



World-Changing Worldbuilding

Use Your World to Challenge the Status Quo

Dani Abernathy



About Me

Dani Abernathy (she/her)

- Author Accelerator Certified Book Coach
- Enneagram Teacher
- Creator of the Rooted Writers Mentorship
- Live in Northwest Arkansas
- Love books, rainy days, and deep conversation
- Enneagram Four, INFJ, Capricorn & Manifesting Generator



My Mission

I help novelists write the stories they need to tell so their readers can feel seen and can see others.

I believe stories can change the world, one reader at a time, because they teach us to have more compassion for ourselves and others.

Stories are one of our most powerful tools for having less war and more love.





Today you will:

- Learn why fantasy can change the world
- Discover your connection to your novel
- Identify what your book is really about
- Understand how to build a purposeful world
- Gain practical tools
- Feel empowered to write a world-changing book

This is what fuels my mission of helping folks **write the stories they need to tell so their readers can feel seen and see others**. We need stories from people like you who are BIPOC, disabled, queer, Ace, trans, fat, neurodivergent, eXvangelical, or just trying your damned best to be a good person and make things a little bit better for everyone.

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A Workbook by Dani Abernathy

To download your Guide, go to File > Download

Find Your Driving Themes

Discover more about your connection to your novel in [this post I wrote for Jane Friedman](#).

What do you stand up for and defend?

What makes you sad or pisses you off?

What would you like to change about the world?

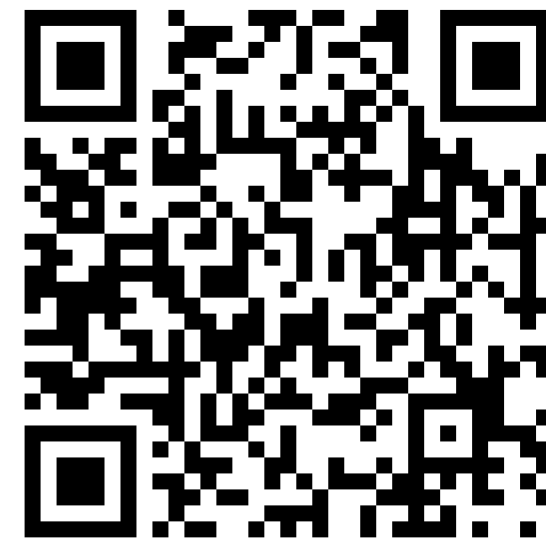
What would your perfect world look like?

Find Your Point

Hear me talk more about the point in [this #amwriting podcast episode](#).

Why is this story important to you?

When your ideal reader finishes your book, how do you want them to feel?



Get the Workbook

Includes additional resources

www.daniabernathy.com/fantasyweek24

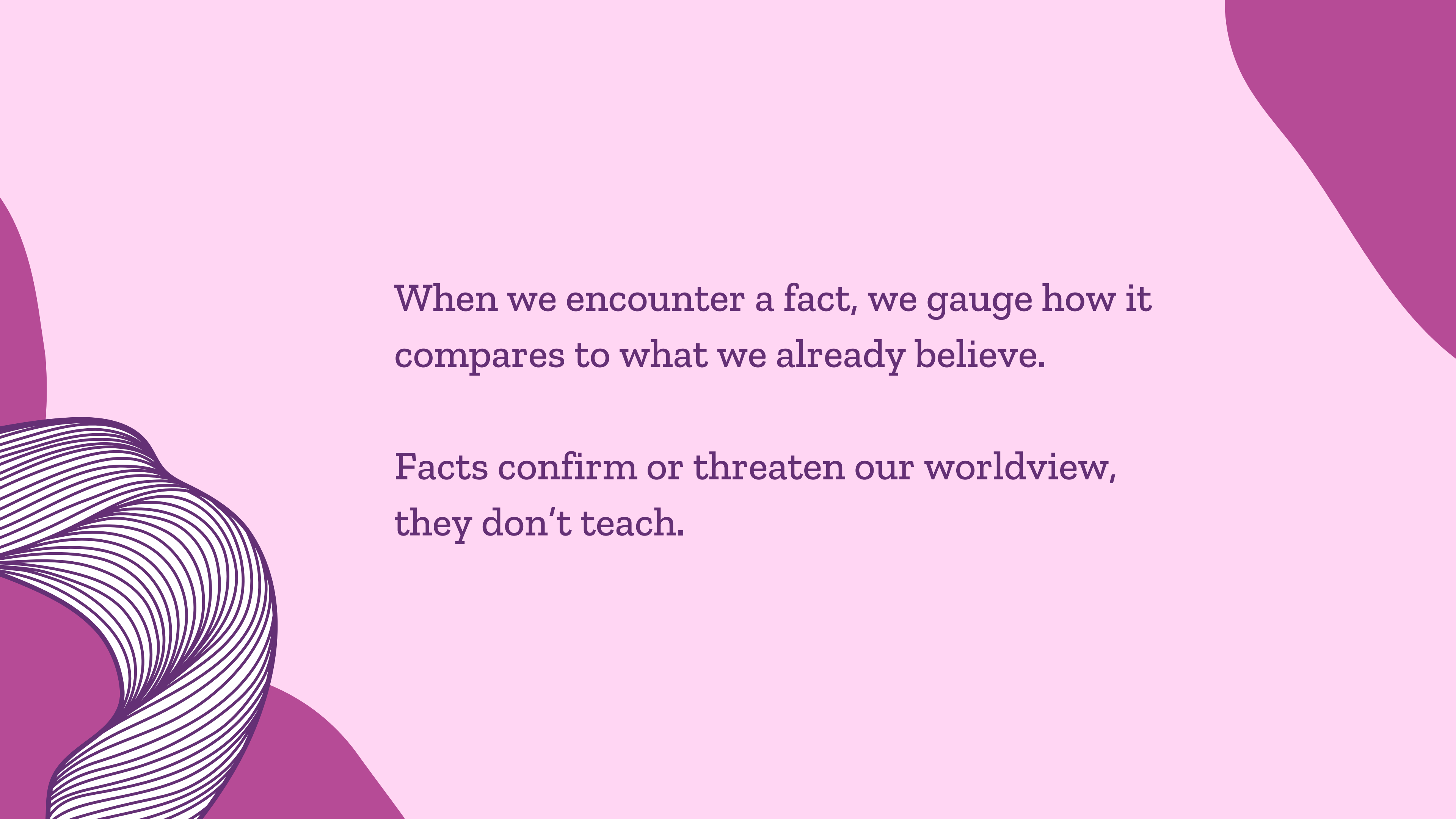


The Power of Story

Unpopular Opinion:

