

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a Victorian world that is both familiar yet more fantastical than our own. It is an age of sorcery and steam, where Eldren magicians walk the streets alongside Dwarf engineers, and wyverns fly alongside airships. Explorers map the globe, uncovering ancient secrets often best left forgotten. It is a world of high adventure for those with the curiosity and constitution to seek their fortunes.

The year is 1856. The Crimean War is in full swing, with Russian magicians proving that, whilst waning, the age of magic is not yet over. India suffers under corporate rule. A fractured America teeters on the edge of civil war. Spiritualists contact the spirits of the dead, while angels war in Heaven.

This is a world of high adventure, where danger lurks in shadowy alleys and brightly lit parlours. Aetheric energies fuel monstrous engines, and ancient mysteries lie buried beneath concrete and steel. Empires expand and many parts of the map are still marked 'unknown'. It is a world in need of adventurers.

Welcome to *Victoriana*. We've been waiting for you.

A ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF HIGH ADVENTURE...

Victoriana is a role-playing game set in a fantastical 19th century. You take on the role of an intrepid adventurer who breaks free from the conventions of society to right the evils of the world. Thankfully, your adventurer doesn't have to do this alone; he or she is part of a league of like-minded individuals who understand that it's often useful to have someone watching your back when you confront dastardly villains!

Of course, it is entirely possible that you're wondering just what a 'role-playing game' is. Unlike traditional boardgames with game boards and playing pieces, a role-playing game primarily takes place in your imagination.

Your 'playing piece' is an adventurer, a fictional character you design by making choices and recording them on a piece of paper, known as an 'adventurer sheet.' You determine her social class, her background, her skills, her talents, and even her mode of dress and the articles she carries.



During the course of an evening's play, you determine what actions your adventurer takes; your choices are only limited by your imagination. You typically have other players at the table as well, each playing an adventurer in this fantastical Victorian world.

Unlike traditional games, you don't play against each other. Instead, one of the players, the Gamesmaster, creates the adventure and presents it to the rest of the group. She also takes on the roles of any other characters that appear in the adventure. You and the other players work together to accomplish the goals that the Gamesmaster has set before you. The trials and tribulations are different each time, and your adventurer's story grows with each adventure, whether she succeeds or fails.

Now, what's a game without rules? You hold in your hand all of the guidelines necessary to play a game of *Victoriana*. It may seem a bit daunting at first but don't worry, most of what you'll need is in the adventurer generation section. You'll also have the guiding hand of the Gamesmaster and, perhaps, other experienced players to help you along.

Hopefully, by the time you've generated your first adventurer, you'll discover that she is more than a collection of lists and numbers. She'll have a name, a personality, and a place in the world, all determined by you and the choices you make for her.

The rest of the game is dedicated to the challenges she'll face. There are rules for navigating society functions, fighting ruffians, using magic, building machines and racing across rooftops. Don't worry about absorbing all of this information to start with; these sections are tools for the Gamesmaster in helping you bring your adventures to life!

...IN A FANTASTICAL WORLD OF SORGERY AND STEAM

From a respectable distance, *Victoriana* presents our mid-19th century in broad strokes. Europe is embroiled in the Crimean War, the United States of America expands across the continent, and Japan opens trade with the West. London is the 'centre of the world' and the sun never sets on the British Empire.

That aside, *Victoriana* is much more than a mere copy of our own historical Victorian era. For starters, the Humans of *Victoriana* are merely one subspecies amongst many,

sharing their world with a number of others, including aristocratic Eldren, industrious Dwarves and muscular Ogres.

Unlike in many fantasy worlds, however, these subspecies are fully integrated into *Victoriana's* nations and societies. Whilst it is indeed true that the Eldren tend to be in the highest stations while the Beastfolk barely scrape by at the bottom, you would be hard-pressed to find such a thing as a 'Dwarf Nation' or 'Gnome Association.' A person is primarily defined by her social class rather than her ancestry.

