

# **World Building**

## **with Gregory A. Kompes**

### **All works of fiction (and many nonfiction) require world building**

From high fantasy to contemporary romance, from memoir to creative nonfiction, all books and stories require world building.

Why?

- Because we have to establish the unique world and its rules for the reader to become immersed in the story.
- Because each narrator sees the world uniquely.
- Because each character sees the world uniquely.

"You had to start wondering how the fresh water got in and the sewage got out... World building from the bottom up, to use a happy phrase, is more fruitful than world building from top-down."  
~Terry Pratchett

### **How do we create our worlds?**

#### **1. Characters**

- Human
- Fantastical
- Speaking animals
- Traits
- Abilities
- Genders: Norms/Rules/Laws

**How do your characters see and interpret their world?**

#### **2. Communication & Language(s)**

- Spoken language often shows region, education, socioeconomics, etc.
- Technology and availability (crows, owls, internet, phones, seers)
- Signs, gestures, etc.

### **3. Setting/Place**

- Geography
- Worlds
- Regions
- Geology
- Atmosphere
- Gravity
- Plants
- Animals
- Water
- Land

### **4. History**

- Personal/Character
- Greater: Community, Place, City, State, Nation, World(s)

### **5. Government**

- Federation, Empire, Theocracy, Feudal, Republic, Democracy, Confederation, Dictatorship, etc.?

### **6. Laws and Rules**

- Environment (more on this at end)
- Magic
- Science
- Societal Norms
- Culture
- Politics
- Manners
- Travel

**Consider how your characters interact in their world based on the rules.**

## **7. Power**

- Who is powerful in your world?
  - What makes them powerful? (Rules)
- Who is weak?
- Who wants to be powerful?

## **8. Technology**

- What technology in your world makes life more convenient for your characters?
- Are there any downfalls to using this technology?
- What is the most valuable technological item your hero owns? How do they use it?

## **9. Weaponry**

- Technology
- Power
- Who can/can't have?

## **10. Currency & Economics**

- World(s), Country, Community
- What is valued?
- System of exchange/barter
- Money/Credits
- Stock Markets/Exchanges
- Business

## **11. Food**

- Favorite foods (society/characters)
- Rituals
- Production
- Values

## **12. Religion(s)/Philosophy(s)**

- What are the major philosophies and religions of your world?
- What are the minor philosophies and religions of your world?
- How did these views develop? And over how long a period of time?
- What event(s) created these worldviews?
- What conflicts are there between the separate religion/philosophies or within them?

## **13. Rituals**

A few examples of rituals that say a lot about a culture:

- graduation or commencement ceremonies
- homecoming football games
- school dances
- Sadie Hawkins Day
- senior prom
- bar/bat mitzvah
- first communion
- baptism
- etc.

**Eight common traits of rituals:**

- gestures
- repeated actions
- symbolic celebrations
- connected to important events
- significant words spoken
- link to the past
- community activity