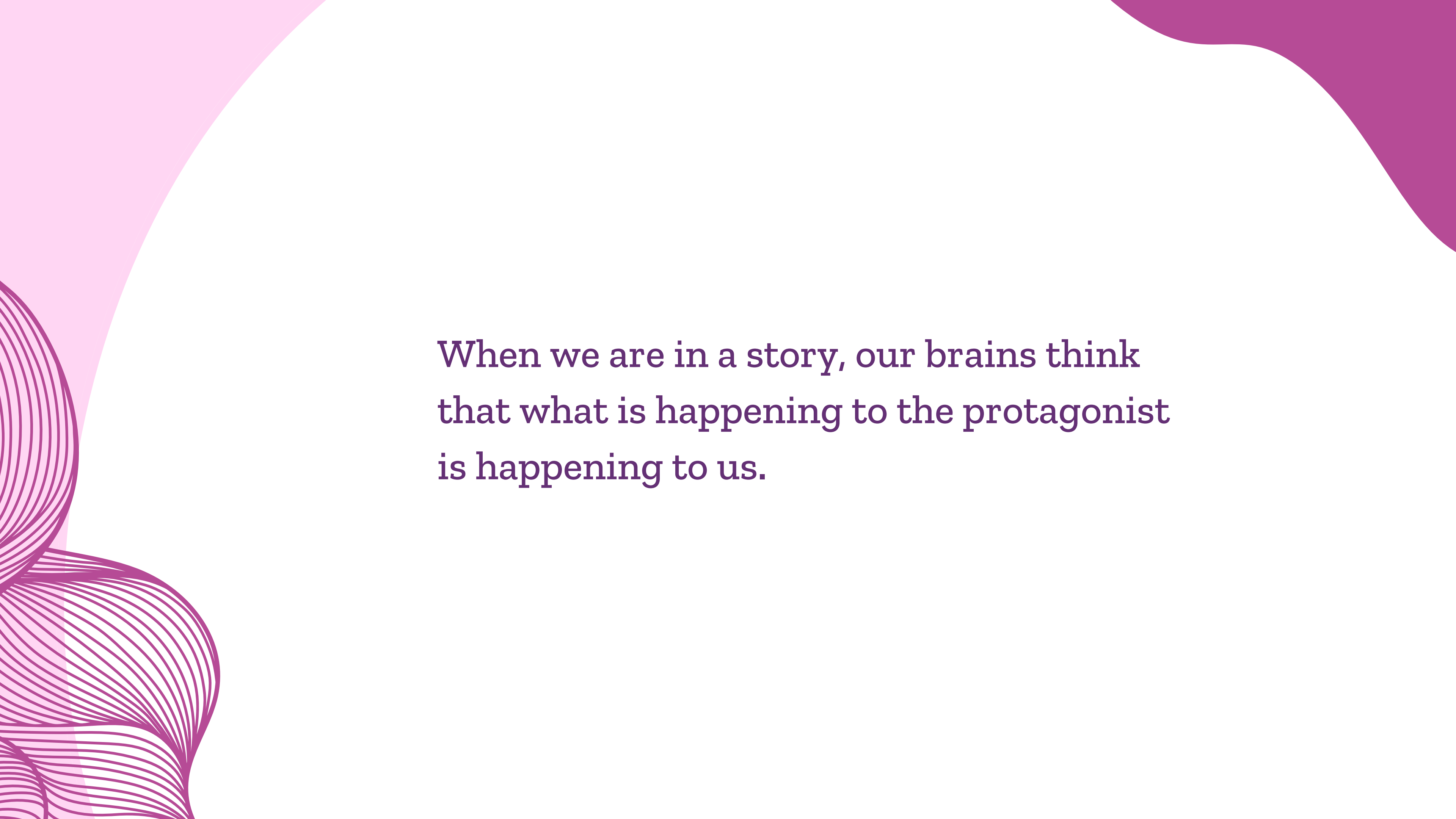
Fiction is a more effective teacher than non-fiction.






When we encounter a fact, we gauge how it compares to what we already believe.

Facts confirm or threaten our worldview, they don't teach.



When we are in a story, our brains think that what is happening to the protagonist is happening to us.



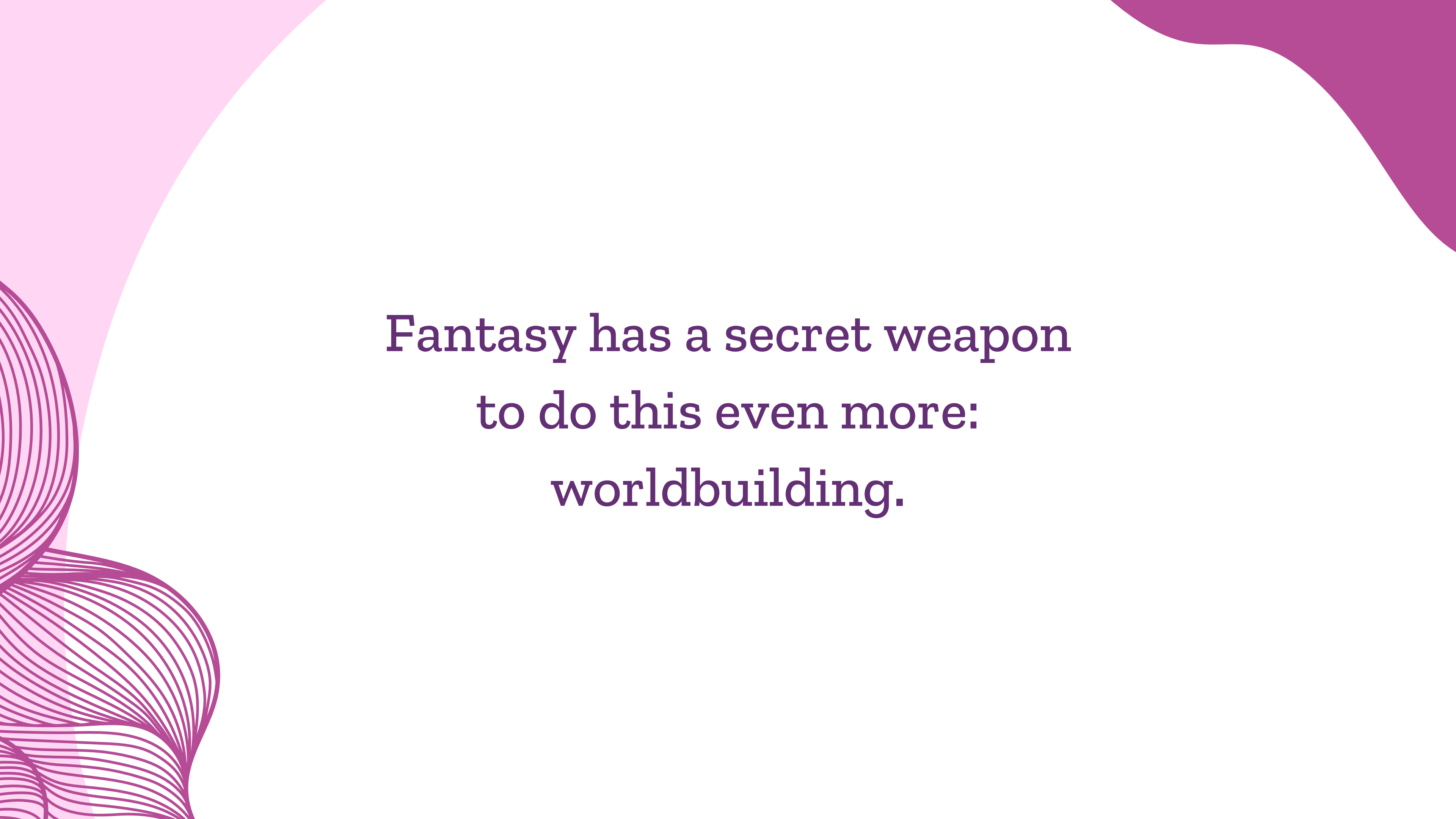
Facts strengthen our preexisting ideas.
Stories teach us new ideas.