Second: *Victoriana* is a world of magic. While the great age of sorcery is over, there are many that still tap into the aether. Clairvoyants read auras and predict the future. Conjurers brew potions and enchant clothing. Hermeticists throw bolts of aetheric energy and heal with a touch. Demonologists summon dark powers for personal gain.

Third: *Victoriana* is a world of steam. As magic wanes, science rises to take its place. The industrial revolution is in full swing. Scientists and engineers create new marvels that emulate the magic of old and redefine the way people work and live. Perhaps ironically, magic helps to fuel many of these new wonders, empowering engineers to build ever more complex and wondrous machines.

Fourth: *Victoriana* is a world of horror. While technology reshapes the globe, occult horrors still lurk just beyond the gaslights. Necromancers create undead armies whilst calling on the power of forgotten gods. Dangerous beasts lurk in the sewers and the countryside. Some of these creatures have adapted to the new world, combining preternatural abilities with clockwork and steam.

Finally, and most importantly, *Victoriana* is a world of fantastical adventure. Someone needs to protect the world from horrors magical, scientific and mundane. Someone needs to ensure that ancient, powerful artefacts don't fall into the wrong hands. Someone needs to bring justice to those who aren't able to protect themselves.

That 'someone' is the adventurer, who is unafraid of the challenges that await her. Luckily, she is usually able to find like-minded associates to aid her in her causes. Perhaps, in the end, the odds are still stacked against her, but she wouldn't have it any other way.

THE DISTORTED LOOKING GLASS OF HISTORY

Of all the changes between this edition of *Victoriana* and its predecessors, the one likely to garner the most attention is the resetting of the game year to 1856. This is not a change that was made lightly and we weighed the pros and cons for quite some time, before ultimately deciding that the world of *Victoriana* belongs in the mid-1850s rather than 1867.

In many ways, this change is a natural evolution. The First Edition firmly set *Victoriana* in a fantasy world which resembled our own, but collapsed together many events that took place throughout the Victorian era, planting them in a fictional 1867. The Second Edition took a harder approach to actual history but left the original anachronisms intact. With the Third Edition, we wanted to pay homage to both previous versions; we wanted to present the world that the First Edition gave us while strengthening its ties to actual history.

Now, being a world of sorcery and steam, some historical deviation is to be expected. While most of the major dates and events in history are as we remember, some of the details have changed. For this we've taken the conceit that the fantastic magic and science of *Victoriana* tend to balance themselves as far as the overall flow of history is concerned; the changes remind us that this is still a fantasy world and anything can happen.

We hope that this conceit makes it easier for Gamesmasters to do research for their campaigns and insert key historical figures and events into them. We also hope that it aids the players' immersion in the game, as they won't have to adjust their perceptions of the time period according to *Victoriana's* historical deviations.

If you are a long-time fan of *Victoriana* and prefer the 'fantasy 1867' of the previous editions, then by all means continue to use it! You may have to adjust the odd date here and there in the new supplements, but for the most part there will be little substantive difference, as the previous editions' present maps pretty well with the current world of the Third Edition.

This change should have little to no impact on previously published support products.

BEING AN ADVENTURER

Adventurers are a breed apart - they aren't afraid to step outside their social roles and expectations to do what needs to be done. Realising that there is only so much each can do alone, adventurers often band together in associations to combat specific types of threats.

Your association may be a society of explorers, travelling the world in search of new lands, forgotten treasures and ancient evils. Or it may revolve around a private investigation firm, solving potentially scandalous cases and ensuring that the guilty go to trial while the often-framed innocent remain free.

Then again, it may track down demonologists, necromancers and other practitioners of the Maleficium, facing demons and other vile creatures from the Pale. Or your association

may work for Her Majesty, ferreting out threats to the Crown and destroying the steam-driven monstrosities that would-be rulers and revolutionaries create.

