Hard 30 – Good Draw, Bad Draw

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Hard 30 - Tiers of the Phoenixborn: Card Draw

The founding fathers may have wished it but not all draw is created equal. I've tiered out all the cards that have the word 'draw' on them and will judge them exclusively on that merit. Mostly it comes down to the style of the deck and what magic types you are running. Even if you are fully committed to a nature only deck, Ashes has some dice neutral answers for you.

Orrick Tier

The poster boy of clan Greedy McHoardy. Orrick is the alpha and omega of card draw. Between his ability and signature card, you lift two cards AND fix two dice for the cost of one. Even if you don't use Concentrate he's more efficient than any other option. Don't misread this. I am not saying Orrick is the only phoenixborn worth attempting to draw a lot of cards. He's just the most efficient.

Orrick - Phoenixborn

Great! But Only If You Build Around It Tier

These cards contain whole realms of theory to be explored detailing every nuanced aspect. This is not that article. I really like Abundance, Generosity, and Law of Sight. All three bring something to the gaming table. Ash Spirit nominally belongs here as a junior Abundance that costs one die every activation. Solid, but, you better have a plan for it.

Abundance is the best repeatable draw in the game. For both you and your opponent. The secrets of Generosity have just revealed themselves to me and I can't wait to explore them more. Law of Sight has been the cornerstone to a couple of solid builds for me in Lulu and Xander. Any deck where you want a targeted spell to 100 percent land free of reactions.

Cantrip Tier (Good)

Depending on what you are doing with your deck pretty much every cantrip slots into here. A cantrip is a card that replaces itself with a single card draw. None of these cards are going to set the world on fire but they give incremental value to a deck dedicated to drawing. Don't hammerfist a cantrip into your deck that doesn't further a deck goal. But, if you need some dice fixing or a cheap body. One cost cantrips are your jam.

I am currently having a dalliance with Spectral Assassin for small battlefields and aggressive swing builds. Its ability has stifled a couple of reactions that I know of so far. Others that earn honorable mentions include Accelerate, Hidden Power, and Particle Shield.

Other cards that creep into the cantrip definition are Squall Stallion and River Scald. Technically they are. But, no one is using them for their draw ability. Although it makes me want to drop Scald into a swarm deck and see what happens. But, no on Stallion. Even I have my limits!

Combo Tier

Here are your standard draw options that are good in other games; Changing Winds, New Ideas, and Sleight of Hand. I have run all three cards to varying degrees of satisfaction. None of them I found particularly exciting until it hit me.

What I discovered while reviewing this group was I wasn't putting much value on sifting. I think Rimea's ability is amazing if underused. There isn't an onus on building combo decks because there aren't many game-ending combos to exploit. However, if you are digging for that silver bullet or McGuffin, here are the excavation tools you need.

Sifters

The best of the bunch is New Ideas. On the surface, the initial cost of one die and two cards to draw three feels bad. However, if you bottom out your deck consistently, that card you tucked comes back around. Great for Molten Golds and a knight or two.

Nothing out muscles Sleight of Hand for pure deck plumbing power. Changing Winds is a really nice blend of the two. I have been wavering on Winds because I want to just put it in the bad tier but I think there are just enough merits. The initial scrying of the top two cards brings it up out of the dregs but only for combo decks.

Tutors

I debated whether I was even going to touch on fetch effects. I don't think they offer up anything to talk about. If you absolutely need to get certain cards for your deck to work, play them. If not, the draw is going to be more efficient. Cards like Augury, Emperor Lion, and Open Memory have a place in certain decks but should not be widely used.

And I then imagine if something like Koji, Augury, and Acceleration isn't something to exploit. Just dropping wrath effects all game long at a moment's notice. Will wonders never cease.

Just Bad Tier

Delayed gratification can be incredibly rewarding in the right context. Ripping cardboard is not one. Foresight, Iron Worker, Chant of Worship, and Expand Energy should not go into your common deck. In order to maximize the payoff for drawing cards, you need to have those options available right now. Not a round from now and not when someone dies. Certainly not after you play a reaction that might be stuck in your hand.

Worker is so close to being good. I really like the two basics of any color cost to smooth out a deck's magic types. But then he ends up being targeted. So…that means he's good then, right?

I almost forgot the Sympathy die itself. I'm going to file this way as bad. On the rare occasion, you have an extra power side just lying around then it's a great move to pick one up. It's even fine to meditate for the draw next turn if you have the side actions and it's early in the game. But, if you have nothing to spend the dice on and you have just free side actions to waste then you need to, er, maybe, try some different card combinations. Unless that's your plan. Then awesome.

I truly feel there is a perfect situation for every card in Ashes. Some situations just occur a LOT less than others to make the card itself all that useful. As much as I want Expand Energy to be reasonable I just haven't found a place for it. My best creation so far involves Law of Sight so you get rid of those awkward pauses waiting to use a reaction. It's still just ok… Internet, prove me wrong! Heyo and gl!

About the Author

Jerod Leupold has been an avid gamer and advocate for over 30 years. He cut his teeth on the business side by founding and running Critical Hit Games in Iowa City for eight years before selling to excellent stewards. Now that he has time to take things like vacations he amuses himself by using his English degree and journalism background talking about game theory. He has been published under the Gamenomicon franchise for Party First RPG adventures and sourcebooks. As well as several articles about A Game of Thrones CCG and LCG back in the day. While he’s never hoisted a grand champion trophy he has been an innovator and bride’s maid an innumerable number of times.

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