A top-down view of various stationery items scattered on a white surface. There are two pairs of scissors, one with black handles and one with gold handles. Several gold paper clips are scattered around. A small green succulent in a gold-colored pot is in the upper right. Two small gold-colored containers, one with a patterned lid, are in the lower right. A brown notebook with a black spine is in the bottom right corner.

Prepare to write a masterful story by
mapping out your plot, character arcs,
settings, and more...

the Pre-Write Project

Kristen Kieffer



Why pre-write your project?

Hi, writer! I'm so thrilled you decided to pick up this workbook today.

Pre-writing is the process of exploring and expanding upon a story idea before beginning to write.

Completing this process can help you determine an idea's potential and gain intimate knowledge of your story, thereby helping you avoid the messiness of writing by the seat of your pants and instead embrace the power of drafting with a plan in place.

In this workbook, I'll guide you through all of the common pre-writing elements writers explore, including getting to know your characters, outlining your plot, defining your settings and story elements, and more.

By the time you complete this workbook, you'll have a full reference guide you can use to maintain focus, avoid inconsistencies and errors, and otherwise smooth out the all-too-often bumpy process of writing a book.

As you work through this workbook, keep in mind that there is no one right way to write a novel—or, in this case, pre-write a novel.

While I personally find that completing each section in chronological order works best for my pre-writing process, feel free to jump around or skip sections as you see fit.

You may also find it helpful to print multiple copies of certain pages throughout this workbook to properly complete your story guide. To do so, simply open your print options, identify the individual page or page range you'd like to copy, and press print.



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For All Writers

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JUMPSTART YOUR CREATIVITY

Jumpstart your creativity.

Is there a story idea you're just dying to explore?

Without the seed of a story in mind, it would be impossible to dive into the pre-writing process. That's why we're first going to spend time stirring our imaginations to life.

If you already have a story idea in mind, feel free to skip this section and dive right into the second section of our workbook, Exploring Your Story Idea.

If, however, you're just not sure what to write, it's time to jumpstart your creativity! Use the questions on the following pages to help you dig up a gem of a story idea you just can't wait to write.

Activity #1: Explore your interests.

Use the questions on the next several pages to begin exploring what kinds of stories most capture your heart.

Thinking about the following questions in depth will help you plant the seeds of a story idea you just might grow to love.

Jumpstart your creativity.

Question #1: Who are some of your favorite characters from literature?

In the space below, describe what you love about these characters. Try to be as specific as possible, considering their traits, flaws, backstories, etc.

Jumpstart your creativity.

Question #2: What are some of your favorite stories of all time?

In the space below, describe what you love about these stories, paying special attention to their genres, plots, settings, and themes.

Jumpstart your creativity.

Question #3: What are some of your story pet peeves?

In the space below, make a list of anything you hate seeing in stories (e.g. love triangles, gore, tragic endings, shallow characters, info dumps, etc.).

Jumpstart your creativity.

Question #4: What are some of your interests and favorite things?

In the space below, make a list of things you love (e.g. pirates, rainy days, 80's music, baseball, the smell of coffee, outer space, psychology, etc.).

Jumpstart your creativity.

Activity #2: Begin brainstorming story ideas.

Taking your answers from Activity #1 into consideration, use the space below to begin forming a story idea.

What kind of hero or villain would you love to write? What stories most capture your interest? Can you put an exciting twist on a pet peeve? How can you incorporate some of the things you love most in life?

EXPAND YOUR STORY IDEA

Expand your story idea.

Does the thought of pre-writing your story overwhelm you?

Taking the small seed of a story idea and transforming it into a full-length novel is a lot of work. It's no wonder so many writers freeze up at words like "character development" and "outlining."

The good news is that pre-writing doesn't have to be as daunting a task as it seems. By breaking down large tasks into small, manageable steps, we can make the massive undertaking of pre-writing much more exciting.

In this section of our workbook, Expand Your Story Idea, we'll begin pushing at the boundaries of our story ideas, exploring elements we've yet to consider so we can tackle pre-writing's larger tasks with confidence in sections to come.

Activity #1: Establish Your Story Idea.

If you skipped section #1 of our workbook, Jumpstart Your Creativity, because you already had a story idea in mind, use the two questions in this activity to help ensure your story idea is the right one to pursue as you work through this workbook.

Expand your story idea.

Question #1: What is your story idea?

Using the space below, brain-dump everything you currently know about your story idea. Don't worry if it isn't much. Every scrap of inspiration counts!

Expand your story idea.

Question #2: What about your story idea excites you?

Don't waste precious writing time on a story you aren't passionate about. In the space below, write down why you love your story. What about it grabs your interest?

Expand your story idea.

Activity #2: Expand your story idea.

For each of the following prompts, set a 10-minute timer and brainstorm as much as you can, writing everything down in the spaces provided.

Prompt #1: Your Characters

Expand your story idea.

Prompt #2: Your Scenes / Plot

Expand your story idea.

Prompt #3: Your Setting / World-building

Prompt #4: Genre-Specific Details (e.g. a magic system, suspects for a mystery, info about historic cultures, the romantic meet-cute, etc.)

IDENTIFY YOUR IDEAL READER

Identify your ideal reader.

Do you know who you're writing for?

We're just one step away from diving deep into the bulk of our pre-writing tasks (character development, plotting, research, oh my!). But before we get started, it's time to define who you're writing for.

Knowing your target audience before digging into major pre-writing tasks will help you focus on crafting a story that will most appeal to your future readers.

Pre-writing with your ideal reader in mind doesn't mean you're not writing for yourself as well. First and foremost, you should always write the story you want to write.

But identifying your story's parameters by getting to know your ideal reader is what will help you write a story that you not only adore, but that your readers will adore too.

Activity #1: Identify your ideal reader.

Use the questions in this third section of our workbook to help you identify your ideal reader and shape the boundaries of your story's framework.

Identify your ideal reader.

Question #1: What is your story's genre? (Check as many as apply.)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fantasy | <input type="checkbox"/> Science Fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> Drama |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Romance | <input type="checkbox"/> Adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> Spy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thriller | <input type="checkbox"/> Mystery | <input type="checkbox"/> Dystopian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historical | <input type="checkbox"/> Paranormal | <input type="checkbox"/> Horror |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

Question #2: What age market are you writing for?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children | <input type="checkbox"/> Young Adult | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle Grade | <input type="checkbox"/> New Adult | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

Question #3: Who would your story best suit?

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girls / Women | <input type="checkbox"/> Boys / Men | <input type="checkbox"/> Anyone |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|

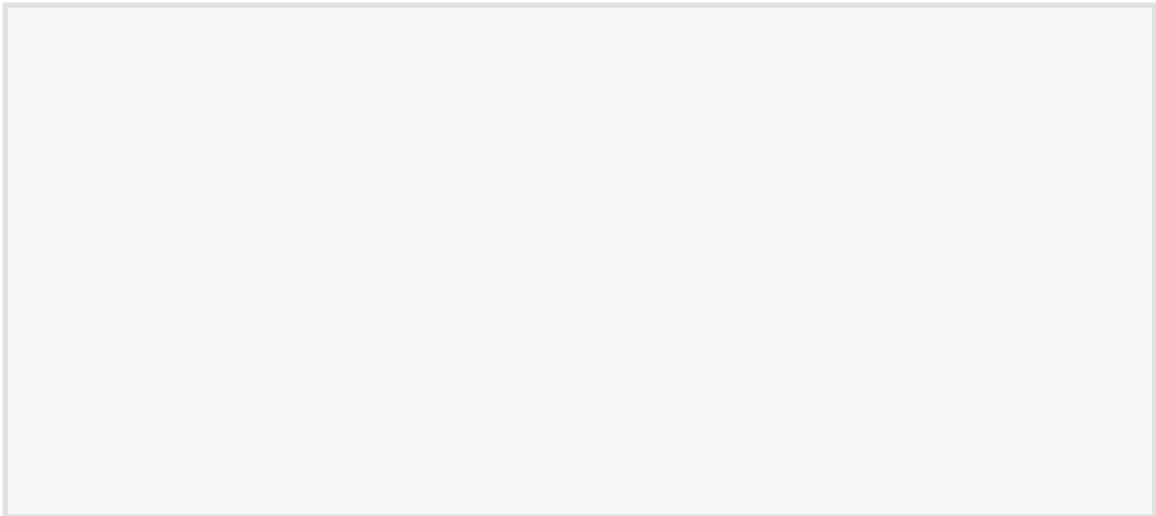
Identify your ideal reader.

Question #4: What are your ideal reader's favorite books, movies, and television shows? (i.e. stories similar to your own in some respect)

-
-
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-

Question #5: Why does your ideal reader love stories?



Identify your ideal reader.

Question #6: What are your ideal reader's biggest struggles, fears, and insecurities?

Question #7: What makes your ideal reader happy, sad, angry, and excited?

Identify your ideal reader.

Question #8: Outside of reading, what does your ideal reader love to do? What activities do they enjoy?

Question #9: How does your ideal reader see the world? (i.e. Are they optimistic, pessimistic, or realistic; introverted or extroverted, etc.?)

CRAFT CHARACTER STORIES

Craft character stories.

Characters are the backbone of any good story.

Our characters' actions drive the plot forward, their personalities liven up the page, and their motivations and backstories create powerful emotional connections with our readers.

Without well-crafted characters, stories fall flat. No matter how fantastic any other element of our stories might be.

That's why we're going to focus on getting to know our story's main characters, as well as those important to them, in this section of our workbook.

Activity #1: Get to know your main characters.

Answer the prompts on the following pages of our workbook to help you gain a comprehensive understanding of your main character.

Then, reprint these prompts and answer them once more for any other major characters in your story.

(You can reprint specific pages by opening your print settings and entering the appropriate page range.)

Craft character stories.

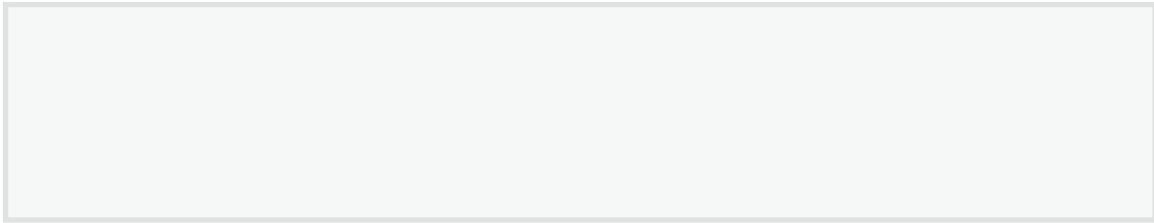
Name & Age:

Describe your character's appearance.

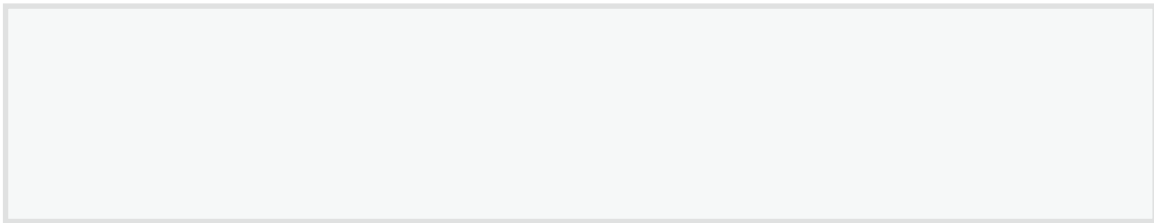
Describe your character's mannerisms, posture, and gait.

Craft character stories.

