



Critical Role: Tal'Dorei Campaign Setting

Matthew Mercer, Andy Law (Cartographer), James J. Haeck

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Critical Role has taken the roleplaying world by storm and now you can join the adventure! Until now, the wondrous and dangerous lands of Tal'Dorei have been the sole stomping grounds of the show's adventuring company, Vox Machina. But now, you can explore these realms in a tome from the pen of Game Master Matt Mercer himself! Will you find one of the revered Vestiges of Divergence or perhaps discover part of the Chroma Conclave's legacy? Can you help the Ashari in their sacred charge to prevent the elemental vortices from overwhelming the world, or will you find yourself embroiled in the machinations of the Clasp? This setting book takes an in-depth look at the history, people, and places of Tal'Dorei, and includes new backgrounds, magic

Critical Role: Tal'Dorei Campaign Setting Details

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From Reader Review Critical Role: Tal'Dorei Campaign Setting for online ebook

Jessica says

5 stars. I wish I had a million to give.

Norrin Shearer says

Matthew Mercer is a genius. It's as simple as that. The way he explains this world of his is brilliant. The history, the deities, the new features available for player characters. I love Critical Role and this book does a brilliant job of bringing the world of the show to us players. I'm insanely pleased with this and so happy to have read it. I'm stoked to play a campaign in the world of Exandria! Also, hey all you Critters out there! ? #IsItThursdayYet

Alexandra Wimberley says

I'm so excited for this entire campaign guide. I've been looking forward to its release since the book was announced, and I'm delighted to see part of the world of Exandria fleshed out for people to actually play in. Tal'Dorei is an exciting place! In particular I'm really in love with Matt's "Way of the Cobalt Soul" monk's path. If there's ever someone running a Tal'Dorei campaign, I can't wait to jump in to play myself.

Chris Jackson says

I really enjoyed reading through this, finding out more about the amazing continent of Tal'Dorei, discovering secrets about Vox Machina that were not revealed in their campaign. I hope that Matthew decides to make another one for the setting of Campaign 2 and all others that Critical Role explores.

Michelle (In Libris Veritas) says

A really good campaign setting with a lot of detail, but not so much that you get overwhelmed by them. It really meshes well with 5e and would be great for a full campaign or if you simply want to add in details to your current games.

I love that it keeps a focus on player creation and has a lot of wiggle room for changes.

Laura says

A well written dip into the amazing world Matthew Mercer has created. I have been a Critter for years and hope he will continue to release campaign books so that all can enjoy Exandria.

Lara says

Awesome. Maybe I can try my hand at DMing with one of the offered adventure hooks...

Lynmars says

Overall, this is very good setting material for D&D campaigns that want to jump into the same world as Vox Machina and Critical Role. There's a lot here for people who love rich details and immersion, without bogging things down or setting up rigid lines.

The layout is good; it starts with the ancient Calamity, also known as the Second Spark, the Divergence, and a few other names, relating to creation myths and why the gods can't directly intervene on the material plane. From there we get the history of the continent/nation of Tal'Dorei itself, though it suddenly jumps from centuries to decades to years with no solid timeline (including sometimes setting it up as a year since the Fall of the Chroma Conclave to acting as if several years have passed in some instances)--though that's not exactly a downside.

One of the big disclaimers is the idea that GMs should make Tal'Dorei their own, and even Matt Mercer himself can't say another person's version of the world is wrong. There's a lot of freedom here.

The Gazetteer section emphasizes that; there is a lot of overall detail of each section of Tal'Dorei, major settlements and landmarks--some familiar for viewers, some new. There's also a lot of summary and things left unsaid, or outright given options as to what's really going on. Some sections get more detail than others, if only due to the familiarity of the region thanks to Vox Machina's adventures, and some questions are answered.

I like the section of various factions (I need a stained glass-style Ashari symbol pin yesterday), and the reworking of the deities with familiar or new-but-easily-coded nicknames and titles, since there was not a feasible way to deal with the copyright on the original D&D pantheon names. The titles, woven into the history of Tal'Dorei and its various people, work perfectly to add to the flavor of this setting.

The other continents/nations are touched on, but only as much as they affect Tal'Dorei itself, like Fire Ashari who work near Emon, or where the Myriad originate as they make their way into Tal'Dorei and clash with the Clasp.