If you want to change people through
your writing, tell a story.






This is why writing can be a form
of resistance and revolution.



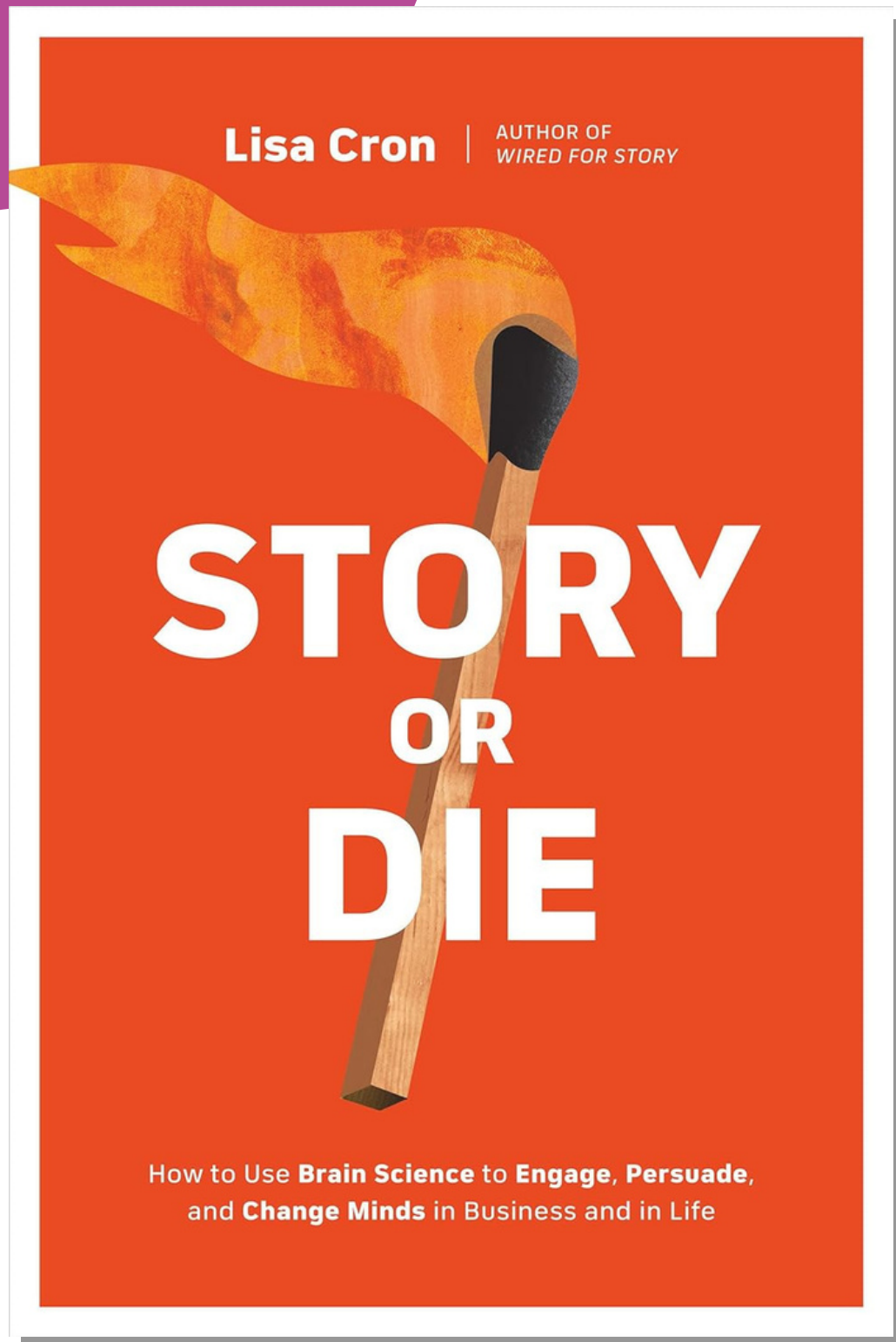
**Fantasy has a secret weapon
to do this even more:
worldbuilding.**



A purposefully designed world pulls the reader even further into the story and allows them to engage with difficult topics in less charged ways.



Not everyone wants to write a novel
that changes the world, and that's okay.