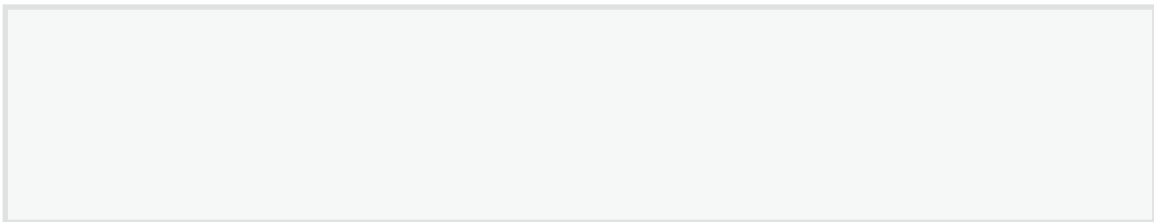
What are some of your character's positive traits?



What are some of your character's negative traits?

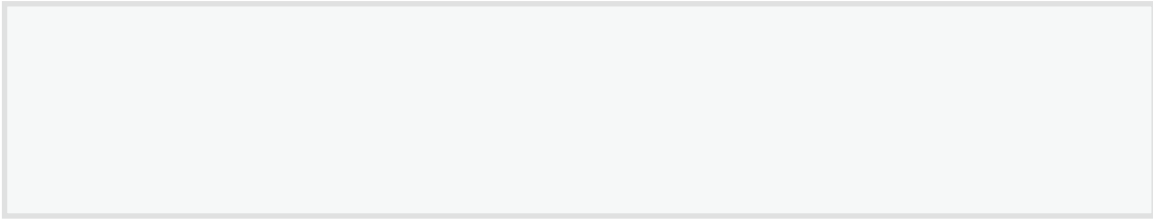


What makes your character happy?

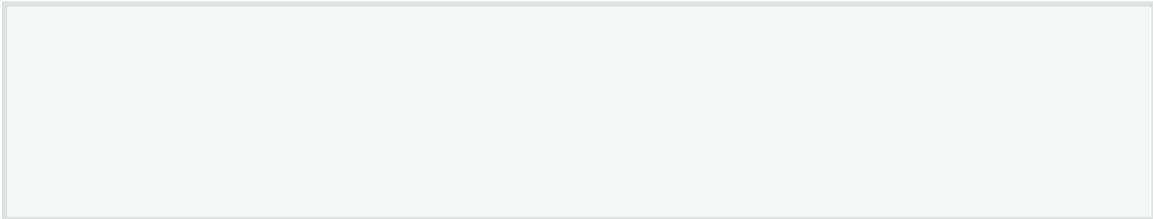


Craft character stories.

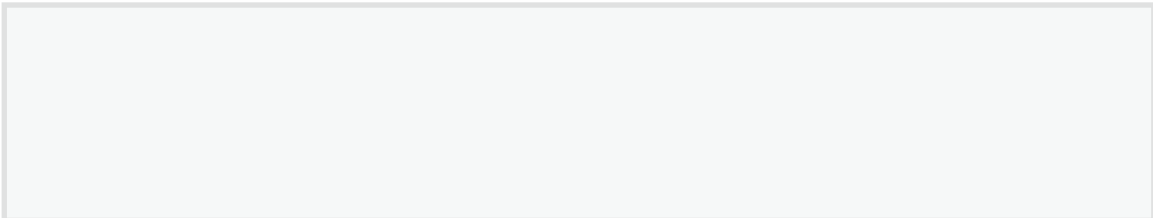
What makes your character sad?



What makes your character angry?

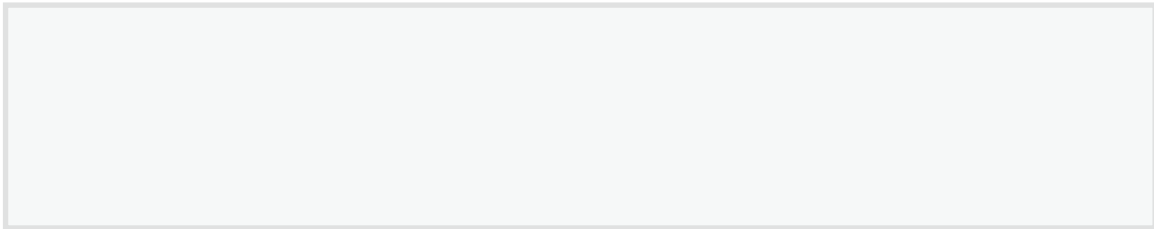


What makes your character excited?

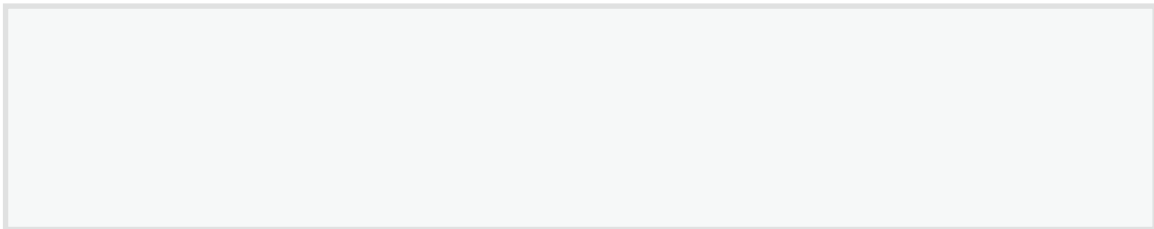


Craft character stories.

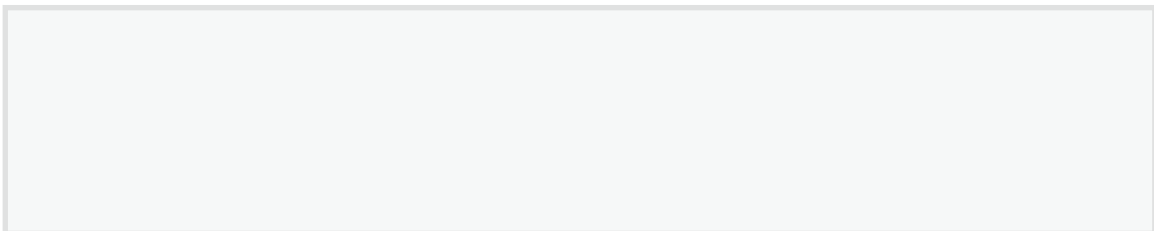
What does your character want from life?



What are your character's biggest fears and regrets?



What is your character's darkest secret?



Craft character stories.

Describe important events in your character's past. What is their backstory?

What is your character's life like at the beginning of your story?

Craft character stories.

What are some of your character's personality traits? Are they...

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Introverted | <input type="checkbox"/> Extroverted | <input type="checkbox"/> Adventurous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cautious | <input type="checkbox"/> Confident | <input type="checkbox"/> Insecure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cynical | <input type="checkbox"/> Trustworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> Dishonest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gullible | <input type="checkbox"/> Blunt | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curious | <input type="checkbox"/> Indifferent | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kind | <input type="checkbox"/> Grouchy | <input type="checkbox"/> Compassionate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humble | <input type="checkbox"/> Arrogant | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Envious | <input type="checkbox"/> Content | <input type="checkbox"/> Calm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perceptive | <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorant | <input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proud | <input type="checkbox"/> Humble | <input type="checkbox"/> Talkative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxed | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious | <input type="checkbox"/> Serious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Playful | <input type="checkbox"/> Fearless | <input type="checkbox"/> Observant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Persistent | <input type="checkbox"/> Charming | <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reliable | <input type="checkbox"/> Apathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Obnoxious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Imaginative | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-centered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vain | <input type="checkbox"/> Sarcastic | <input type="checkbox"/> Sullen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rude | <input type="checkbox"/> Cowardly | <input type="checkbox"/> Quarrelsome |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stingy | <input type="checkbox"/> Bossy | <input type="checkbox"/> Vulgar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Inept | <input type="checkbox"/> Clumsy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shy | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-deprecating | <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Pessimistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Realistic |

Craft character stories.

Who are the most important people in your character's life at the beginning of your story?

How is your character unsatisfied at the beginning of your story?

Craft character stories.

What is your character's story goal? (i.e. What do they want to achieve, prevent, or overcome?)

Why does your character want to achieve this goal? (i.e. What is their motivation?)

Craft character stories.

If all went according to plan, what steps would your character take to achieve their goal?

What is your character's ambition? (i.e. What does your character think they need to find fulfillment? Revenge, romance, wealth, etc?)

Craft character stories.

Will achieving their ambition actually bring your character fulfillment? If not, what will?

How does your character's ambition play into their fears or flaws?

Craft character stories.

**Who will help your character as they work to achieve their story goal?
How will they help?**

**Who will refuse to help your character or stand in direct opposition to
their success? How will they do this?**

OUTLINE YOUR PLOT ARCS

Outline your plot arcs.

At last, it's time to lay out our stories.

Plotting isn't every writer's favorite part of the writing process, but it doesn't have to be the worst part either. We can take away a good bit of plotting overwhelm simply by keeping our characters in mind.

Remember, our characters' actions define the plot.

By utilizing the goals and motivations you crafted for your characters in the previous section of our workbook, you can begin planning the events of your story with clarity and focus.

The following section contains guided outlining questions based on the 3-Act Story Structure, literature's most popular plotting device. Utilizing this structure is a great way to purposefully craft a well-paced plot without succumbing to predictable storytelling.

Activity #1: Identify your hook.

The first chapter in any story has many jobs, most importantly being to introduce readers to your main character in a way that hooks them into the story for the long haul.

Use the following questions to help you map out the perfect hook for your story.

Outline your plot arcs.

What instance of conflict might your protagonist encounter while still living their everyday life?

What does this conflict reveal about who your protagonist is at the beginning of the story?

Outline your plot arcs.

How does this instance of conflict unsettle and/or motivate your protagonist?

In most cases, your protagonist won't yet decide to pursue their story goal. What makes them hesitate?

Outline your plot arcs.

What is your protagonist doing immediately before this initial conflict breaks out? (This is often where a story should begin.)

What is one intriguing insight about your protagonist or your story world that you can use to open your novel? (This will be your hook.)

Outline your plot arcs.

What exposition do you need to relay in the first few chapters to clarify reader understanding? (Consider setting, character details, relationships, world-building, etc.)

What event will push your protagonist past their hesitations and make them set out on a journey to achieve their story goal?

Outline your plot arcs.

If your story has an antagonist, how will you reveal that they are also on a journey to achieve a goal that conflicts with your protagonist's goal?

If your story has no clear antagonist, who or what will cause conflict for your protagonist and how will you reveal this?

Outline your plot arcs.

Activity #2: Lay out the first half of your story.

It's in the first half of your story that the main character begins their journey, the source of conflict is revealed, and new and intriguing revelations begin to come to light.

Use the questions in the following section to help you map out the well-paced events that will cover the first half of your story.

Describe the initial 2 - 3 steps your protagonist will take to try to achieve their story goal.

Outline your plot arcs.

How will your protagonist already struggle to make progress toward their goal during these initial events?

How are your protagonist's fears, flaws, regrets and/or secrets holding them back from achieving strong forward progress?

Outline your plot arcs.

How are your protagonist's sidekicks and/or mentors helping them in their journey to achieve their goal thus far?

If your story has an antagonist, what 2 - 3 initial steps will they take to work toward their goal? Will readers know their actions?

Outline your plot arcs.

If someone is helping your antagonist / antagonistic force work toward their goal, how are they doing so?

What major conflict will occur between your protagonist and the antagonist / antagonistic force?

Outline your plot arcs.

What loss or setback occurs as a result of this conflict that solidifies your protagonist's determination to achieve their goal?

How does this loss or setback shape your protagonist's outlook, change their plan of action, and/or spur their personal growth?

Outline your plot arcs.

What does this conflict reveal about your story's antagonist / antagonistic force and/or how does it affect their plan to achieve their goal?

Will readers know your antagonist's / antagonistic force's motivation during the first half of the book? If so, how will you reveal it?

Outline your plot arcs.

What 2 - 3 steps will your protagonist take after this conflict to continue working toward their story goal?

What 2 - 3 steps will your antagonist / antagonistic force take after this conflict to continue working toward their story goal?

