

the order of the stick

the order of the stick is a popular webcomic series that has garnered a significant following due to its unique blend of humor, fantasy storytelling, and role-playing game parody. Created by Rich Burlew, the comic uses stick-figure art to tell an engaging narrative inspired by Dungeons & Dragons mechanics and fantasy tropes. This article explores the origins, storyline, characters, and cultural impact of the order of the stick, providing a comprehensive overview suitable for both newcomers and longtime fans. Additionally, the article examines how the comic balances intricate plot development with accessible humor, contributing to its enduring popularity. Readers will also find insights into the production process, thematic elements, and the community that surrounds the order of the stick. The following sections outline the key aspects of this webcomic series in detail.

- Origins and Creation
- Storyline and Worldbuilding
- Main Characters
- Art Style and Presentation
- Themes and Humor
- Fan Community and Cultural Impact
- Publication and Merchandise

Origins and Creation

The order of the stick was created by Rich Burlew and first launched in 2003 as a webcomic parodying tabletop role-playing games, especially Dungeons & Dragons. Burlew's inspiration stemmed from his own experiences as a gamer and storyteller, seeking to blend classic fantasy elements with witty commentary on role-playing game conventions. The minimalist stick-figure art style was initially chosen for simplicity but evolved to become a distinctive hallmark of the comic's identity. Over time, the order of the stick expanded beyond simple humor, developing a complex narrative with deep character arcs and worldbuilding. The series has been supported through various crowdfunding campaigns, ensuring its longevity and ability to maintain high-quality content.

Storyline and Worldbuilding

At its core, the order of the stick follows the adventures of a group of heroes attempting to defeat an evil lich named Xykon and prevent a catastrophic war in a fantasy realm. The plot intricately weaves traditional fantasy storytelling with meta-humor and references to RPG

mechanics such as character classes, alignment, and dice rolls. The world is rich with various factions, magical creatures, and lore that provide a textured backdrop for the characters' quests and conflicts. The narrative structure balances episodic humor with long-term story arcs, making it engaging for both casual readers and those invested in the unfolding drama.

Setting and Universe

The comic takes place in a fantasy setting reminiscent of classic Dungeons & Dragons campaigns, featuring kingdoms, dungeons, and magical landscapes. The universe incorporates elements like gods, demons, and powerful artifacts, enhancing the depth of the story. This setting allows for diverse plotlines ranging from political intrigue to epic battles.

Plot Development

The order of the stick is known for its carefully crafted plot that includes twists, character development, and escalating stakes. The storyline progresses through multiple story arcs, including the heroes' initial formation, their struggles against antagonists, and the exploration of their backgrounds and motivations.

Main Characters

The strength of the order of the stick lies in its memorable cast of characters, each designed to embody classic RPG archetypes while possessing unique personalities and flaws. The characters often break the fourth wall and humorously critique their own roles within the story and game mechanics.

Roy Greenhilt

Roy is the leader of the order, a human fighter characterized by his dedication to heroism and occasional moral rigidity. His character development explores themes of leadership, responsibility, and the burdens of being a hero.

Elan

Elan is a chaotic bard known for his wit and unpredictability. His antics provide much of the comic relief while also highlighting the role of luck and chance in the story's progression.

Other Notable Members

- Vaarsuvius, the enigmatic elven wizard with a complex past

- Belkar Bitterleaf, the chaotic halfling ranger with a penchant for violence
- Durkon Thundershield, the steadfast dwarven cleric devoted to his deity
- Elan's companions and various supporting characters that enrich the narrative

Art Style and Presentation

The order of the stick is distinguished by its simplistic stick-figure art style, which contrasts with the depth of its storytelling. This minimalism emphasizes dialogue and plot over detailed visuals, allowing for quick updates and focusing reader attention on character interactions and humor. The comic uses color strategically to differentiate characters, settings, and moods. Despite its apparent simplicity, the art effectively conveys action sequences, emotional moments, and comedic timing.

Visual Techniques

Rich Burlew employs various visual techniques such as dynamic panel layouts, expressive stick-figure poses, and symbolic imagery to enhance the narrative. The use of text boxes, speech bubbles, and visual gags complements the storytelling and engages readers in multiple ways.

Themes and Humor

The order of the stick masterfully combines humor with serious themes, making it both entertaining and thought-provoking. The comic satirizes role-playing game tropes, player behaviors, and fantasy clichés while addressing deeper topics such as morality, sacrifice, and friendship.

Satire and Parody

Many jokes arise from the subversion of typical RPG expectations, including character classes, alignment debates, and game mechanics. The comic often breaks the fourth wall, acknowledging its own medium and audience.

Serious Undertones

Beyond humor, the series explores complex themes like the nature of good and evil, the cost of heroism, and redemption. These elements provide emotional depth and character growth throughout the story.

Fan Community and Cultural Impact

The order of the stick has cultivated a passionate and active fan community that contributes to its longevity and popularity. Fans engage through forums, fan art, role-playing campaigns, and social media discussions. The comic's influence extends to inspiring other creators in webcomics and gaming culture.