Mercer's insistence on gender equality and representation are worked in naturally, with deities described with various skin colors, two goddesses linked as lovers to maintain balance between their opposing portfolios, the cloud giants have married kings with specific responsibilities each, the Tal'Dorei dynasty was founded by a woman rebelling against tyrants, and specific mention is made of Tal'Dorei's status as a melting pot of immigration, refugees, and major trade hub with the other nations across the Ozmit and Lucidian seas to allow for variety in its peoples. There are characters familiar and new in these pages, male, female, and other; good, bad, and somewhere in between.

There are not a lot of new stats for the player races, except Ravenite Dragonborn, and no new stats for many of the beast races, but yet more history--the conflicting/conflating stories on the origins of centaur and orcs in this world is a good one, the lizardfolks' fall from grace, the hobgoblins and the Iron Empire...again, nothing too unusual, but dashed with specific Exandrian flavor tied back to the Calamity and ensuing Divergence.

The new feats work alongside or as a sample of some of Mercer's familiar houserules, such as the ability to drink potions quickly, or casting more spells in a round. There are new backgrounds that are based off the original PHB options but are specific to the setting. And of course, optional rules for resurrection, including The Fading Spirit ritual, among other ideas.

At a glance, I had no issues with the Way of the Cobalt Soul or the Path of the Juggernaut, and the Blood Domain is pretty much bloodbending. The new domain compliments the Blood Hunter class Mercer created. There are references in a couple places to the Dungeon Master's Guild for his other classes and archetypes, as once something is published to the DMG, that's where it belongs rather than moving to a book, even if the same guy wrote it.

The art is pretty awesome, and my understanding is that they commissioned some fan artists. The PDF came with a separate big map of the continent. There are lovely renditions of Tal'Dorei locations, history, creatures, the various Vestiges (new and familiar), and of course, Vox Machina themselves. The representations of other characters and races could be a bit more diverse to match the text, however.

My quibbles are few; my major rules issue is a concern that the Runechild sorcerer origin adds a second currency to the class on top of sorcery points, with the way the runes work. That'll be one I have to reread and talk over with other experienced players/GMs to see how we understand it and would work it into a campaign.

This book could have used another run by a fresh set of copyeditor eyes, as there are a few editing errors, and a few typesetting errors. Not too out of the norm for smaller RPG publishers in my experience, though, and they didn't distract too much, nor were too frequent, and were mostly minor. There are a few oddities with the PDF Table of Contents, merging two sections and spacing/kerning issues. Some of this is due to pre-order PDF, and reporting to Green Ronin can clean the hardcopies, hopefully, at least the inevitable second printing.

Mercer is not a writer by trade, so the co-developers and editors should have caught more instances of over-description or redundancy in many passages; I wanted a red pen at times to mark out excess adjectives or recommend reworking some sentences. Again, though, this doesn't detract from the overall, and this is a LOT of material. This is probably one of the meatier history and setting books I've seen in a long time, emphasizing flavor instead of more new rules and options.

However, it also showed Mercer's (and many a game writer's) tendency for subtle humor, references, and puns--particularly in the potential plot hook titles for each region or town. Critical Role itself is rife with puns and references, so it suits the campaign guide perfectly, without being jarring for the most part.

I recommend this book if you're looking for a ready-made campaign setting that isn't as well-trod as Forgotten Realms and other previously-published settings. I recommend it if you love Critical Role, or are new to whatever these "Critters" go on about. If you just want a description of Tal'Dorei and its history, this is an excellent reference book.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to peek into this world and have the option to use it in my own games, and I am, perhaps oddly, proud of Matthew Mercer, his players, and the Critter community for making this happen.

See you in Tal'Dorei.

Neveth says

Eeeeeeeeeeee.

Gonna use some of this in future D&D campaigns that I run. :D

Jean-Daniel Veer says

Very exciting resource for a DM! Especially love the tool, character options and the Blood domain.

Jade says

“Welcome to Tal’Dorei, the first of (hopefully) a number of campaign guides and world books within my own crazy creation, Exandria.”