Outline your plot arcs.

How will you continue to develop your protagonist during the first half of your story? What will readers learn about them?

What flaws, fears, regrets, or secrets has your protagonist yet to reveal or overcome, and how are these things holding them back?

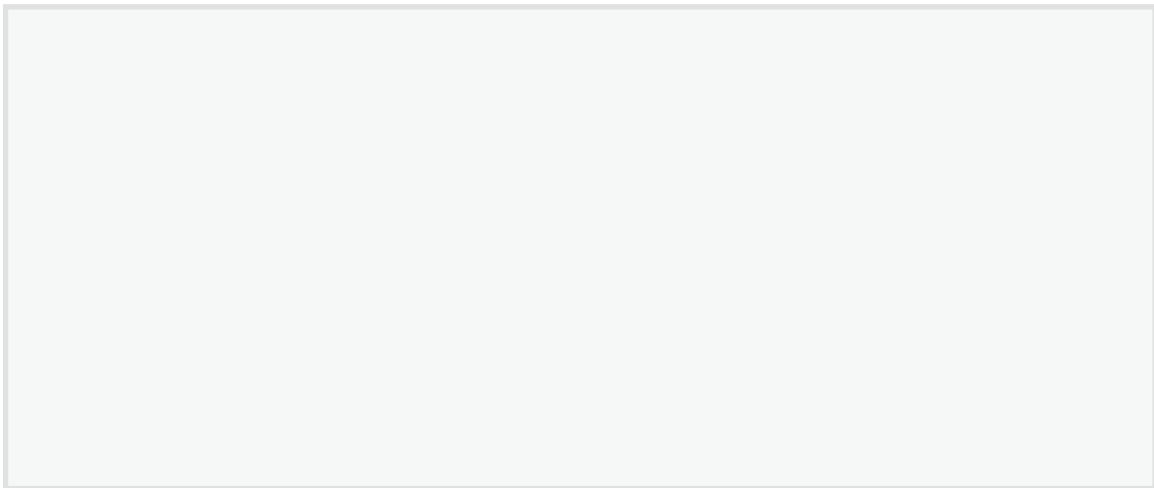
Outline your plot arcs.

Activity #3: Plot a game-changing midpoint.

A story's mid-point provides another instance of direct conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist or antagonistic force that stands in their path to success—only this time, the conflict is bigger than ever before.

In this activity, you'll plot out an epic conflict that will serve as the game-changing mid-point of your story.

What brings your protagonist and antagonist / antagonistic force into the biggest conflict of the story thus far?

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray border, intended for the student to write their response to the prompt above.

Outline your plot arcs.

Describe what occurs during this major conflict.

Outline your plot arcs.

What losses or setbacks do your protagonist and antagonist / antagonistic force face as a result of this conflict?

Does anything good result of this conflict for your protagonist and/or antagonist / antagonistic force (i.e. new knowledge, a reward, etc.)? How so?

Outline your plot arcs.

Has this conflict challenged or revealed any of your protagonist's fears, flaws, regrets, or secrets? How so?

How has this conflict changed the way your protagonist will fight to achieve their story goal?

Outline your plot arcs.

Has this conflict revealed anything new about your story's antagonist / antagonistic force to readers? How so?

How has this conflict changed the way your antagonist / antagonistic force will fight to achieve their story goal?

Outline your plot arcs.

Activity #4: Outline the second half of your story.

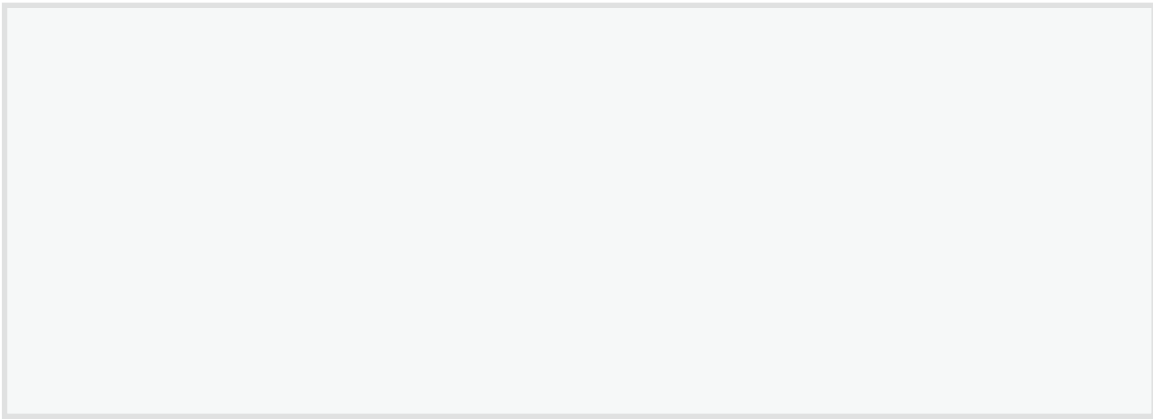
The events of your story's mid-point have forever changed your protagonist's outlook. Suddenly, they go on the offensive, taking definitive action that moves them closer to defeating the antagonist / antagonistic force and achieving their goal.

Use the questions provided in this activity to help you outline the second half of your story and avoid pesky pacing problems.

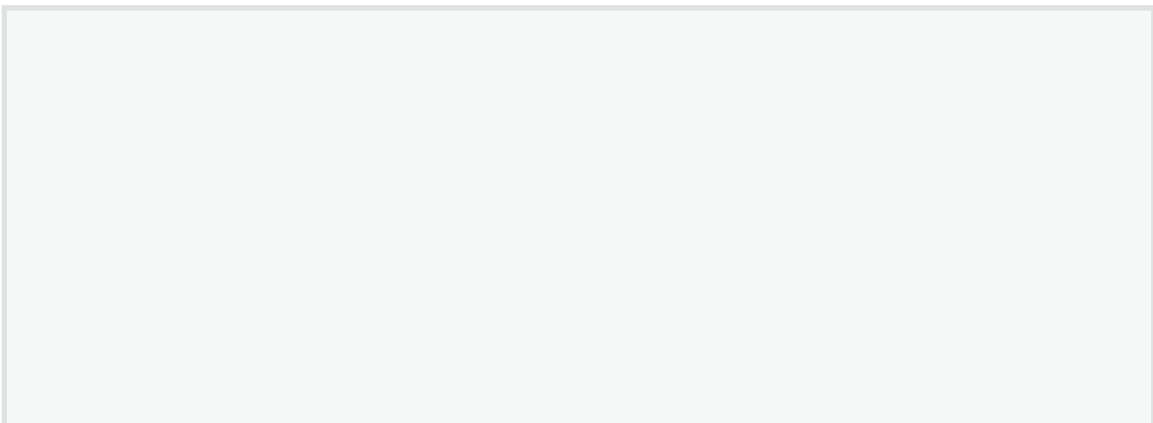
What 2 - 3 steps will your protagonist now take to continue working toward their story goal?

Outline your plot arcs.

What progress will your protagonist achieve during this time?



What setbacks will your protagonist face during this time?



Outline your plot arcs.

How does your protagonist evolve during this time?

How are your protagonist's fears, flaws, regrets, and/or secrets still holding them back or stunting their progress?

Outline your plot arcs.

What 2 - 3 steps will your antagonist / antagonistic force take during this time to achieve progress toward their story goal?

Will your antagonist / antagonistic force face any setbacks during this time? How so?

Outline your plot arcs.

If you haven't already, how will you reveal your antagonist's / antagonistic force's motivation to achieve their goal?

Will your antagonist / antagonistic force undergo any character development? How so?

Outline your plot arcs.

What event will occur just before your story's climax that serves as a breaking point for your protagonist? Describe this event.

Outline your plot arcs.

How does this event force your protagonist to finally face the fear, flaw, regret, and/or secret that has been holding them back?

What will motivate your protagonist to overcome or reveal this fear, flaw, regret, and/or secret and continue striving to reach their goal?

Outline your plot arcs.

Activity #5: Craft an epic climactic sequence.

Everything in your story has been building toward this moment: the final conflict between your protagonist and the force that has kept them from achieving their goal.

Use the questions in this activity to help you pull all your story's threads of conflict together and bring its defining conflict to life.

What brings your protagonist and antagonist / antagonistic force into the biggest conflict of the story?

Outline your plot arcs.

What action does the protagonist take to defeat the antagonist / antagonistic force and/or achieve their story goal?

What action does the antagonist take to defeat the protagonist and/or achieve their story goal?

Outline your plot arcs.

Is anything new revealed about the protagonist and/or antagonist / antagonistic force at this time? If so, what?

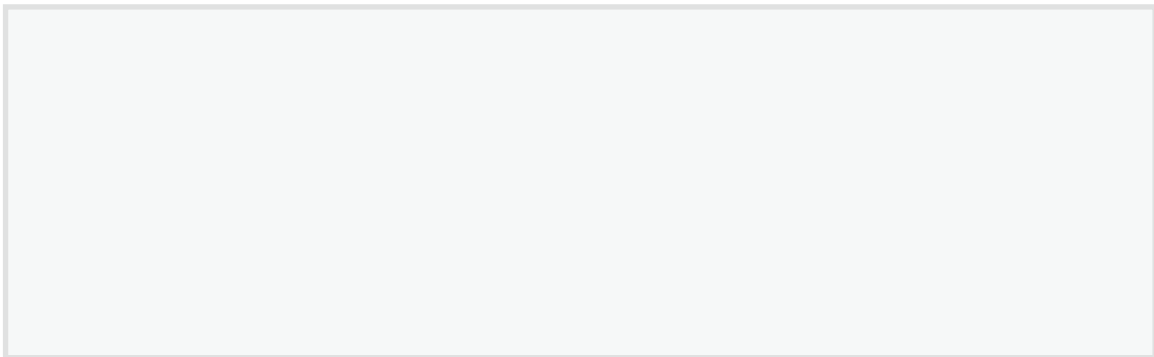
If something new is revealed, how does this affect the character, opinions, or actions of the opposite party?

Outline your plot arcs.

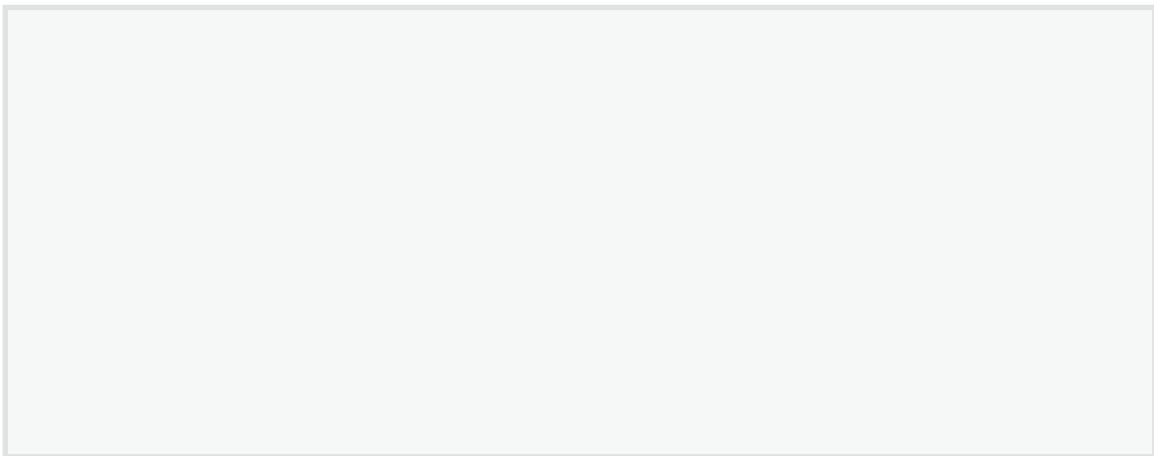
How do the events of your story's climactic sequence play out? Is there a clear winner? If so, how did they achieve success?

Outline your plot arcs.