Recommended Reading

Story or Die

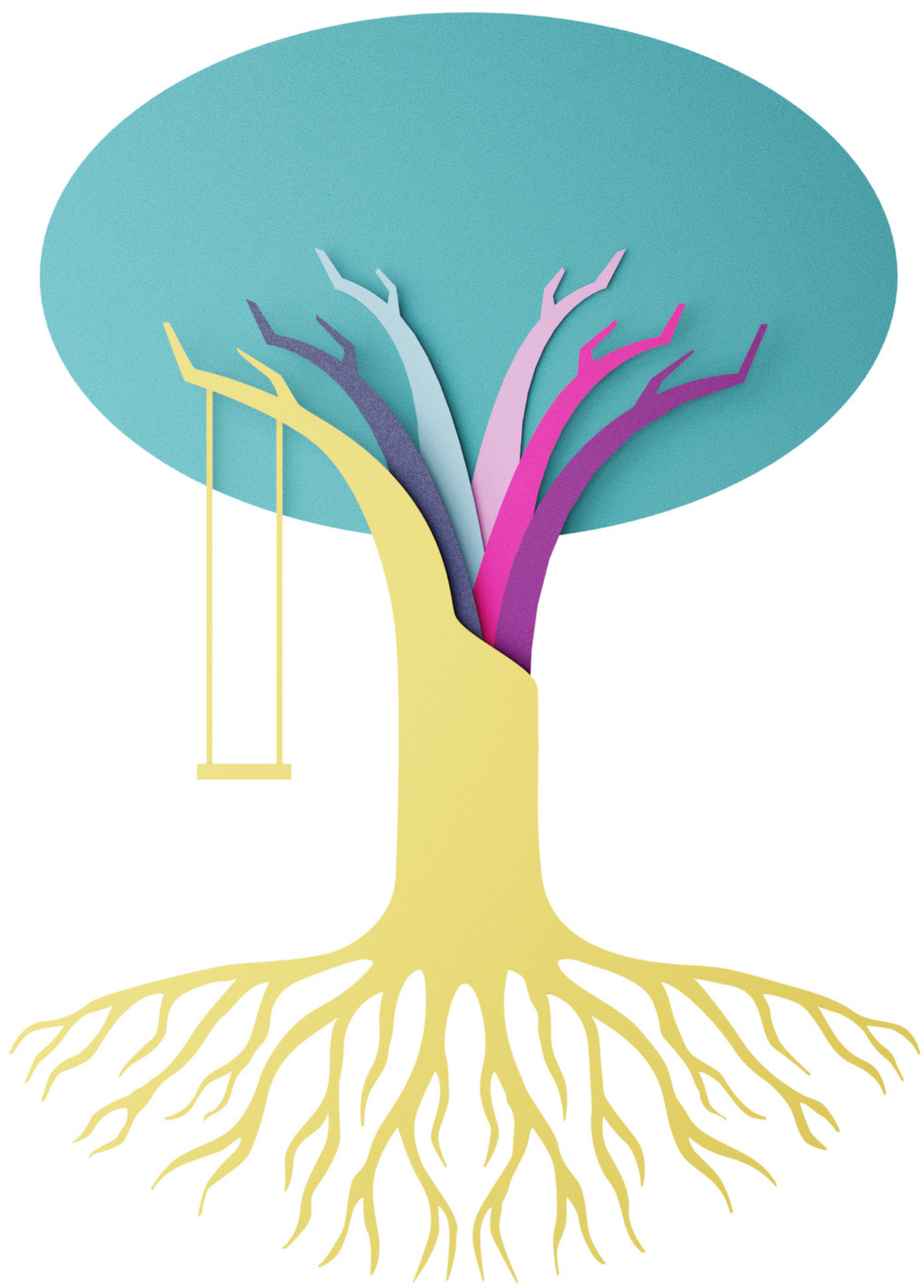
By Lisa Cron



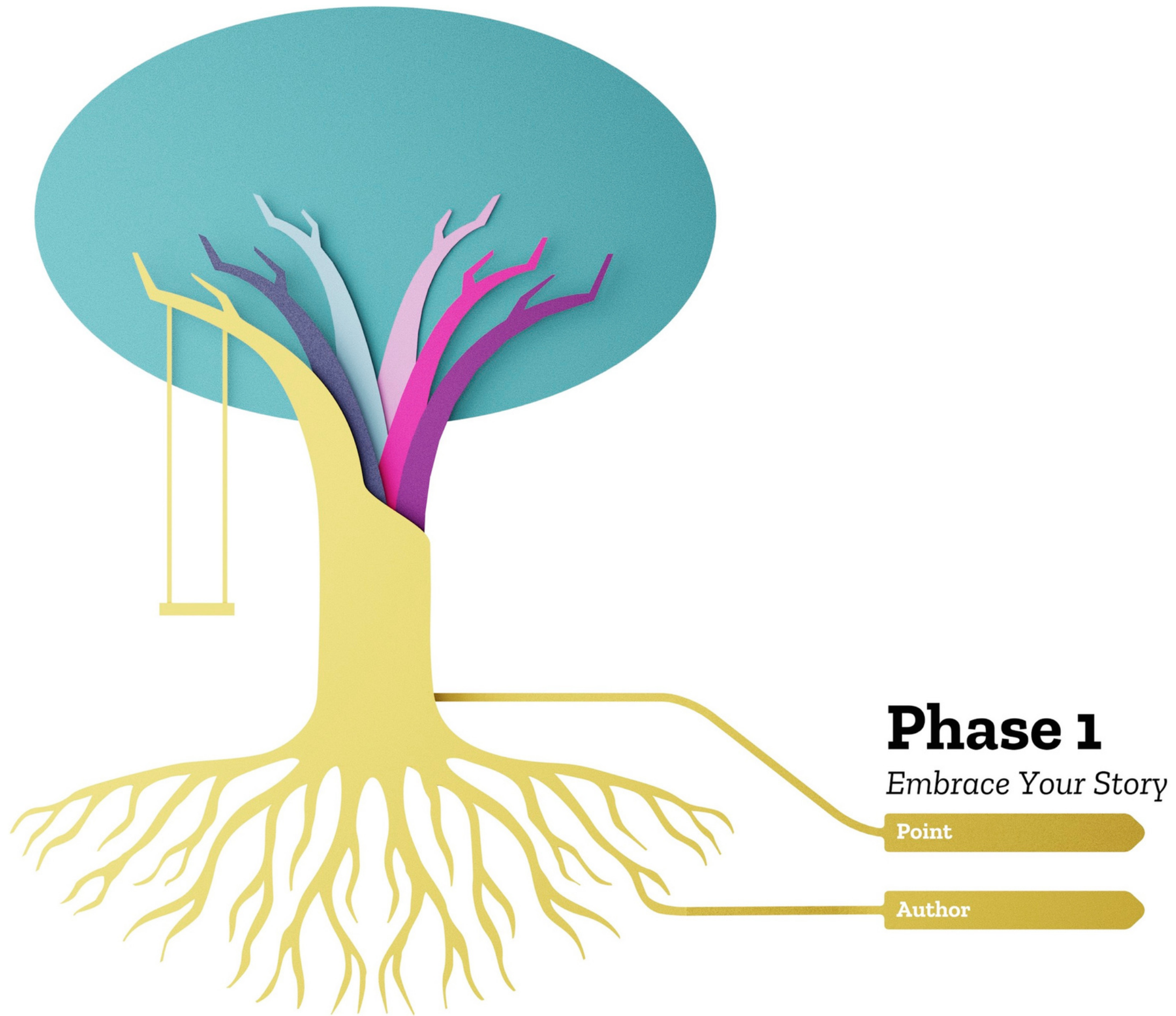
Change Begins in You



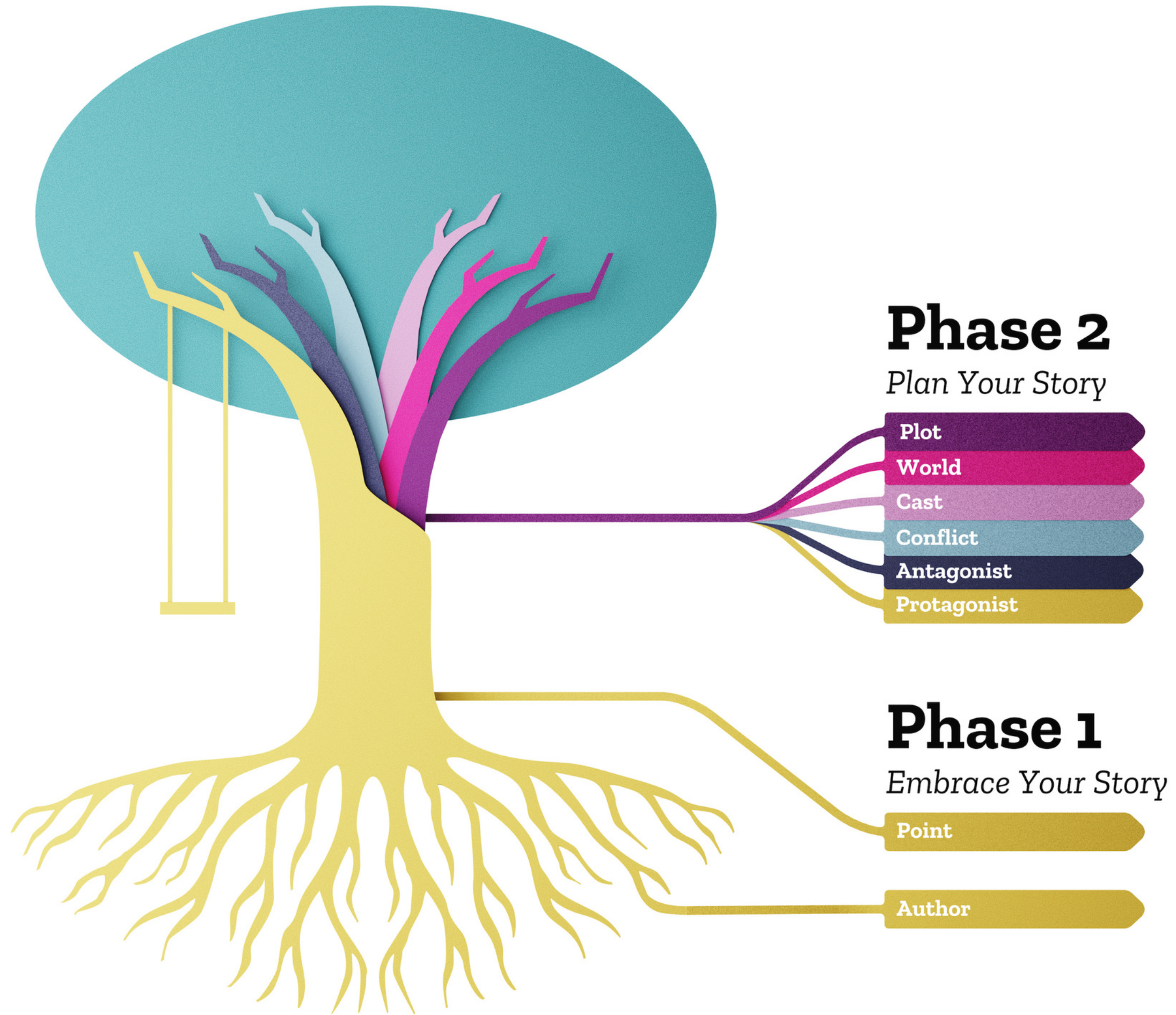
The Story Tree



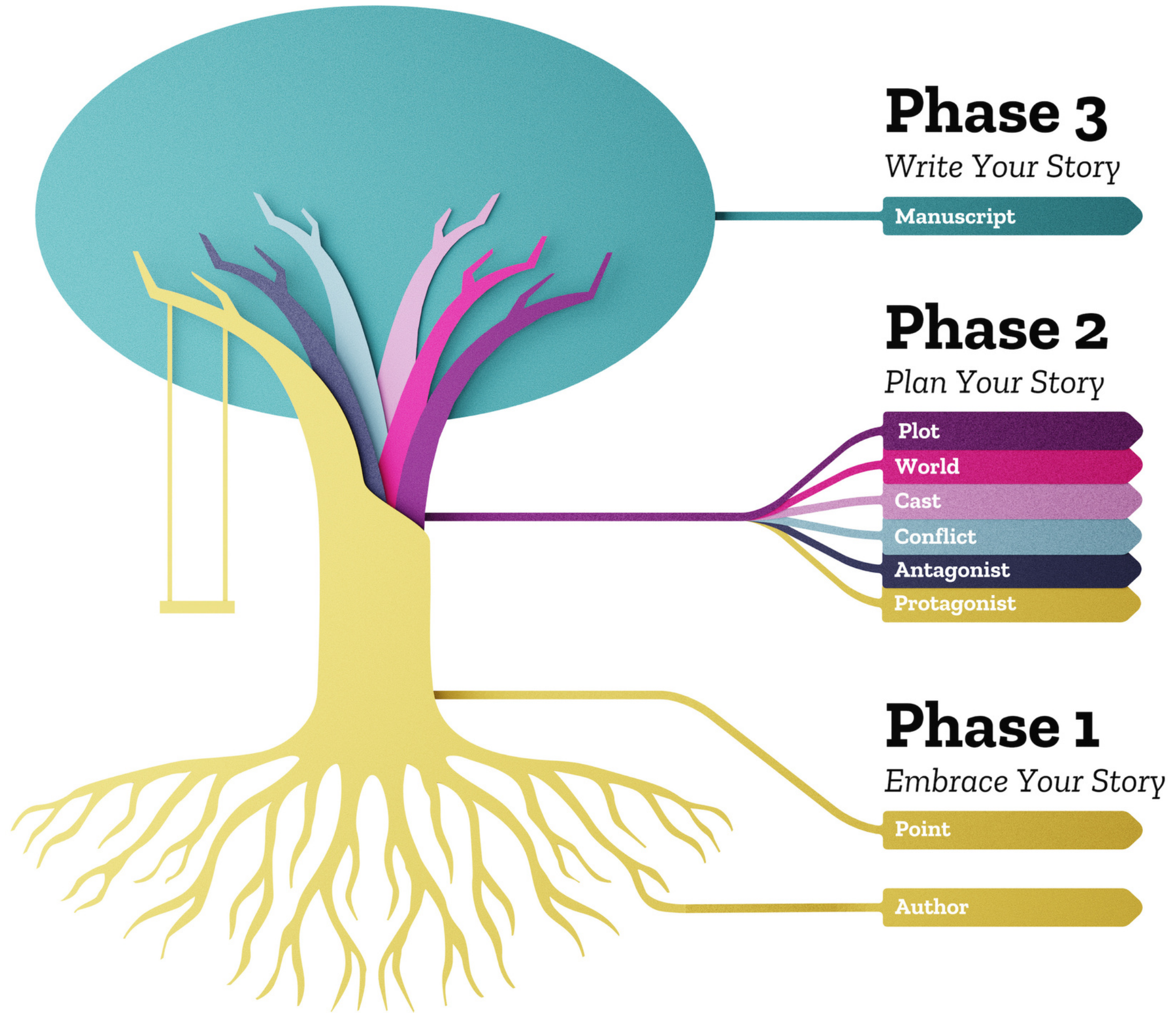
The Story Tree



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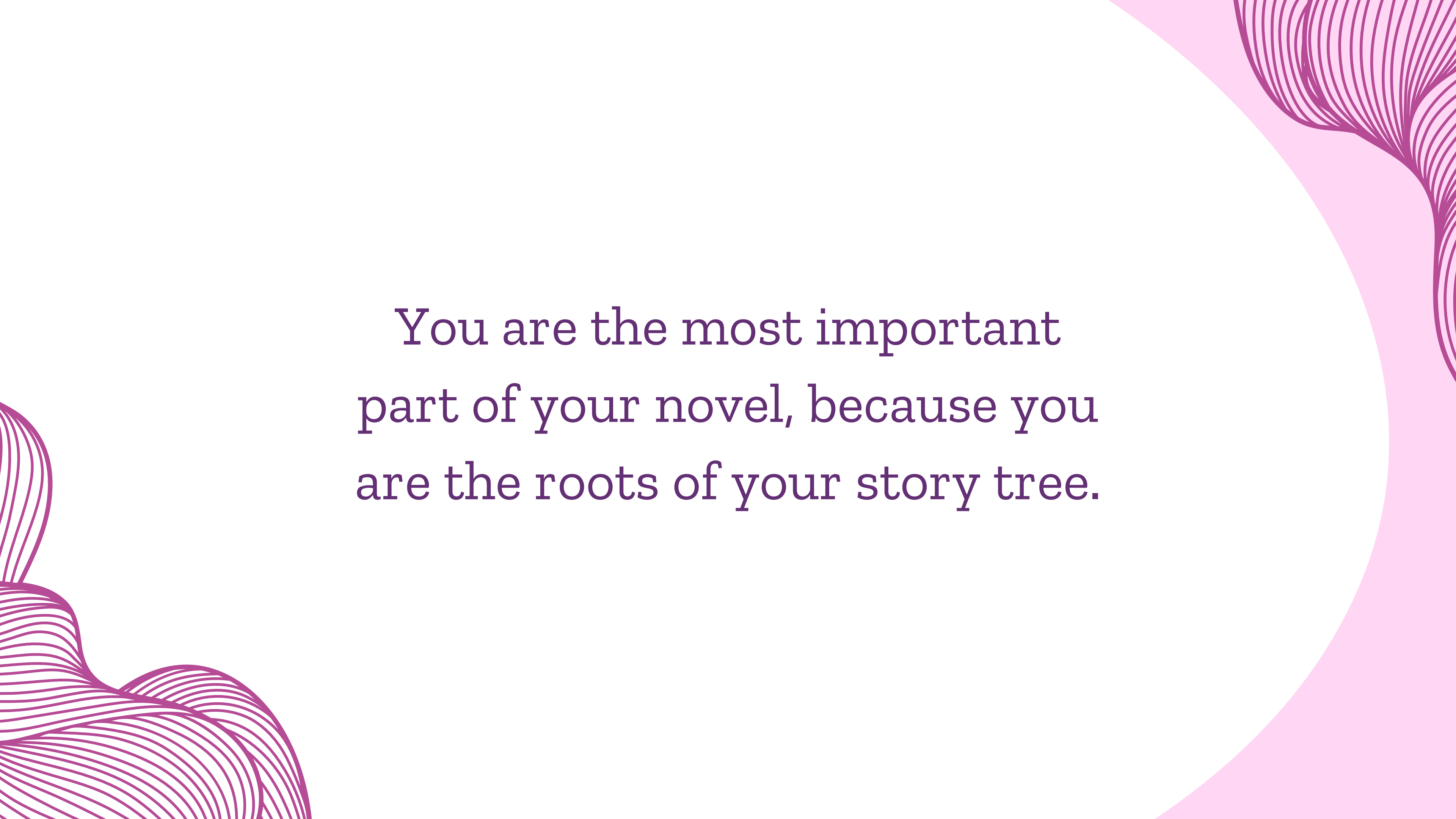


The Story Tree





Your novel's purpose begins by
embracing the YOU in your story.



You are the most important
part of your novel, because you
are the roots of your story tree.

What you care about determines
what you write.





What themes drive your writing?

You Might Write About...

- Gender equality
- Human rights
- Racism
- Imperialism
- Trans right
- Love
- Freedom of information
- Income equality
- Mental health
- Neurodiversity
- Ethical business practices
- Anti-fat bias
- Colorism
