living spell encounter with a fairly certain idea of its target CR.

Living Confusion

One common tactic of mid-level enchanters in war is to use the *confusion* spell on enemy troops; affected creatures are either removed from combat (by fleeing or doing nothing at all) or are likely to attack their own allies, increasing casualties and weakening morale. The Cyrran enchanter Igarn carried a *metamagic rod of quicken* which he used often in conjunction with this spell to turn flanking troops against their center, and it is believed that one living confusion roaming the Mourmland is fused to Igarn's lost rod--the properties of the item and spell interact strangely, allowing the living spell an extra attack each round (whether the item would survive

the death of the creature is unknown). The living spell presented here was formed from a *confusion* spell with caster level 8.

This ephemeral mist seems to contain dozens of floating eyes and mouths which fade in and out of existence. The cloud roils and twists in a chaotic fashion.

Living Confusion CR 8

N Large Ooze

Init +0; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 13

(+4 deflection, -1 size)

hp 60 (8 HD); DR 10/magic

Immune critical hits, flanking, gaze attacks, mind-affecting effects, paralysis, poison, polymorph, sleep, and effects that rely on sight

SR 18

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6

Spd 40 ft. (8 squares)

Melee slam +7 (1d6+3 plus confusion)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +12

Atk Options engulf, confusion

Abilities Str 14, Dex 11, Con 14, Int --, Wis 11, Cha 14

Confusion (Su): A creature hit by a living confusion or engulfed by it is affected by the *confusion* spell. It must make a Will saving throw (DC 16) or be confused for 8 rounds.

Engulf (Ex): A living confusion can flow around a Large or smaller creature as a standard action. It cannot make a slam attack during a round in which it engulfs. The living spell merely has to move over the opponents, affecting as many as it can cover. Opponents can make attacks of opportunity against the living spell, but if they do so they are not entitled to a saving throw against the engulf attack. Those who do not attempt attacks of opportunity must succeed at a DC 16 Reflex save or be engulfed; on a success they are pushed back or aside (opponent's choice) as the spell moves forward. Engulfed creatures are subject to the full normal effect of the *confusion* spell (see above) each round on the living spell's turn, and are considered to be grappled.

Let's compare the living spell to the gibbering moulder. The spell is CR 8 and the moulder is CR 5, so the spell should be tougher than an encounter with two moulthers (CR 5 + CR 5 = EL 7). The spell's DC is higher but it only affects one creature per round, whereas the moulder's confusion ability affects all nearby creatures. The spell has more hit points than one moulder but less than two, but its DR/magic and SR 18 make up for the slight deficit compared to the EL 7 encounter with two moulthers. The spell's blindsight is better than the moulder's darkvision. The spell lacks the moulder's ground manipulation ability but is much faster. The moulder has more attacks per round but they do much less damage. The moulder's blood drain ability is powerful but the spell can hold more creatures within itself (4 Medium creatures for a Large ooze compared to 1 Medium for the moulder, or two Medium creatures for a pair of moulthers). The spell's attack and grapple bonuses are greater than the moulder's but its AC is lower. Overall, the living confusion spell seems comparable to an encounter with a pair of gibbering moulthers (it is better in some ways and worse in others), which means that the living spell's CR may actually be 7 instead of 8. If an encounter with this living confusion spell seems easier than its CR indicates, consider adjusting the CR value down to 7 when awarding experience points.



About the Author

Sean K Reynolds lives in Las Vegas and develops worlds for Upper Deck as well as running his own small press d20 company. His D&D credits include the *Monster Manual*, the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*, and *Savage Species*. You can find more game material at [Sean's website](#).

Recent Living Spells

- Bind, Fall, and Spray 01/15/2007
- Disintegrate, Dizzy and Dispel 10/23/2006
- Dust, Storm, and Confusion 10/02/2006
- Acid, Slumber, and Stone 09/18/2006

(MORE)

Recent Articles

- This Month's *Dragon* Magazine 04/26/2007
- Chapter 2: Conflict 09/24/2007
- Eastern Classes 09/18/2007
- Crusaders, Swordsages, Warblades 09/11/2007
- *Fortress of the Yuan-Ti* 09/04/2007

(MORE)

[About Us](#) [Jobs](#) [New to the Game?](#) [Inside Wizards](#) [Find a Store](#) [Press](#) [Help](#) [Sitemap](#)

©1995-2019 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

[Terms of Use](#) - [Privacy Statement](#)