Did the winner achieve their goal through their victory over the loser? If so, are they now content or do they still have unfinished business?



If the winner has unfinished business, how do they plan to resolve it?



Outline your plot arcs.

Did the protagonist suffer any losses during the climactic conflict? If so, how do those losses affect them?

Does the climactic sequence affect any of your secondary characters? If so, how?

Outline your plot arcs.

What does the winner plan to do now that they have overcome the loser?

What does the loser plan to do now that they have been defeated?

Outline your plot arcs.

Activity #6: Wrap up your story's plot.

With the conflict of your story's climactic sequence complete, your story begins to wind down.

Use the questions provided in this activity to help you tie up the loose ends of your plot and play out the remainder of your characters' stories.

What consequences will your protagonist face following your story's climax?

Outline your plot arcs.

What consequences will your antagonist face following your story's climax?

If your protagonist has not yet achieved their story goal, how will they do so in the final pages of your story?

Outline your plot arcs.

Has your protagonist undergone any character development? If so, how are they a different person at the end of your story?

Does your protagonist have any unfinished business? If so, how will they work to resolve it?

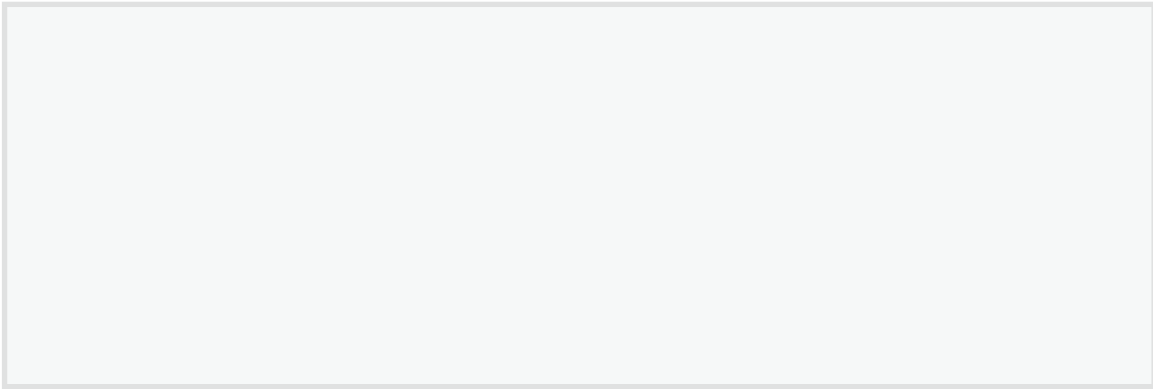
Outline your plot arcs.

If your protagonist doesn't have any unfinished business, what remaining threads of tension will carry readers through to the final page?

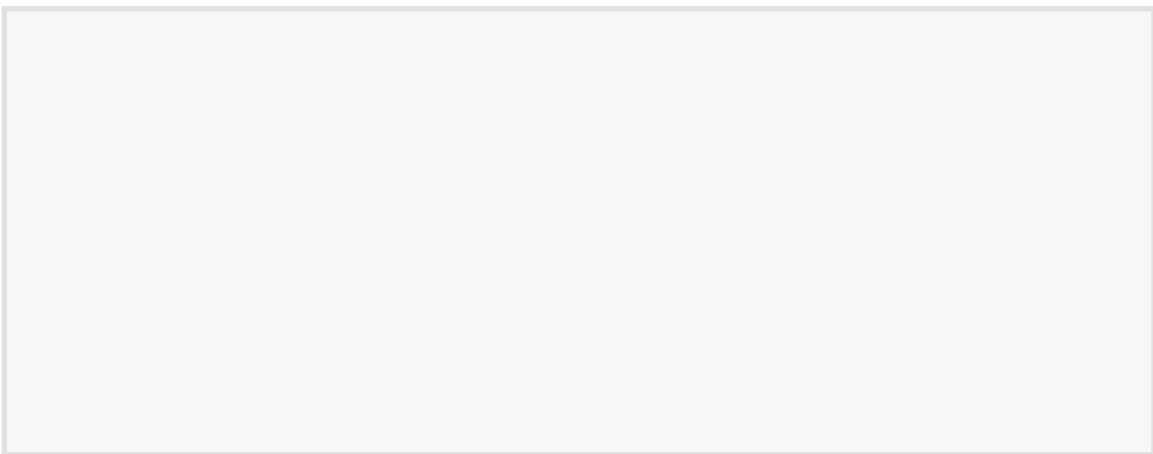
Will these threads of tension be resolved? If so, how? If not, how are you hoping your ambiguous ending will make readers feel?

Outline your plot arcs.

Where will your protagonist's story end?



Where will your antagonist's story end?



Outline your plot arcs.

What happens to your secondary characters in the final pages of your book?

What kind of mood would you like your story to end on, and how will you achieve this?

EXPAND YOUR STORY GUIDE

Expand your story guide.

It's time to put the finishing touches on your story guide.

By filling out this workbook, you've been compiling a comprehensive guide that you can reference to help you maintain focus, clarity, and consistency while writing and editing your story.

At this point in our workbook, we've covered the most important elements of story—specifically, characters and plot. But we're not about to cut corners and leave our story guides incomplete.

In this section of our workbook, we'll complete several activities that will help us expand the scope of our story guides so they'll be as useful as possible when it comes time to write and edit.

Activity #1: Define your story and scene settings.

A story setting is the general time and place in which your story is set, while scenes settings are the specific backdrops for each individual scene in your story.

Use the questions in this activity to help you define the story and scene settings for your book. You may find it helpful to make duplicates of some of the pages in this activity.

Expand your story guide.

How many story settings does your book feature?

Outline each below, including the location, year/time period, time of year and weather, culture and society, and any other important notes.

Expand your story guide.

What are some of your important scene settings?

Outline each below (cont. on the next page). Describe the sights, sounds, and scents of each place, as well as any other important notes.

Expand your story guide.

Continue taking notes on important scene settings below.

Expand your story guide.

Activity #2: Map out important story elements.

Story elements are techniques and devices that you can use to frame your story and add to its intrigue.

In this activity, utilize the provided questions to help you map out the important story elements of your book so you have a strong framework for your story in place before you begin to write.

How many points of view will your story feature and which characters will have the point of view?

Expand your story guide.

What point-of-view (1st, 2nd, 3rd omniscient, 3rd limited, etc.) and tense (past, present, future) will you write in?

What themes (i.e. main topics) will your novel explore? (e.g. friendship, revenge, coming-of-age, love, loss, etc.)

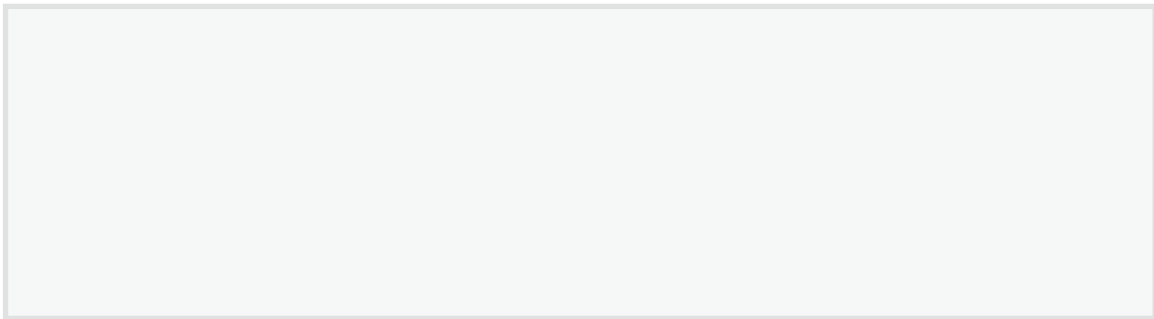
Expand your story guide.

What is your story's thematic statement(s)? (i.e. what statement are you, as the author, trying to make about your story's themes?)

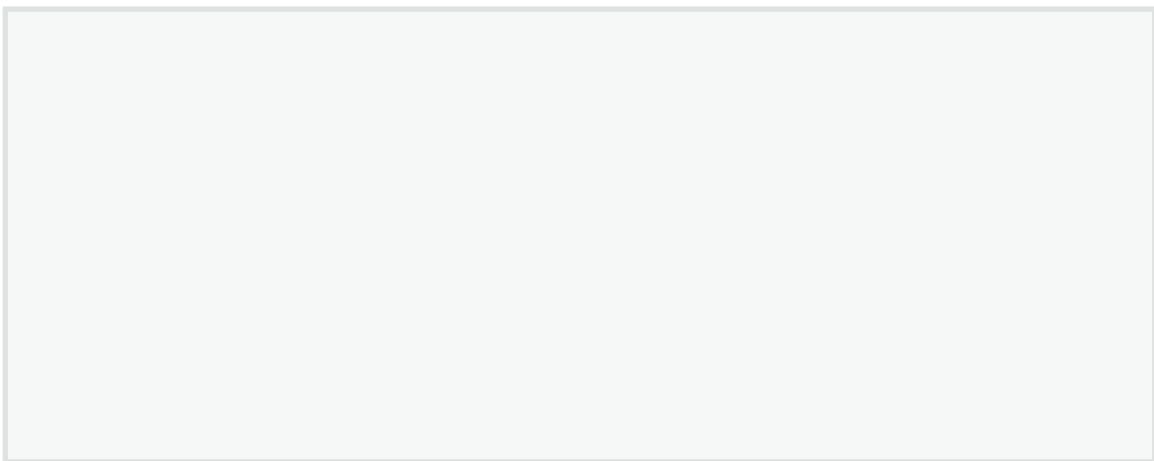
Does your story contain any motifs? Describe them below. (A motif is a recurring element with symbolic significance.)

Expand your story guide.

What important plot events do you want to foreshadow in your story?



In the space below, brainstorm some ways you might foreshadow these events.



Expand your story guide.

Will your story contain any flashbacks? If so, where will you include them in your plot? Describe each flashback below.

Expand your story guide.

Will your story contain any secondary plot lines? If so, describe them below. (A secondary plot line is a chain of events separate but related to the main events of your story.)

Expand your story guide.

Will your story contain a prologue or epigraph? Describe it below.

Will your story contain an epilogue? Describe it below.

RESEARCH YOUR STORY

Research your story.

A little research can go a long way.

By researching key contextual information, writers can add incredible depth to their stories, elevating common and/or shallow storytelling to extraordinary and captivating new heights.

At first glance, the research process can seem more than a little intimidating. That's why we're breaking down an easy research process that will work well for many writers in this section of our workbook.

Don't think you need to complete any research? Explore today's section anyway. You may just discover some interesting topics you can use to add some of that captivating depth to your own story.

Activity #1: Prepare to research.

Using the prompts in this activity, first write down the broad topics you'd like to research before you write (e.g. injuries from car accidents, 1940's fashion, island living, how to play the violin, etc.).

Then, use the space provided beneath each topic prompt to detail what exactly you'd like to research about each topic (e.g. air bag injuries and medical response times, popular NYC fashion houses, famous violinists, etc.).

Research your story.

Topic:

Topic:

Topic:

Research your story.

Topic:

Topic:

Topic:

Research your story.

Now it's time to research.

There are many ways to research a novel, but which types of research you'll explore will depend largely on both the topics you need to research and the resources that are available to you.

Here are some of the most common ways to research your story:

Online: Conduct research online using credible websites, such as those ending in .edu, .gov, and .org.

Books: Take valuable and credible research notes by reading books written by experts on your topics of choice.

Interviews: Conduct an interview with an expert on your topic or with someone who's experienced first-hand the topics you're covering in your story.

