

MY BEST WRITING ADVICE: LEARN HOW TO BUILD A WORLD FOR YOUR BOOK

Episode 217

LINDSAY'S TOP 10 ELEMENTS OF WORLD-BUILDING TO ENRICH YOUR STORIES (PART 1)

1. **Society:** What are the social structures—class, status, shared cultural values—of your story world? Do your characters accept these norms? Do they push against them? What likeminded groups band together within this world?
2. **History:** Before your story began, your story world existed. What happened before “page 1”? How does it affect the people living within your story? How does the history of your story world affect your current story society? Who was allowed to write the history books in your world, and how does that affect your character’s worldview?
3. **Government & Politics:** What type of government exists in your story world? If it’s a monarchy, where do your main characters sit within what is (likely) a rigid class system? If it’s a representative government what are the current powerful factions, and how do your characters feel about them? Do they live in a politically homogenous location?
4. **Economy:** What type of currency is used in your story world? What is the current state of the economy, and how has it affected the location where your characters live?
5. **Religion/Faith/Beliefs:** Is there a “religious norm” in your story world? Are your characters part of that? Are they outliers? How does the broader religious backdrop of your story world affect your characters’ inner spiritual lives?



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LINDSAY'S TOP 10 ELEMENTS OF WORLD-BUILDING TO ENRICH YOUR STORIES - PART 2

6. **Science/Education/Intellect:** How scientifically advanced is the culture of your story world? How free is access to education? How deeply is education valued (or not) in your world? What type of philosophers would (or did) come from your story world?

7. **Technology:** How advanced is the technology of your world? Is the specific place where your main character lives as technologically advanced as the rest of the world? More so? How does that affect their daily life, their work, their communication?

8. **Art:** What type of art is produced in your story world? Think of how deeply Renaissance art affected everything about the societies of the time. How does art—visual art, music, dance, handcrafts, storytelling, etc.—affect the culture in which your story takes place?

9. **Geography/Climate:** Think of the physical setting of your story world. Brainstorm a list of details about that physical setting using all five senses. What exists just beyond the borders of your character's domain?

10. **Magic/the Supernatural:** For those writing speculative fiction, does a supernatural element factor into your story world? If so, what are the rules of that power (the physics)? What are the limits to these powers? What is the source of the power? If you're not writing speculative fiction, does the real supernatural world take the stage in your story? How so?

