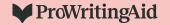# Build Your Science Fiction World

Presented by Hayley Milliman
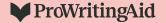
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What is world-building?

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.
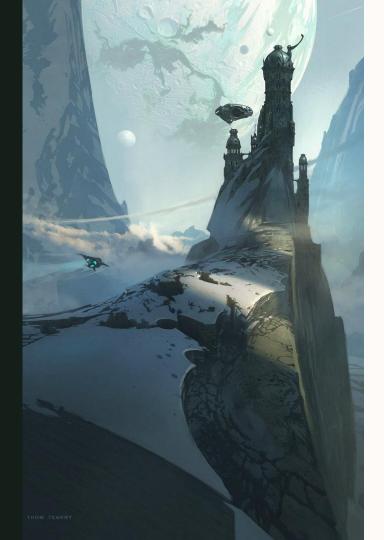
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Examples of Science Fiction Worlds

World: Dune

The world of Dune revolves around the desert planet Arrakis, a harsh and unforgiving environment dominated by massive sand dunes and extreme heat. Arrakis is the only source of the valuable spice melange, which grants extended life and heightened abilities. Herbert meticulously crafts a world where political intrigue, ecological balance, and human adaptation are central themes. The world-building of Dune shapes the story's epic scale, from the intricacies of interstellar politics to the profound symbiosis between the planet and its inhabitants.
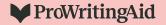
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World: <mark>Gethen</mark>

Le Guin's The Left Hand of Darkness explores the icy planet of Gethen, a place where the inhabitants are ambisexual, capable of shifting between male and female identities depending on their reproductive cycles. This unique biological feature is central to the novel's exploration of gender, identity, and societal structure. Gethen's world-building goes beyond the physical environment—frigid and perpetually snowy—into the sociopolitical landscapes shaped by this fluidity. The different nations on Gethen, Karhide and Orgoreyn, represent contrasting political ideologies, showing how the planet's people grapple with power, trust, and survival in an alien yet vividly relatable context.

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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).

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.

5:00

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!

Thank you!

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