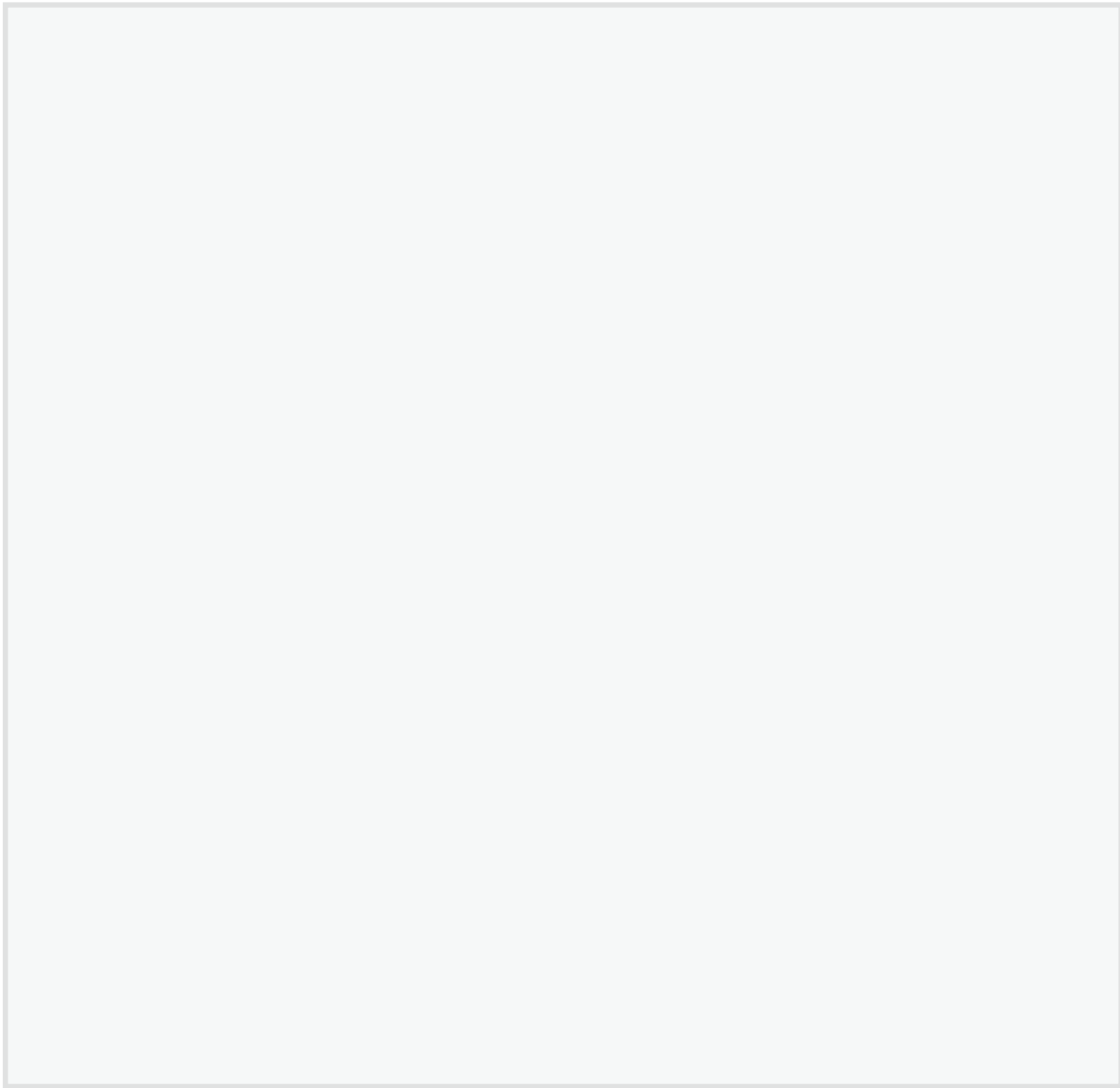
Experiences: Visit a place you'd like to research, take part in your characters' favorite activities or habits (when safe and legal, of course!), or keep a keen observational eye when out in public.

Activity #2: Begin researching.

Use the spaces provided on the following pages to take notes and list citations as you begin researching your story topics.

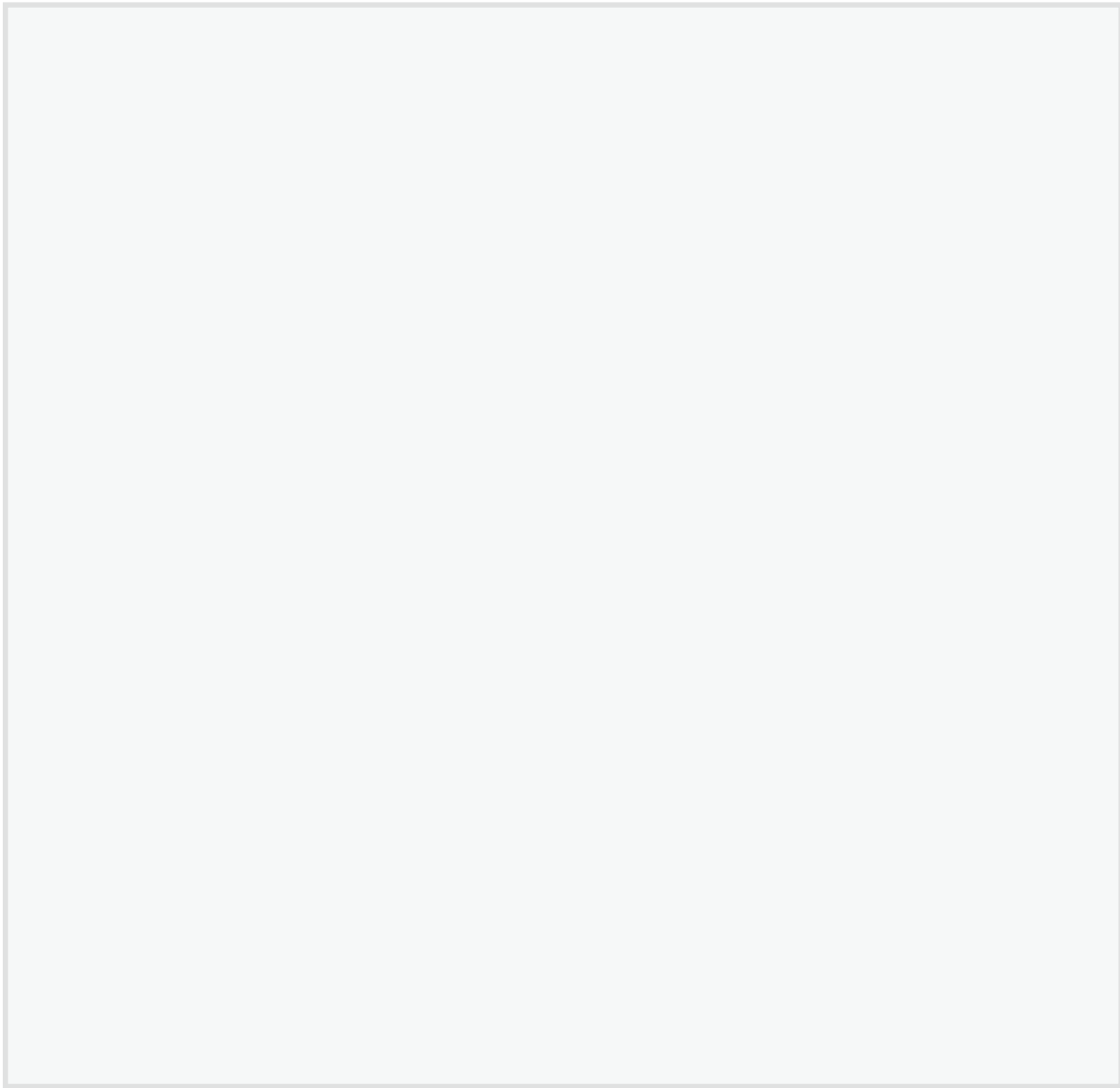
Research your story.

Topic / Sub-Topic:



Research your story.

Topic / Sub-Topic:



Research your story.

Topic / Sub-Topic:

Topic / Sub-Topic:

Research your story.

Topic / Sub-Topic:

Topic / Sub-Topic:

**BUILD
YOUR STORY
WORLD**

Build your story world.

Are you writing speculative fiction?

The remaining four sections of our workbook are designed specifically to help authors who write stories set in fantastical, magical, supernatural, or futuristic worlds.

Authors of speculative fiction often have additional pre-writing work to complete because they will be writing in a fictional world or modified real-world setting and therefore must map out these new elements.

Are you one such author? If so, don't skip out on the remaining sections of our workbook.

In this first section, we'll begin by sketching out the basics of our story worlds, particularly as pertains to their physical characteristics. Ready to dive in?

Activity #1: Define the parameters of your story world.

Use the prompts provided on the following page to define the basic geographical elements of your story's setting.

Build your story world.

Describe the basic geography of your fictional world below.

In the space below, write down your story world's main countries, regions, or cities.

Build your story world.

Activity #2: Build your fictional world.

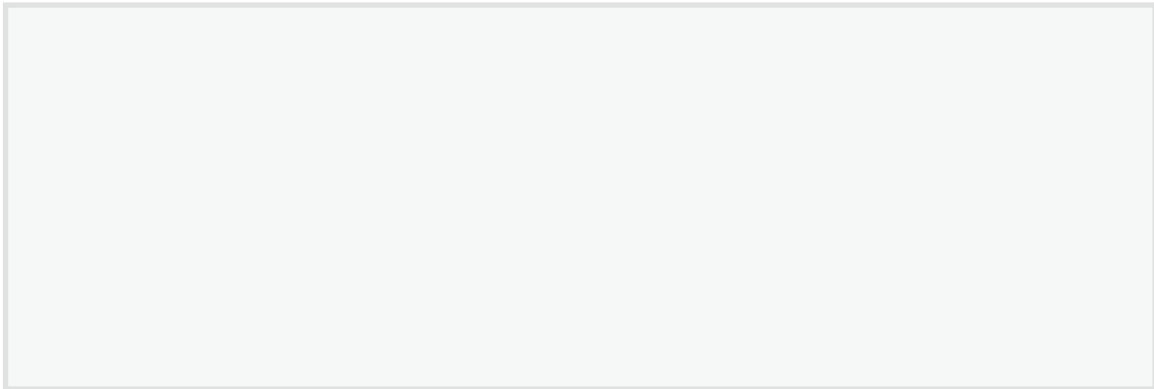
If you're writing within a fictional world, take the time to lay out this world before beginning to write, specifically taking a look at each individual region within your world.

Use the following questions to gain a strong understanding of each country or region in your fictional world. You may wish to print multiple copies of this activity so you can complete the prompts for every region in your story world.

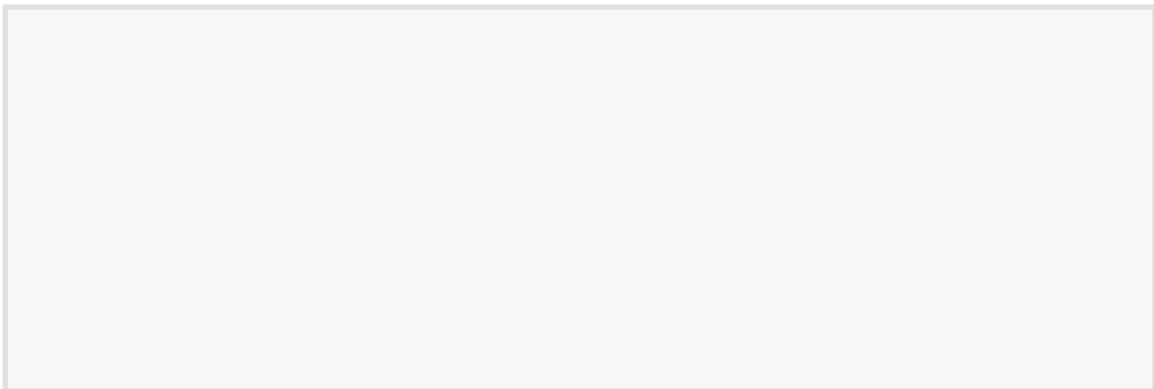
In the space below, describe the terrain and weather in this region.

