



BRICK BY MAGICAL BRICK: BUILDING A FANTASY WORLD HANDOUT

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LEEDS Virtual LGBT+ Literature Festival | July 5–11, 2021

What even is worldbuilding?

Worldbuilding is where you, as the writer, are setting up where your story takes place. At the most intense level of worldbuilding, you're constructing an entire imaginary world—hence the name.

How is fantasy worldbuilding unique?

Fantasy is different than other kinds of worldbuilding because of the distinctly fantastical elements you get to play with. Namely, the magic and dragon element. The amount of worldbuilding depends on the type of fantasy you're writing. For example, high fantasy usually needs more worldbuilding elements than magical realism.

In fantasy worldbuilding, what should we focus on first?

Just like any element of writing, where you should focus on first really depends on you. I always say to start with what you're most excited about. Another way to think about this is figuring out what is most important, or different, about your world that you want to highlight.

Personally, I like to focus on the magic system. Why? Because it's expansive, it's unique to fantasy, and it's a way to really stretch your creativity. If you don't know where to start for your worldbuilding, I'd start with the magic!

Remember, you're basically creating a set of rules for your world to follow. They're guidelines that you can use to make sure everything you're writing is consistent. Doing so will also make the reader understand the world better and, in turn, make the world more believable.

Here are the eight elements you'll need to flesh out to create a believable world:

- **Creatures:** Here you'll think about what kind of animals roam your world, both the mythological beasts (like wyverns) and the everyday animals, even the types of pets your characters can have.
- **Magic:** This is where you'll brainstorm the magic system, the rules, who has magic, who doesn't, how do they get it, what do they use it for.
- **Geography:** These are things like the landscape, climates, plants, water, deserts. In fantasy, maps have become quite popular and can be a tool used to keep it all straight in your own mind and to help your readers.

- History: This is both the “big” history—like world wars—and the “little” history—like what happened in the country your characters are from, or the village they’re starting in.
- People: Who lives where and why, forming their culture and language, figuring out if they get along with their neighboring areas, their religion and what they value.
- Social hierarchy: Here, you’ll have to determine what kind of government you have, who rules and how, what kind of weapons they have if they go to war, how they deal with crime, politics, their laws.
- Business: Brainstorm what kind of jobs the people have in your world, things like transportation, science, technology, medicine, architecture, arts, etc.
- Everyday life: This is nitty gritty stuff like fashion and food and manners.

There’s so much to do, how do we not get overwhelmed?

- Start small. Start with a reference point of where your character is beginning their story and build out the world from there.
- Draw on other works for inspiration. Is there a fantasy story with a world you particularly love? Re-read that story and see how they build their worlds.
- Draw on real life. See if there’s a way to draw on real life to get you inspired. Visit areas associated with your world (like a stream or coffee shop) or Google locations to get inspiration. You can even use our own Earth governments and history to help build out your world.

How do we sprinkle all those fascinating elements into the story?

- Use your character point of view to narrow your focus.
- Ask “should my reader care about this?”
- Use dialogue.
- Show off different cultures through the characters your main character meets.
- Showcase your world while your characters are traveling.
- Show it off through food.
- Include little details to immerse your readers into the world.
- Don’t feel the need to include everything.

One final thought!

We have the incredible opportunity to create a whole new world from the ground up, and as fantasy writers, we can also play with the magic and dragon element of it all. So most of all, have fun with it!



Let’s Stay In Touch!

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