This lovingly crafted campaign setting by everybody’s favorite Game Master, Matthew Mercer, contains a ton of information on his homebrew setting of Exandria – to such an extent that you’d be able to run your own campaigns in the land of Tal’Dorei *and* hunt all the little references in its text and gasp at the gorgeous art like the Critical Role fan that you are.

It’s divided up into four chapters that each deal with a separate part of Tal’Dorei.

Chapter one deals with setting up your campaigns in Tal’Dorei. Here, you’re able to find all the information you could possibly need on its rich history, its races and pantheon, and the many factions and societies roaming the lands and cities.

Chapter two moves onto a gazetteer of Tal’Dorei, which basically boils down to a detailed deconstruction of geographical areas of interest. From sierras and plains to mountains and expanses, you’ll be able to find all of Tal’Dorei’s locations here – including a short history on each area, and some details on distant regions, too. (And yes, you’ll be able to find all the places that Vox Machina visited, as well.)

Chapter three delves into character options. This is where you can find new player classes (the Blood Domain, the Path of the Juggernaut, Runechild, and the Way of the Cobalt Soul), suggestions for player character backgrounds, and new feats. There’s also plenty of information on the Vestiges of Divergence (special items) and some optional rules.

Chapter four covers allies and adversaries, so this is where you can read up on monstrous races (including

their history) and find a number of statblocks for possible enemies and NPCs (such as the Clasp Enforcer, the Ashari Skydancer, and the Cinderslag Elemental).

The physical book also includes a fold-out map of Tal'Dorei in old-cartography-style, drawn up through the surveys of none other than Tyriok Gadsworth. The D20 designs in the corners of the map are also a particularly nice touch.

This campaign setting is basically everything I could have wanted from Mercer after this book was first announced. It shows plenty of worldbuilding, love, and more than enough detail to appeal to the game master inside of me. It's rich and detailed without ever getting overbearing and a damn joy to read through as a Critical Role fan, too.

Mercer strongly emphasizes the freedom that comes with this setting and its rules and history, and actively encourages game masters and players to make changes and come up with their own game.

More of his personal influence can be felt in the inclusion of minorities; there's plenty of women doing cool things throughout the history of Tal'Dorei, there's the mention of two goddesses being each other's lovers, as well as descriptions for different skin colors when mentioning characters/gods. Never does it feel forced, but rather just as a natural and organic part of his world (as it should be).

The art is stunning and the layout is both easily readable and interesting to look at. In particular, I loved the little quotes from in-game books, speeches, and events scattered throughout the book, which adds another layer of immersion and realism to Tal'Dorei.

There are only a few issues that I have with this book, but they are small and few in-between. There's a number of small editing issues as well as a few spelling/grammar mistakes, and sometimes the writing is filled a little too copiously with adjectives and descriptions. I also have to admit that I would've liked to have seen more statblocks in here, for enemies, monstrous races, and allies alike – but perhaps a bestiary lies on the horizon still.

However, none of these small faults distracts from the core of the book, which is to provide a proper setting for creating your own campaign in Tal'Dorei.

And boy, does it succeed in that aspect! Even taking away the fact that I'm a big Critical Role fan, I'd definitely say that this book beats a lot of other campaign settings – both in *Dungeons & Dragons* and *Pathfinder* – in terms of history, lore, and details. It's big, it's fun, and it's such a joy to read and browse through.

As a fellow worldbuilder and game master, I can only say: thank you. I love that this exists and is now giving so many people the opportunity to do what they've seen Vox Machina do over the years.

And I can only hope that we'll see more books in this vein added to the pile in the future.

Kit says

Very in depth, more information than I thought would be in it.

Dara says

As a devoted fan of Critical Role, I couldn't wait to get my hands on Matthew Mercer's Critical Role: Tal'Dorei Campaign Setting. I pre-ordered the book as soon as it was available and paid extra to get the PDF immediately.

I am a total nerd for worldbuilding and lore so this campaign guide was like crack for me. I loved learning the history and geography of Tal'Dorei in detail. I revel in Mercer's creative genius. The art in the book is wonderful and the map is top-notch. I can't wait to get my physical copy and play in this world. Thank you, Matt.

5 out of 5 stars.

Catie says

Mercer is love, Mercer is life