Build your story world.

Are there any well-known physical landmarks or buildings? Describe them.

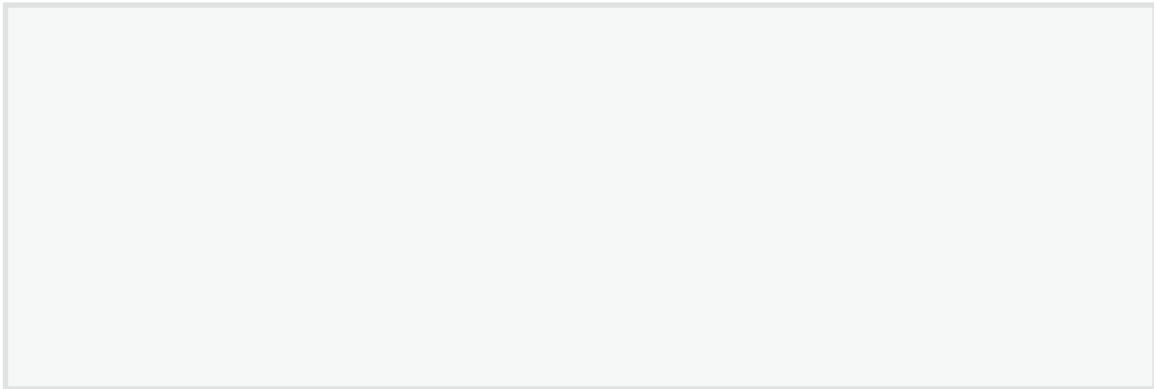


To which real-world country or region does this place physically compare?

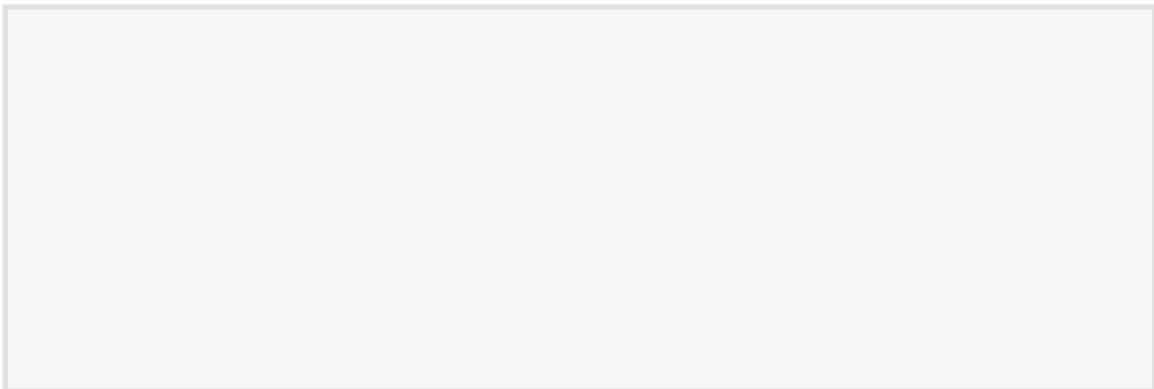


Build your story world.

What natural resources can be found in your fictional region?

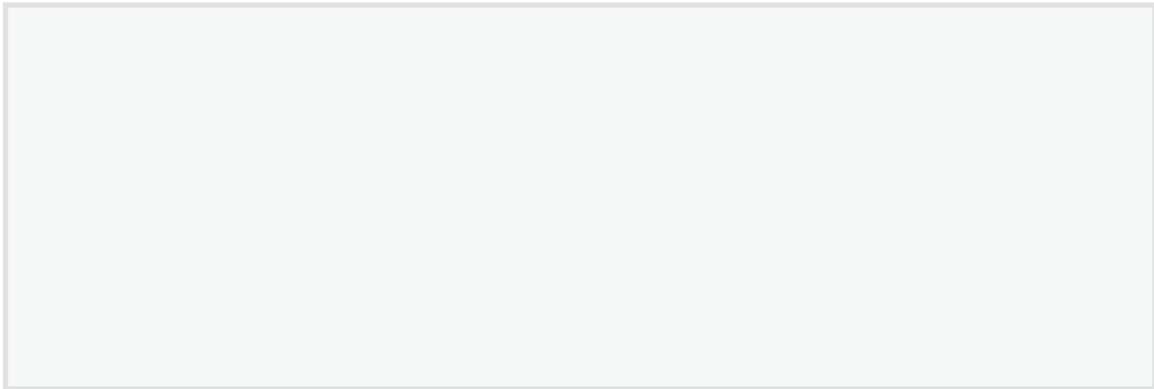


Does this region maintain any industries? If so, describe them below.

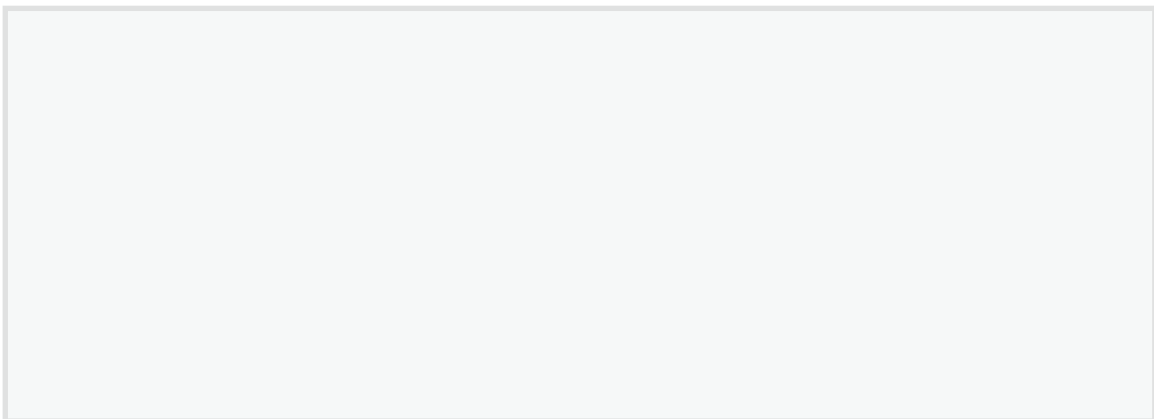


Build your story world.

Are there any unnatural or magical elements in this place? Describe them.



Which cultures are represented in this region? Make a quick list below.



Build your story world.

Use the space below to lay out a basic sketch of this region of your story world. Don't worry, it doesn't have to be neat!

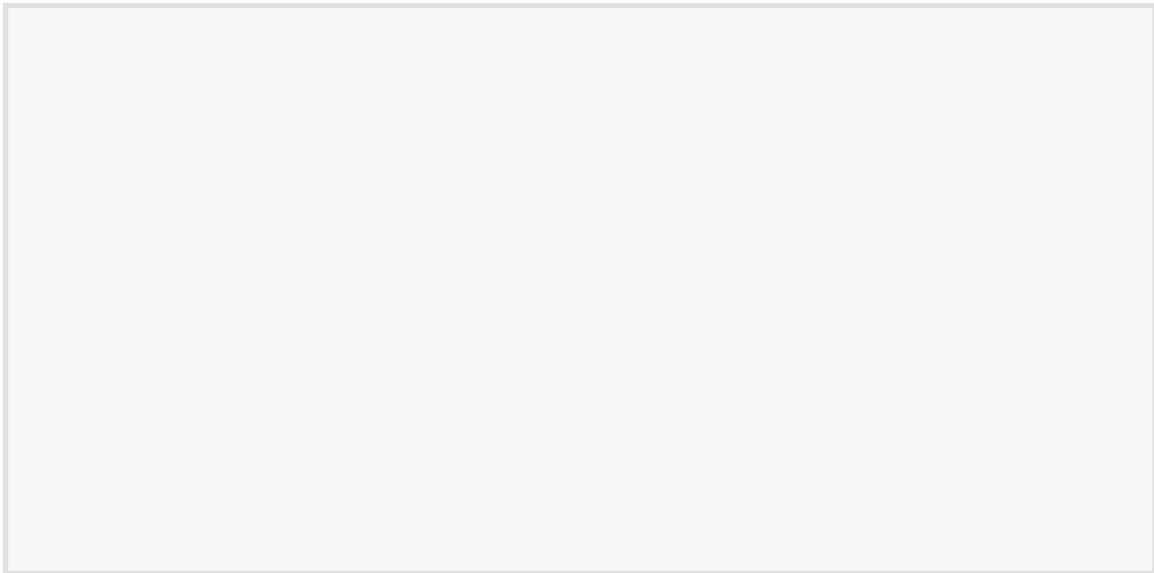
Build your story world.

Activity #3: Map out your unique real-world setting.

Are you writing a real-world setting with non-realistic elements? Then this activity is for you!

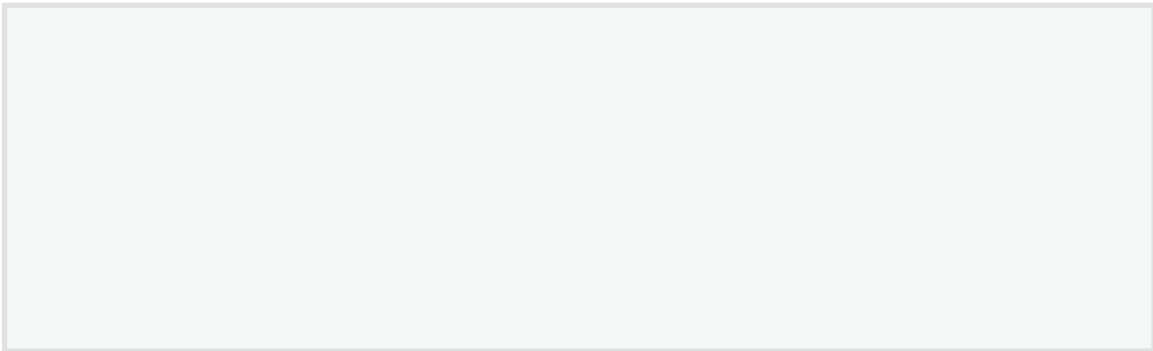
Use the prompts on the following pages to map out what makes your version of our world different from the real one.

Where in the real world does your story take place?

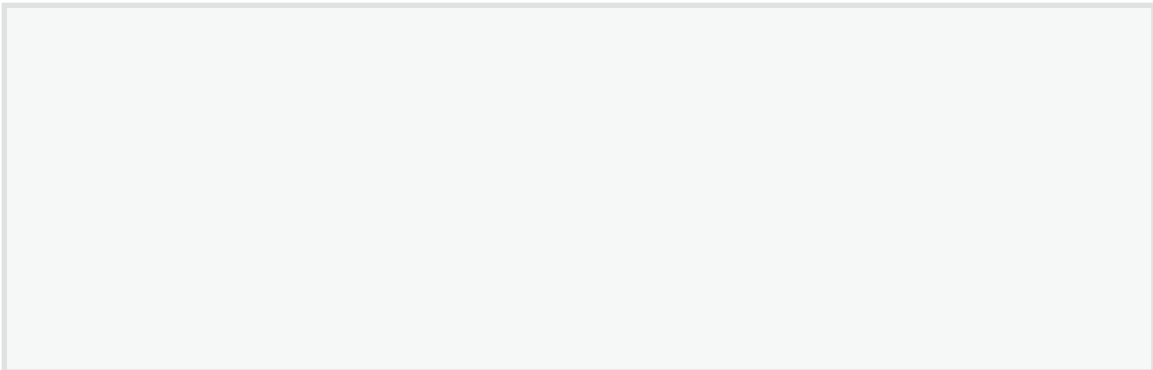
A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray border, intended for the user to map out their unique real-world setting.

Build your story world.

What fantastical, paranormal, magical, or futuristic elements appear in your version of our real world?