- Religious intolerance
- Racial stereotypes
- Abortion rights
- Religion
- Political systems
- Education
- Family
- Housing insecurity
- Capitalism
- Climate change
- Ableism

Find Your Driving Themes

1. What do you stand up for and defend?
2. What makes you sad or pisses you off?
3. What would you like to change about the world?
4. What would your perfect world look like?

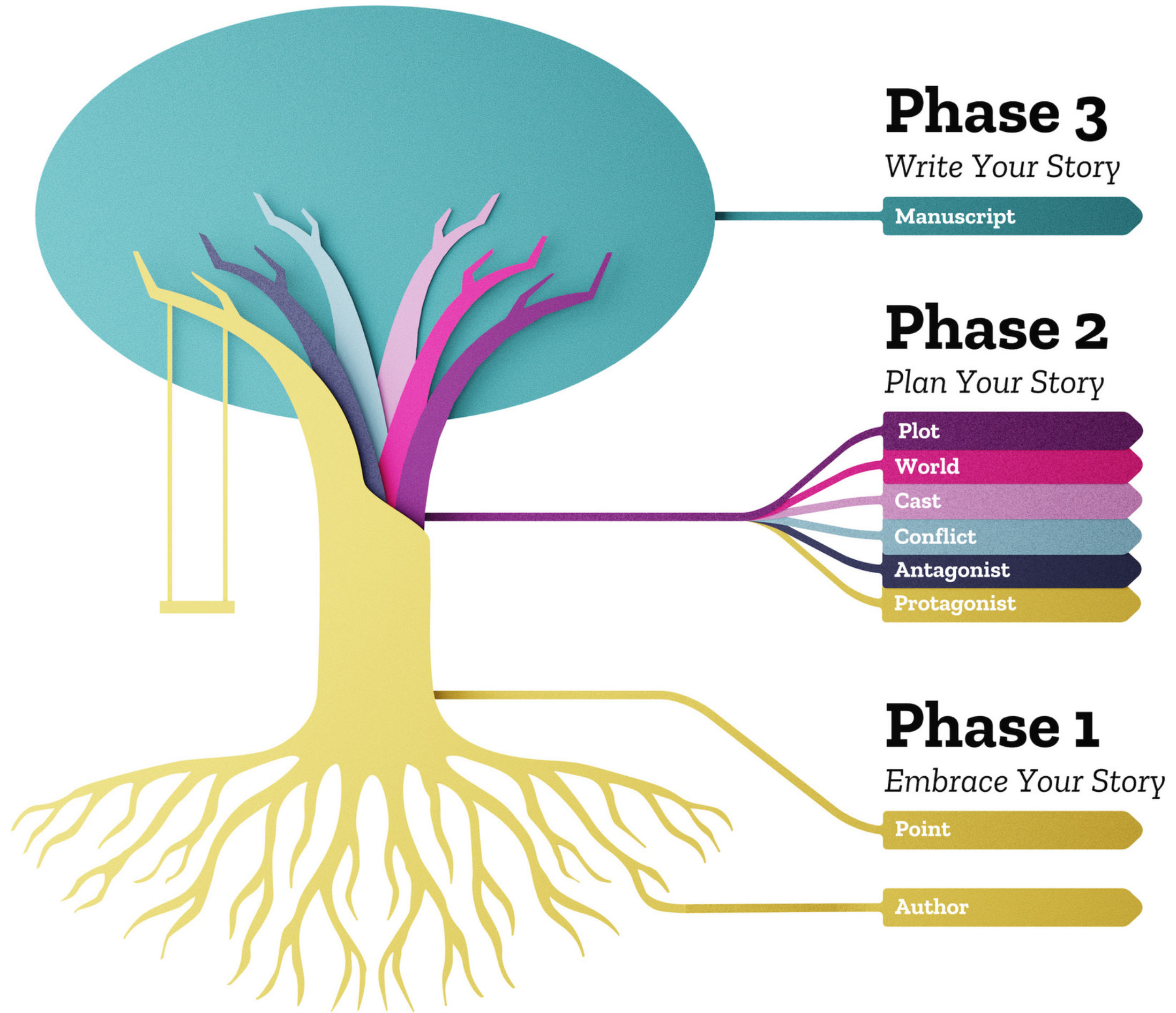




Name the Change You
Want to See



The Story Tree



The Point is the bridge between you
and the reader. It gives direction to
every part of your book.



What is a point?

What your novel says about the world
and how to live in it



Elements of a Good Point

- One or two sentences

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- Clear and powerful

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- Sums up your worldview or message



Elements of a Good Point

- One or two sentences
- Clear and powerful
- Sums up your worldview or message
- Reminds you of why you're writing this book

Examples of Points from Rooted Writers

- When darkness comes to claim us, leaders have the responsibility to stand in the light and stand firm, even to their own detriment.
- Love is the only thing powerful enough to bring down empires.
- Queer people are not disposable. The fight to live as a queer person is worth it, and queer love is worth sacrificing for.
- Only when you accept and embrace your own form of messy magic can you rally others and dismantle systems of oppression.
- When people transform virtuous beliefs into dogma, it can lead to judgement and even the kind of cruelty that becomes evil. Having the humility to recognize the limits of our understanding allows space for compassion.

