Fantasy Writing Workshop

ADDING DEPTH TO YOUR FANTASY WORLD

Hi, I'm Hayley!

What is world-building?

When done right, world-building creates a living, breathing environment for a story that feels just as real as the world that we actually live in.

As a fiction writer, particularly in the fantasy or science fiction genres, world-building can make or break your book. If you construct a world that is believable and multi-layered, your readers will sink right into it. If, on the other hand, you don't pay enough attention to world-building, your story can come across as implausible or boring.

Examples of Fantasy Worlds

World: Narnia

Narnia is an epic world full of fantastic creatures and fierce battles between good and evil. Just like Middle-Earth, Narnia has risen above the fantasy genre to find itself firmly lodged in classic literature. Narnia is a fantasy land where magic meets reality, one that has drawn in young and old alike over the past decades. As a writer, you can take lessons from Narnia: think about whether your world will have a moral theme or what kind of battleground might be needed.

World: Westeros

Thanks to the wildly popular television series, fans and non-fantasy-fiction fans alike love George R. R. Martin's epic tales set in the fantasy land of Westeros. However, Westeros is only one part of the sprawling fictional world created by Martin. Because of its firm grounding in historical lore, Westeros feels entirely real. Is there a period from history that you feel passionate about that can feed into your world?

World: Lunathion

Fantasy worlds don't have to be historically inspired. Lunathion, the city at the center of Sarah J. Maas' newest city, is modern. It has fantastical elements, like different types of creatures, and mixes different types of weapons. This world feels more modern and akin to something we would recognize than other fantasy worlds.

Writing Prompts

Prompt 1

Describe your novel's world in 50 words or less. This quick exercise is designed to get you warmed up and thinking about world-building as we go through our next series of exercises.

Prompt 2

Write down five rules for your world. Again, these rules can relate to any part of your world. Dream big here! The rules might have to do with different creatures (perhaps a dangerous species that only comes out at night) or relationships (perhaps two peoples have a long history of conflict) or what's right and wrong (perhaps murder is okay in your world as long as it's justified).

5:00

Prompt 3

Brainstorm a list of 3-5 swear words (or other phrases) that characters in your world use. They can be celebratory phrases or angry phrases or frustrated phrases. How you use them is up to you! But think through a list of phrases that you can add to embed your characters in a wider history of speech. Then, if you've already started or finished your manuscript, think about where you can add these phrases into existing dialogue.

Prompt 4

Describe the greatest and most feared warriors in your world's history. Notice that we said greatest and most feared. The warriors might be protagonists or antagonists. Think through how they influenced your world and led to the current status quo. If the warrior is known as a hero, perhaps they provide inspiration for your main character. If they're a villain, maybe they helped contribute to why your world is now the way that it is.

Prompt 5

Write the origin story for your world. This story should tell how your world and all the creatures in it came to be. You can choose to write a more scientific story or a more mythological story. It's up to you!