Does everyone in your story know about these otherworldly elements, or only certain characters?



Build your story world.

How do these otherworldly elements work? Can they be used, wielded, or communicated with?

Outline any important details about these elements in the space below.

Build your story world.

Does your story contain any fictional settings that can be found in or traveled to from the real world?

Write down the important details about this setting below, and consider answering some of the questions in Activity #2 with this setting in mind.

CREATE FICTIONAL SOCIETIES

Create fictional societies.

With fictional worlds come fictional societies.

And, of course, the fictional societies we create for our worlds will have a massive effect on who our characters are and how their stories play out.

That's why it is so important that speculative authors take time to outline their world's societies before diving into the first draft.

Creating realistic and believable fictional societies can be an intimidating process when we think about just how nuanced our real-world societies are.

That's why we're diving straight into nuance and detail in this section of our workbook!

Activity #1: Outline the parameters of your fictional societies.

The following prompts will help you lay out the elements commonly found in any real-world society—with your own unique twist, of course!

You may wish to print multiple copies of this activity if your story features several fictional societies.

Create fictional societies.

Is your fictional society inspired by a real-world society? If so, describe the elements of that society you're carrying over into your own below.

What other societies does this society interact with, whether amicably, financially, contentiously, etc?

Create fictional societies.

In the space below, describe your society's government.

In the space below, describe your society's social classes.

Create fictional societies.

In the space below, describe historical events important to your society.

In the space below, describe your society's economy.

Create fictional societies.

In the space below, describe common professions held by those from your society.

In the space below, describe how different people groups in your society are treated.

Create fictional societies.

Activity #2: Explore your world's cultures.

Within a fictional society, you'll find at least one fictional culture. And just like societies, cultures are complex and nuanced.

Using the prompts provided on the following pages, begin exploring the complexities of your own fictional culture(s) by working through some of cultures' most common elements.

You may wish to print multiple copies of this activity if your story world features more than one fictional culture.

In the space below, describe the arts in this culture.

Create fictional societies.

In the space below, describe the entertainment in this culture.

In the space below, describe the food and drink of this culture.

Create fictional societies.

In the space below, describe the clothing people of this culture wear.

In the space below, describe the written and spoken language(s) found in this culture.

Create fictional societies.

In the space below, describe any customs or symbols important to the people of this culture.

In the space below, describe any historical events, holidays, or frequent practices important to the people of this culture.

Create fictional societies.

In the space below, describe the culture's gender norms.

In the space below, describe the culture's religious and/or moral beliefs.

EXPLORE MAGICAL ELEMENTS

Explore magical elements.

Does your story world contain magic?

If so, you've come to the right place. In this section of our workbook, we're going to explore your world's magic system in depth. Why? Because not all magic systems are built the same!

There are many ways in which magic can be explained and utilized in fiction, as evidenced by any number of fantasy novels. How exactly will magic work in your world? Let's find out.

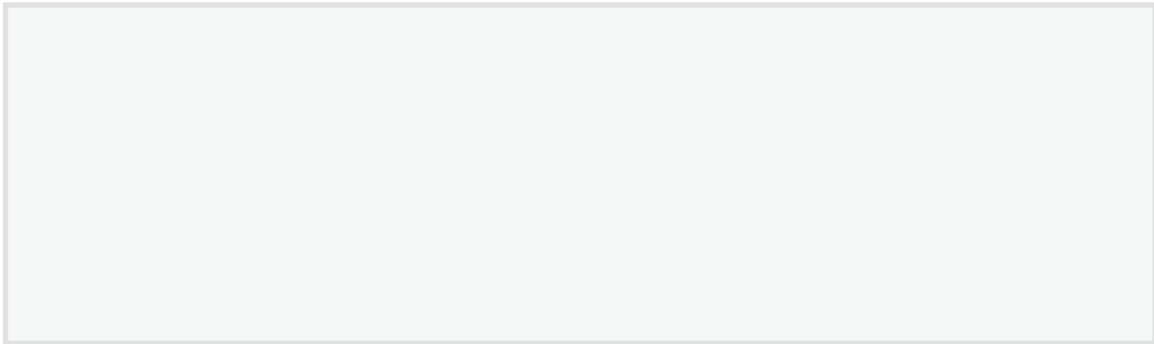
Activity #1: Outline your magic system's rules.

Just like societies and cultures, your magic system should be nuanced and well-developed. That's why this section will walk you through the process of building a magic system step by step.

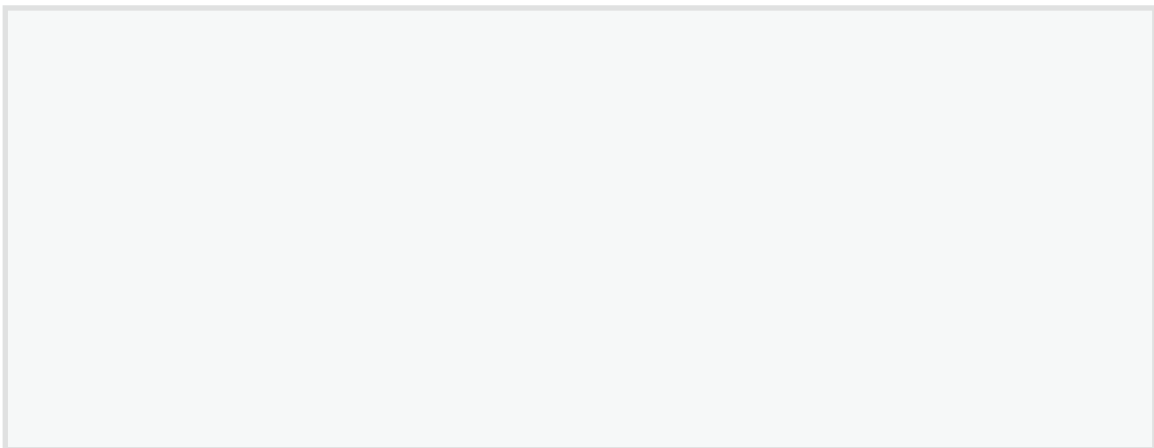
Use the prompts on the following pages to begin building your magic system today.

Explore magical elements.

Who receives magic in your story world?

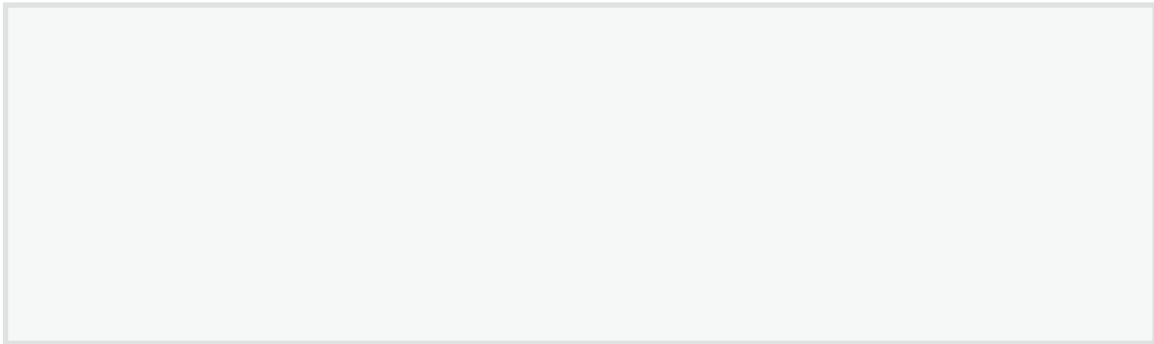


How does magic manifest itself?

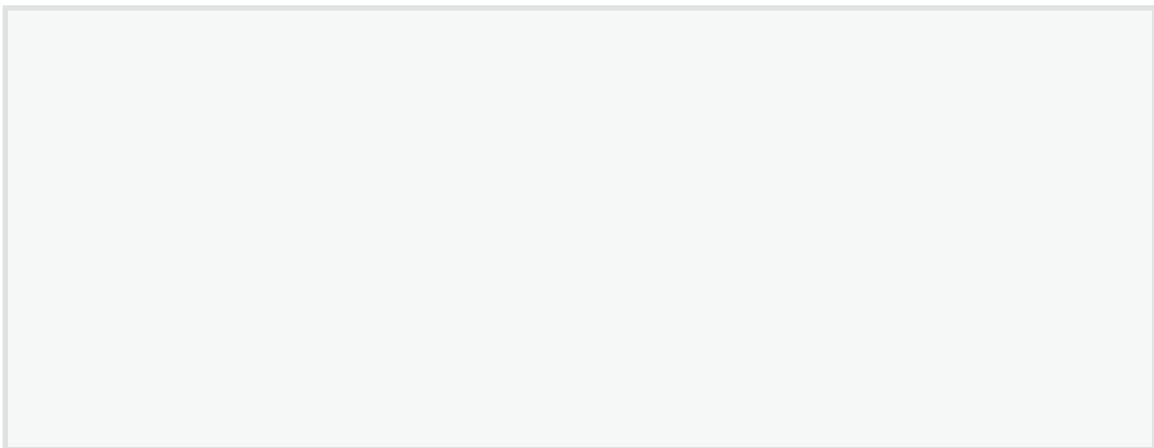


Explore magical elements.

Is magic wild and untamed or does it follow a specific order?

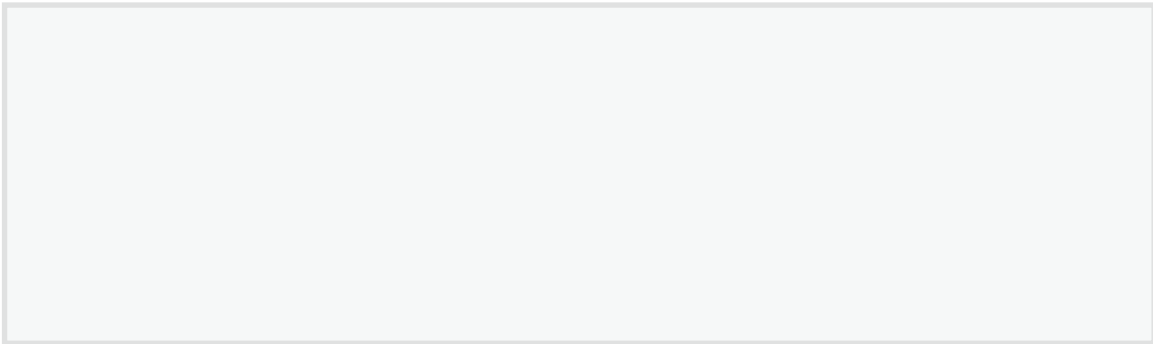
A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray border, intended for a student to write their response to the question above.

How can one learn or gain magic in your world?

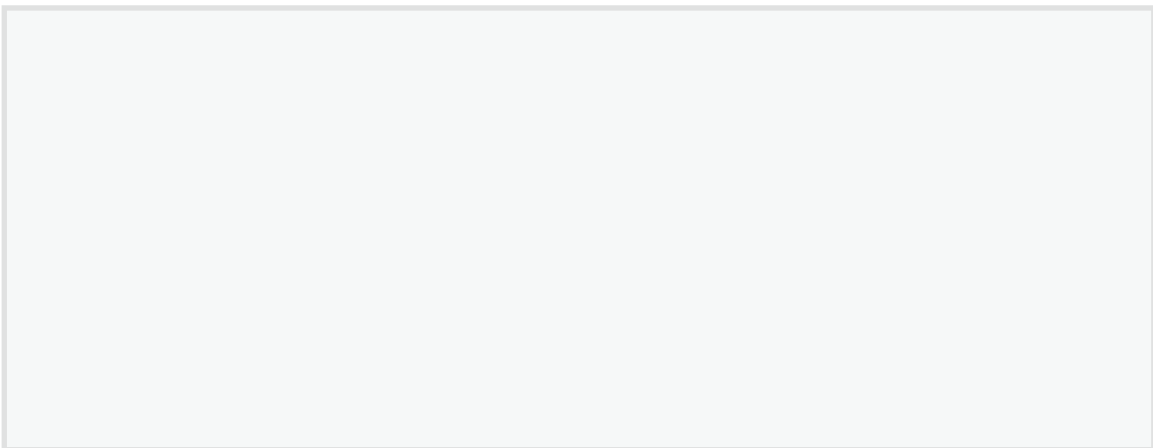
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Explore magical elements.