Let your point be bold.

If you want to change the world through your novel, you have to know what you're trying to say about how things are and how they could be. Your point should make a statement.

Find Your Point

1. Why is this story important to you?
2. When your ideal reader finishes your book, how do you want them to feel?
3. What message do you want them to come away with?
4. Sum up your point in one or two sentences.



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Finding you point is hard.
Aim for a good-enough point.




Create a World that
Changes the World

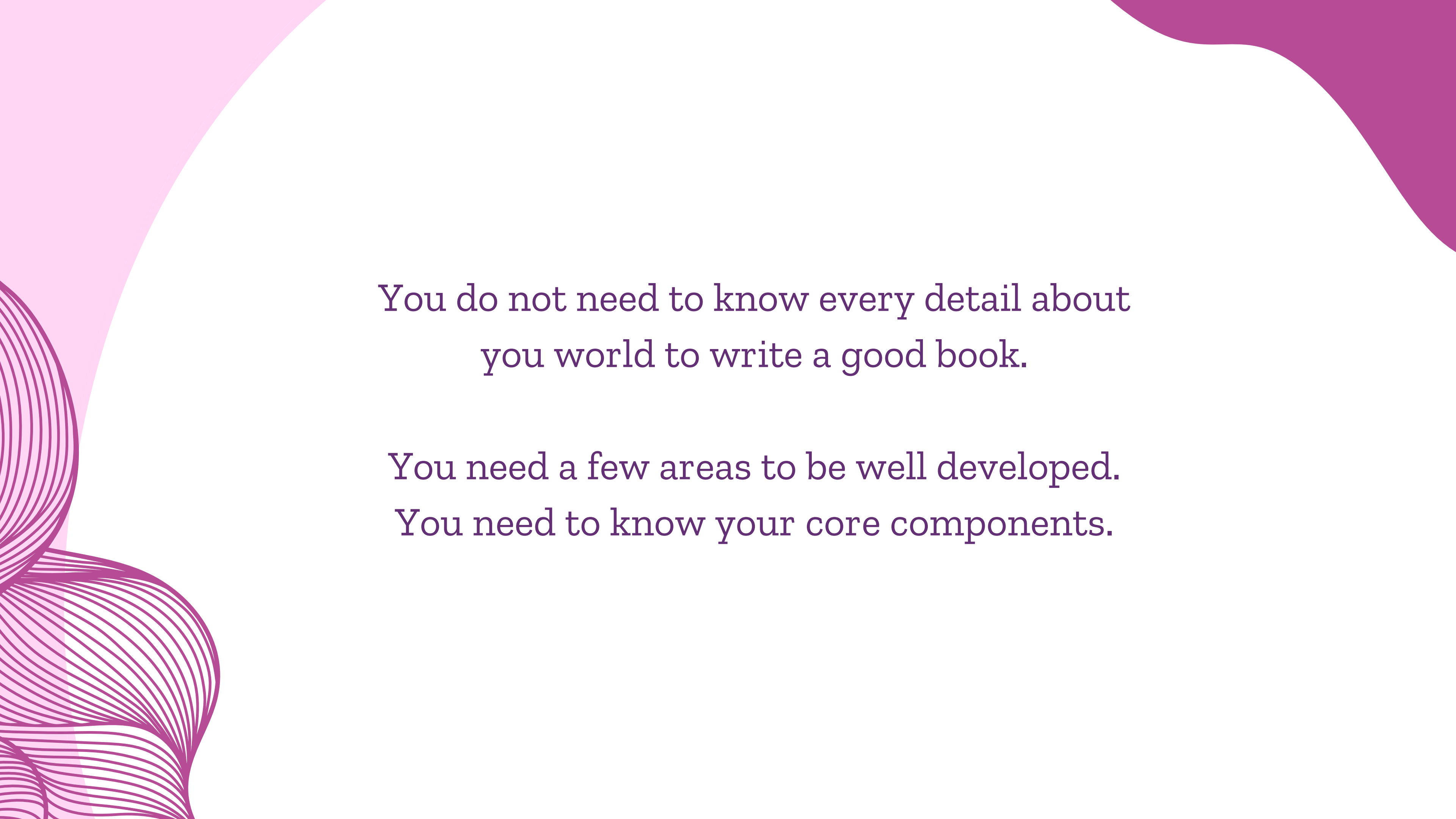


The purpose of worldbuilding is to give your protagonist an environment in which they can experience the point.



A Well-Built World Can:

- Strengthen your point
 - Support important themes and concepts
 - Hook the reader
 - Challenge your reader's perceptions, assumptions, and biases
 - Deepen your protagonist's arc
- 



You do not need to know every detail about
your world to write a good book.

You need a few areas to be well developed.
You need to know your core components.

What are core components?

The parts of your world that most directly support to your point and story.



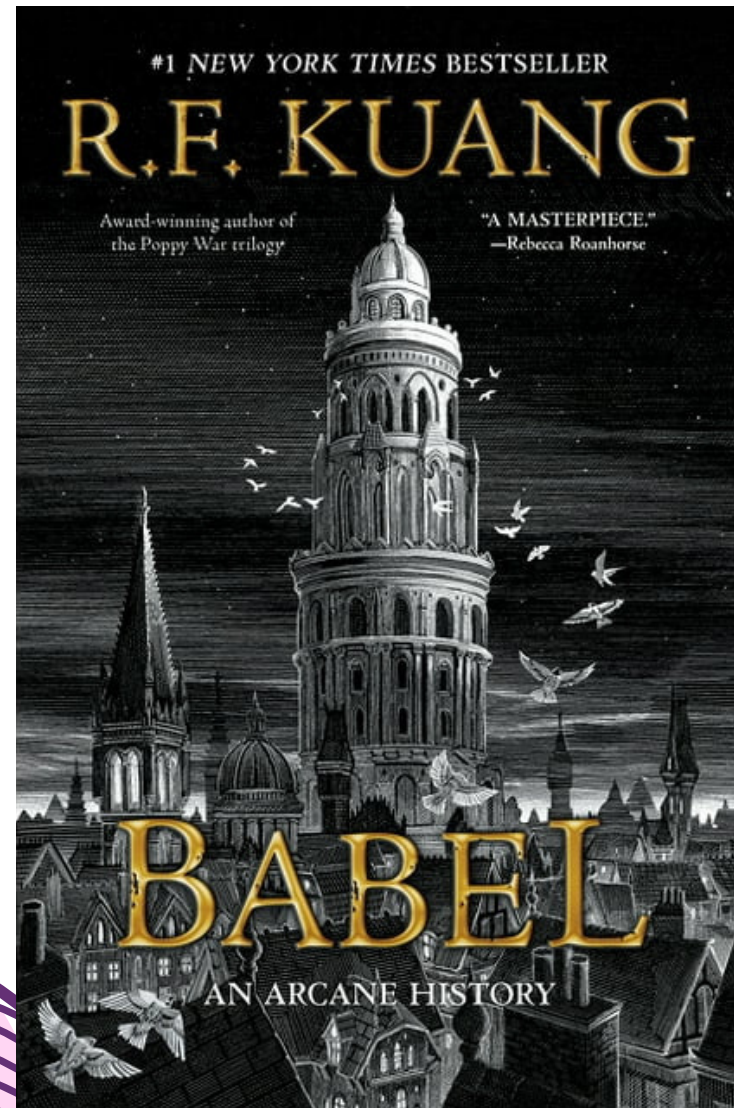
Possible Core Components

What are the *most* important elements to illustrate your point?