Community Engagement

Rich Burlew maintains communication with fans through updates, crowdfunding platforms, and conventions. This interaction fosters a strong relationship between creator and audience, enhancing the overall experience.

Legacy and Influence

The order of the stick is recognized as a pioneering webcomic that successfully blends humor with complex storytelling. Its impact is evident in the rise of similar works that combine gaming culture with narrative depth.

Publication and Merchandise

In addition to the online comic, the order of the stick has been published in several print volumes, allowing fans to collect and enjoy the series offline. Merchandise such as posters, apparel, and gaming accessories is also available, supporting the creator and expanding the comic's reach.

Print Editions

Collected editions compile story arcs with additional content, including author commentary and bonus art. These volumes provide a convenient way for new readers to experience the series.

Merchandise and Crowdfunding

The success of crowdfunding campaigns has enabled the production of exclusive merchandise and special projects, contributing to the comic's sustainability and continued development.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'The Order of the Stick' about?

'The Order of the Stick' is a webcomic by Rich Burlew that parodies tabletop role-playing games, particularly Dungeons & Dragons, following a group of adventurers on a quest to stop an evil lich named Xykon.

Who are the main characters in 'The Order of the Stick'?

The main characters include Roy Greenhilt, the lawful good human fighter and leader; Elan, the chaotic good elven rogue; Vaarsuvius, the neutral good human wizard; Durkon Thundershield, the lawful good dwarven cleric; and Haley Starshine, the chaotic neutral human ranger.

What art style is used in 'The Order of the Stick'?

The comic uses a distinctive stick-figure art style combined with detailed backgrounds and expressive character designs, which enhances its humorous and satirical tone.

How does 'The Order of the Stick' incorporate Dungeons & Dragons rules?

The comic frequently references and satirizes D&D mechanics, such as character classes, leveling up, combat rules, and alignment, often using them as plot devices or for humor.

Is 'The Order of the Stick' ongoing or complete?

As of 2024, 'The Order of the Stick' is ongoing, with new strips released regularly, continuing the story of the characters' adventures and battles.

Has 'The Order of the Stick' been published in print?

Yes, several volumes of 'The Order of the Stick' have been published in print, compiling webcomic strips into books along with extra content and artwork.

What themes are explored in 'The Order of the Stick'?

Beyond humor, the comic explores themes of friendship, heroism, sacrifice, morality, and the consequences of choices, often blending lighthearted moments with serious storytelling.

Additional Resources

1. *The Order of the Stick: On the Origin of PCs*

This graphic novel is the first volume in the Order of the Stick series, introducing readers to a group of adventurers in a Dungeons & Dragons-inspired world. The story blends humor, fantasy, and classic RPG tropes, following the party as they navigate challenges and battle an evil lich. Fans of role-playing games and witty storytelling will find this a delightful start to the saga.

2. *The Order of the Stick: No Cure for the Paladin Blues*

In this installment, the party faces new threats while dealing with personal struggles and moral dilemmas. The story deepens character development and explores themes of heroism and sacrifice. With its signature humor and clever dialogue, the book continues to charm fans of the series.

3. *The Order of the Stick: Start of Darkness*

This volume marks a darker turn in the series, as the heroes confront the rising power of their enemies. The stakes grow higher, and the narrative delves into the complexities of good versus evil. Readers will appreciate the blend of comedy and drama that keeps the story engaging.

4. *The Order of the Stick: On the Origin of PCs - Deluxe Edition*

This deluxe edition of the series' first volume includes additional artwork, behind-the-scenes commentary, and extended content. It offers fans a richer experience and deeper insight into the creation of the Order of the Stick universe. Collectors and new readers alike will enjoy this enhanced edition.

5. *The Order of the Stick: Dungeon Crawl'n' Fools*

A humorous side story set within the Order of the Stick universe, this book parodies classic dungeon-crawling adventures. It features new characters and situations while maintaining the series' trademark wit. It's a fun read for those who love RPG humor and clever satire.

6. *The Order of the Stick: War and XPs*

This volume focuses on the escalating conflict between the heroes and the forces of evil. The narrative balances intense action sequences with the series' characteristic comedic moments. Fans will appreciate the continued character growth and plot development.

7. *The Order of the Stick: The Stick Must Die*

A pivotal book in the series, it delivers significant plot twists and emotional moments. The story challenges the heroes in unexpected ways and tests their resolve. Readers will find this installment both thrilling and heartfelt.

8. *The Order of the Stick: Don't Split the Party*

This collection of short stories and side adventures expands the Order of the Stick world. It offers deeper looks into secondary characters and humorous episodic tales. Perfect for fans seeking more content beyond the main storyline.

9. *The Order of the Stick: The Guild Codex*

An in-universe guidebook, this book provides detailed information about the various guilds, classes, and lore within the Order of the Stick world. It serves as a companion piece for dedicated fans and tabletop RPG enthusiasts. The Codex enriches the reading experience with its comprehensive world-building.

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