

YOUR BEST BOOK
World-Building Exercises:
Story World Q & A
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Exploring the physical world:

- What does it look like? How would you describe it to someone from out of town? Is it conventional—trees, grass, birds, cars—or something else entirely? If we're talking about a contemporary world, what part of the United States, climate, architecture, city identity, clean, dirty, affluent?
- What makes it different from any other place?
- Where do people dwell? Houses? Caves? Something not seen before?
- Are there strange creatures roaming around?
- Is it urban or rural? Some of both?
- What do people do for entertainment?
- What environmental resources are available?
- Is the world industrialized? What is produced?
- What's the climate like?
- Physiology of the population—body type, abilities, intellectual capacity. Do they breathe oxygen? Are they allergic to anything? How do they reproduce?
- Do people have pets?

Now move closer, think about your character's immediate world:

- What is her house like?
- Does she even have a house?
- Does your character have a job?
- How does he get there?
- What is traffic like?
- What kind of furniture, food in the refrigerator, ornaments in the yard, apps on the cell phone, clothes in the closet, clutter on the desk.
- What places does she frequent?
- Where would she never go?

Think about the emotional world:

- Do people express emotion here? Why or why not?
- Is it a culture of fear?
- What aspects of personality are most prized?
- What does your character struggle with?
- What drives her to action more than anything else?
- What other character vexes him most? Why?

- What would he/she never do?
- What would have to happen for him/her to do that thing?
- What is predictable about him?
- What would make him unpredictable or a risk-taker?

Finally, consider the sociological/political world:

- Are people happy, or angry, with the current state of things?
- What's the political system?
- Can people vote?
- Who is in power? How did he/she come to power?
- Is religion an influence?
- Can people walk freely around the world and make their own decisions or are they controlled in some way?
- How are resources managed?
- What jobs or roles are most respected?
- How important is money?
- How important is education?
- What is the attitude about sex?
- Where does discrimination or prejudice occur?
- Are children prized or devalued?

*Once you have a list of answers, challenge yourself to ask more rounds of questions or assign specific categories, explanations, etc. Describe political parties, religious philosophies, etc. Keep answering until you've been as specific as you can be, and you've examined areas of overlap, thought about the consequences/implications, etc.