While united in purpose, the adventurers who comprise each association are varied in their individual capabilities. Some adventurers wield ancient and powerful magics, enchanting talismans or manipulating aetheric energies. Other adventurers are master craftsmen and engineers, designing and building machines on the cutting edge of technology. Still others move through society circles, using their charm and wits to discover secrets and uncover conspiracies. Finally, there are those adventurers who can simply be relied upon to lend a strong hand or a steady aim while always maintaining a stiff upper lip, no matter what the danger.

In short, there are an endless number of ways in which your adventurer can make her mark in *Victoriana*.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

In order to properly enjoy a game of *Victoriana* you're going to need a few things besides this volume. The first, of course, are a few friends and a healthy dose of imagination.

With that sorted, the list of other requirements is mercifully short:

- Each player needs an adventurer sheet in either digital or physical form. There is a blank adventurer sheet included in this volume; it may either be photocopied or printed out. You'll also find a downloadable adventurer sheet on **Cubicle 7's** website (www.cubicle7.co.uk).
- If using physical paper, each player also needs a pencil and scrap paper for jotting down notes or amending the adventurer sheet.
- You also need several dice. *Victoriana* uses standard six-sided (cube) dice and it's even better if you have two colours of them, one to represent normal rolls and one to represent black dice (more on those later). While you could play with as little as one die, we recommend at least 12 normal dice and 12 black dice. Normally, you roll a die and count a '1' or '6' as a success. Notations of 'xD' mean that you roll x dice and add the pips together.
- Unless you plan to play via the internet, you need a place to play. A table and chairs is the traditional setting for role-playing games, but any comfortable arrangement will do.
- The Gamesmaster needs an immense imagination and perhaps a few notes to facilitate play. **Cubicle 7** publishes several full adventures, such as **Streets of Shadow**, that the Gamesmaster can adapt to her needs.
- While not strictly necessary, you may want to use music and props. Miniatures on a map board can aid in visualising a scene, while appropriate music can set a mood. If you can light your room via dim lighting then so much the better!

RACE, RELIGION AND SEX IN VICTORIANA

Victoriana takes place in an era where bigotry and prejudice against various groups of people are overt. These can be quite sensitive topics for some gaming groups (as they are to us!) and should always be handled with care. *Victoriana's* unique spin on history influences these themes as well.

In *Victoriana*, there is one sentient species but various subspecies, all of whom are genetically compatible. One's breeding (a combination of social class and subspecies) is very important in *Victoriana* society, more-so than the colour of one's skin. This is not to say that racism doesn't exist, but an English visitor to America would likely be more horrified to see an enslaved African Eldren working in the fields than an Ogre or Orc, even if she disapproves (as she should!) of slavery in general.

Religion also takes a different form. Given that *Victoriana* makes certain suppositions about the true nature of the universe, we felt it appropriate to create new religions that echo those of the real world rather than modify the existing ones. It cannot be stressed enough, for example, that the Aluminat is not Christianity and that the Followers of the Word is not Islam; they are fantasy religions that simply borrow familiar elements. Ultimately, each religion in *Victoriana* gets some universal truths correct; no one religion is 'right.'

Finally, *Victoriana* treats female adventurers with much more respect than would normally be afforded them in the Victorian era. Players should be able to fully participate in *Victoriana* adventures regardless of their adventurers' gender. This is not to say that a female adventurer won't raise eyebrows when she steps outside of traditional expectations, but this should be handled as role-playing flavour to enhance a scene.

THE ORGANISATION OF THIS EDITION

The Third Edition of *Victoriana* is divided into five books. The first book, the 'Encyclopaedia *Victoriana*,' introduces the setting and is written 'in character.' Here we detail the society, religion and technology of our alternative 1856. The second book, 'One's Full Measure,' illustrates how to design an adventurer to partake in this exciting world. The third book, 'Cogs and Wheels,' is the meat of the rules. Here you'll

find the rules for using skills, combat and other dramatic systems. The fourth book, 'Sorcery and Steam,' details how to handle magic use and technological inventions.