- Physical characteristics
- Gender roles
- Social roles
- Sexuality
- Family structure
- Ethics
- Education
- Physics
- Topography
- Climate
- Flora
- Fauna
- Natural resources
- Government
- Politics
- Economics and trade
- Medicine
- Technology
- Transportation
- Architecture
- Religion
- War
- Art
- Fashion
- Beauty
- Food
- Lodging
- Language
- Music
- Something else

Make your magic mean something.

Example: *Babel* by R.F. Kuang



Traduttore, traditore: An act of translation is always an act of betrayal.

1828. Robin Swift, orphaned by cholera in Canton, is brought to London by the mysterious Professor Lovell. There, he trains for years in Latin, Ancient Greek, and Chinese, all in preparation for the day he'll enroll in Oxford University's prestigious Royal Institute of Translation—also known as Babel.

Babel is the world's center for translation and, more importantly, magic. Silver working—the art of manifesting the meaning lost in translation using enchanted silver bars—has made the British unparalleled in power, as its knowledge serves the Empire's quest for colonization.

For Robin, Oxford is a utopia dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. But knowledge obeys power, and as a Chinese boy raised in Britain, Robin realizes serving Babel means betraying his motherland. As his studies progress, Robin finds himself caught between Babel and the shadowy Hermes Society, an organization dedicated to stopping imperial expansion. When Britain pursues an unjust war with China over silver and opium, Robin must decide...

Can powerful institutions be changed from within, or does revolution always require violence?

Example: Babel by R.F. Kuang

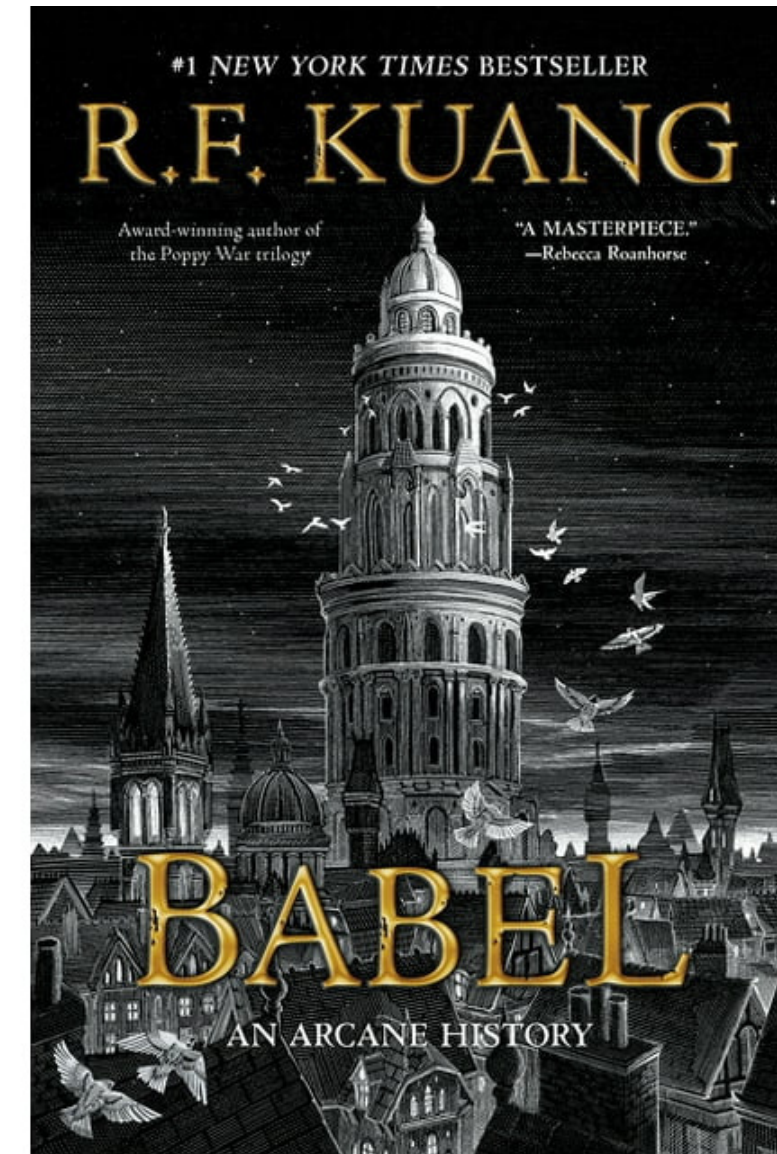
Themes:

- Imperialism
- Oppression
- Academics
- Revolution

Point: Imperialism only exists through oppression and exploitation. When you remove the oppression, the system fails.

Core Elements:

- Economics
- Academia
- Technology (magic)



Example: *Strange World*



Strange World follows a legendary family of explorers called the Clades, who must set aside their differences as they embark on a journey to a mysterious subterranean land inhabited by surreal lifeforms, in order to save a miracle plant Pando that is their society's source of energy.

Example: Strange World

Themes:

- Environmentalism
- Interconnectedness of all things
- Family legacy
- Self-determination

Point: Humanity's wellbeing is dependent on the earth's wellbeing. For humanity to prosper, the earth must also prosper.

Core Elements:

- Ecology
- Economy
- Technology



Example: All the Rotten Wishes

In Queen Velia's land, what someone most needs for their personal growth becomes real through a magical projection called a pretense. But Velia's people have forgotten this truth and view pretenses as sinful abominations. When a monster threatens the long-planned wall that will seal the kingdom away from pretense-lovers, Velia must make peace with who she really is to save her people and herself.

Example: All the Rotten Wishes

Themes:

- Identity
- Self-discovery
- Self-love
- Religion
- Societal expectations and roles

Point: You can only accept your power once you accept yourself.

Core Elements:

- Religion
- Government
- Personal development



Don't build your world in a vacuum.
Build your world around your point.

Create Your World-Changing World

1. Think about your point. Which components of your world are most connected to your point? Which components could best illustrate your point when played out in the story?
2. Brainstorm around your core components. How could they symbolize your point? What hidden or abstract elements of the real world can you make more obvious through these components?
3. Consider your magic. How can your magic function in relation to your point? What makes magic function correctly or incorrectly? What don't your characters know about magic that prevents it from function correctly? What do they need to learn to make it function correctly?

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Aim for a Good-Enough World

You do not have to know every detail of your world to move forward. You will discover more as you write and revise. What do you need to know right now?

Let's Stay Connected

- Pop Up Coaching Call on May 3
- Untapped Superpower Quiz: www.daniabernathy.com/quiz
- Instagram: DaniAbernathyAuthor
- Check out the Rooted Writer's Mentorship on my website