The final book, 'Trials and Tribulations,' is a guide for the Gamesmaster. It contains valuable advice on running *Victoriana* campaigns, as well as including a supporting cast of generic characters, creatures and monsters for you to insert into your adventures.

A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Every role-playing game has its own 'language' and *Victoriana* is no different. Here are a few commonly used terms in *Victoriana*.

ACTION

Anything that an adventurer says or does is considered an action.

ACTION ROLL

Also simply 'roll,' this is a number of dice (and black dice) rolled to determine the outcome of an action.

ADVENTURE or PENNY DREADFUL

A discrete scenario that has a clear objective. Depending on the complexity of the adventure and the length of a game session, an adventure may take one session or several to complete.

ADVENTURER

A character that is controlled by a player during a game. An adventurer is a fictional persona with her own abilities, strengths and weaknesses. A player tries to get into the mind of her adventurer, making choices based on that adventurer's personality whilst keeping in mind the goals of the adventure and campaign.

ASSOCIATION

The glue that binds adventurers together. Whether a large organisation or simply a group of adventurers in similar circumstances, an association highlights the types of challenges the adventurers are expected to overcome.

BLACK DICE

Dice that represent the difficulty of a task. Each success on a black die negates a success on the task roll.

CAMPAIGN or SHILLING SHOCKER

A series of adventures linked together with a common theme, overarching plot, or simply the presence of the same adventurers. In short, if the effects of a previous adventure can influence the next one (however minor), then they are part of a campaign.

CHARACTER

A being controlled by a gamer. Typically, player-controlled characters are distinguished as adventurers and Gamesmaster-controlled characters are supporting characters.

COMBAT SKILL

Any skill that involves physical damage to an opponent.

CONFLICT

A challenge that needs to be overcome either tactically (rolling dice) or dramatically (through role-play).

DICE POOL

The number of dice rolled for a task, usually equal to Attribute + Skill.

DICE POOL MODIFIER

Some tasks are easier than average due to circumstances. A dice pool modifier adds dice to a dice pool for such tasks.

DIFFICULTY

The ease or hardship involved in performing a task.

FOUL FAILURE

If you have any black dice remaining after your successes in a task have been negated, then you suffer a particularly bad failure.

GAME SESSION

Also simply 'session,' a game session is the amount of gaming that the Gamesmaster and players partake in, in a single sitting. While some sessions may be a few minutes or an entire weekend, most game sessions take place in the span of a few hours.

GAME TIME

The amount of time that passes for the adventurers, rather than the players. Sometimes game time moves faster than real time (for example, hand-waving the hours in which the adventurers sleep or take a locomotive from one place to the next) and sometimes game time can run slower than real time (such as determining what to do during a round). There are also times in which game time can match real time, such as during a social scene.

GAMER

Anyone participating in a game session; this includes the Gamesmaster and the players.

GAMESMASTER

The person at the gaming session that runs the players through an adventure. The Gamesmaster often creates the adventures herself, but may also use a published adventure.

HAND-WAVING

Glossing over a chunk of game time in which the adventurers are passively engaged.

PARTY

The term used for adventurers that share an adventure together.

PLAYER

A player controls a single adventurer (or more, if there are very few players) within a game session.

ROLE-PLAY

Generally, all actions taken by a player for her character is 'role-play,' but sometimes this term is used to denote acting one's way through a scene rather than relying on dice rolls.

ROUND

A period of game time, loosely 3 seconds. When a combat situation occurs, the action is organised in rounds.

RUN

When a Gamesmaster decides to take the players through one or more game sessions, then she is considered to be running a game.

SCENE

A part of an adventure that usually takes place in a single location and involves at least one conflict.

SOCIAL SKILL

Any skill that involves influencing an opponent.

SUPPORTING CAST

This is any character controlled by the Gamesmaster. It may be a shopkeeper, villain, preternatural beast, or even an animal.

TASK

Also known as a roll; this is an action that requires a dice roll (often Attribute + Skill) to determine success.