Is magic innate or does it come from an external source?

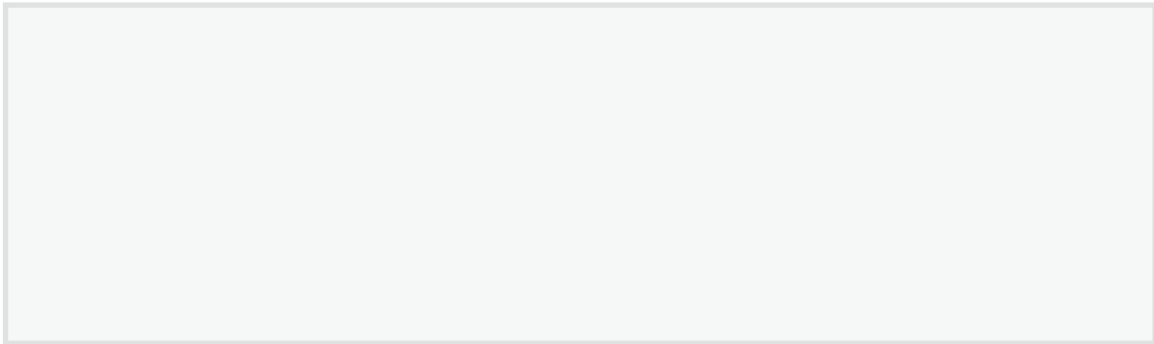


Who created magic? Who has control over it now?

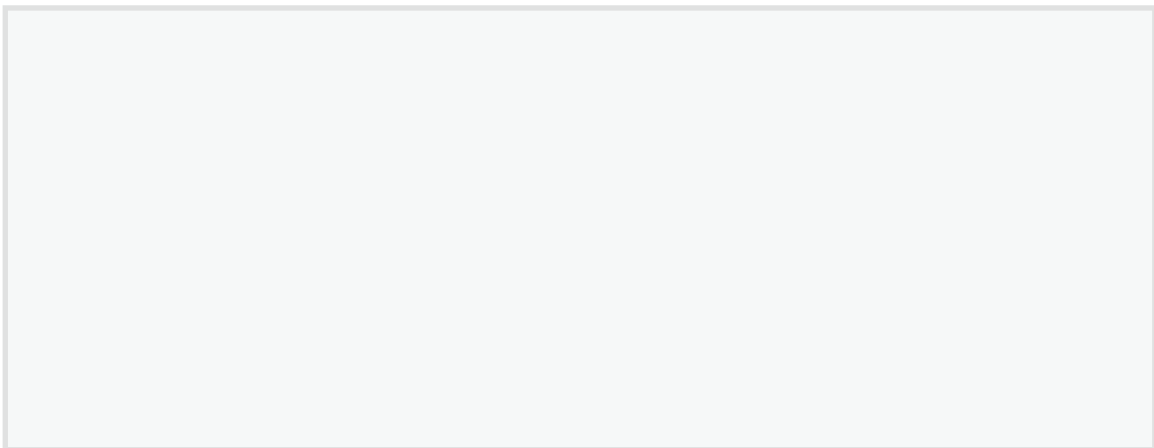


Explore magical elements.

Are items such as wands or staffs needed to use magic?

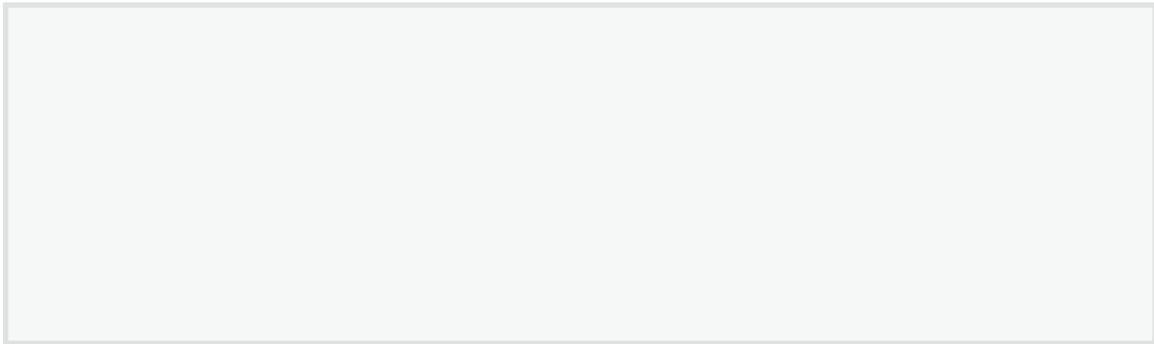


How do religious leaders in your world view magic? The government?

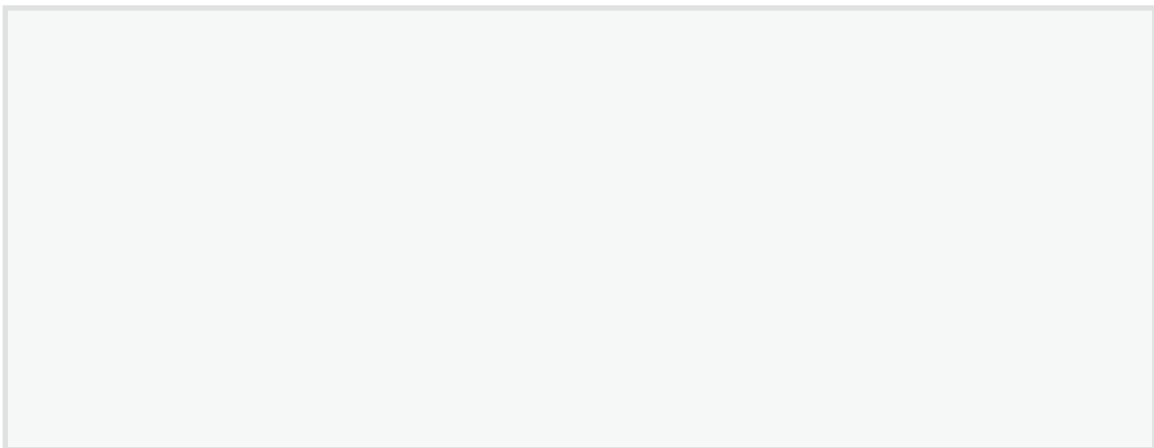


Explore magical elements.

Do any social classes or people groups shun or fear magic? If so, why?



Is there good and evil magic? If so, who practices each type?



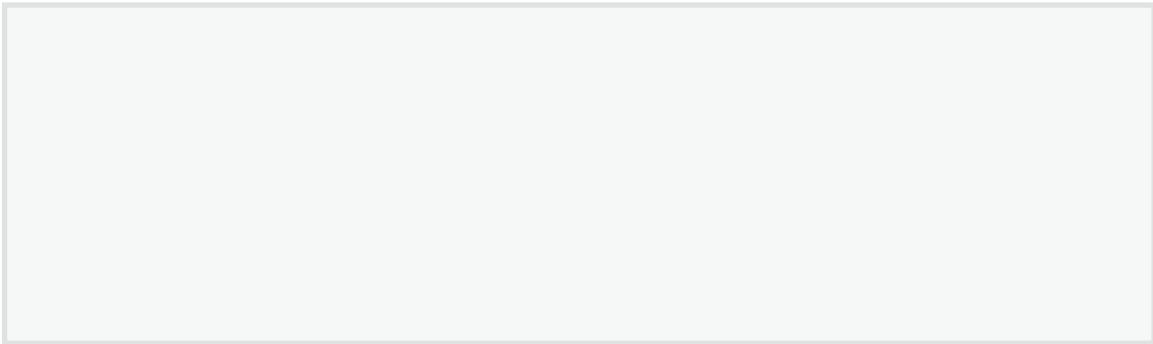
Explore magical elements.

Is magic used differently by people of a certain gender, age, or social group? If so, how?

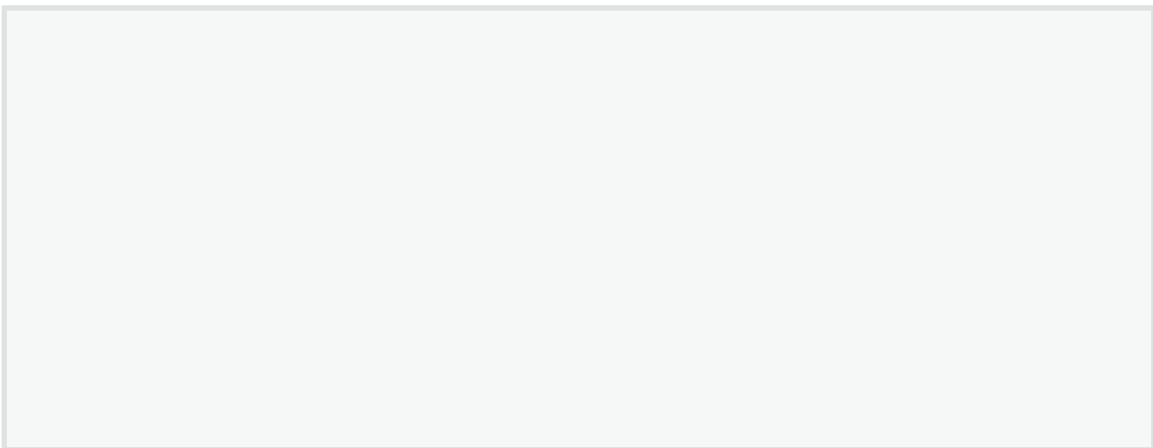
Can magic be created or destroyed? If so, how?

Explore magical elements.

Does magic cost the user anything? If so, what?



How does one go about learning how to use or control magic?



OUTLINE AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGY

Outline available technology.

Let's get technical.

The technologies available in most fictional worlds aren't comparable to those available in real life.

In some cases, the technologies in your story world may be far more advanced than those of our real world. In other cases, it may be far behind.

No matter the kind of technology available to your characters, don't skip this important final section of our workbook.

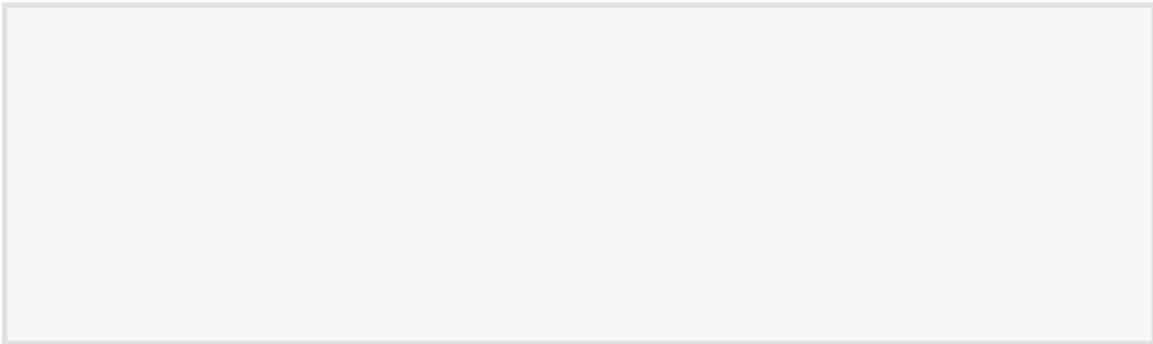
Activity #1: Outline the technologies available in your story world.

Because technology affects how a society operates in so many ways, it's important that you know what technologies are available in your story world before beginning to write.

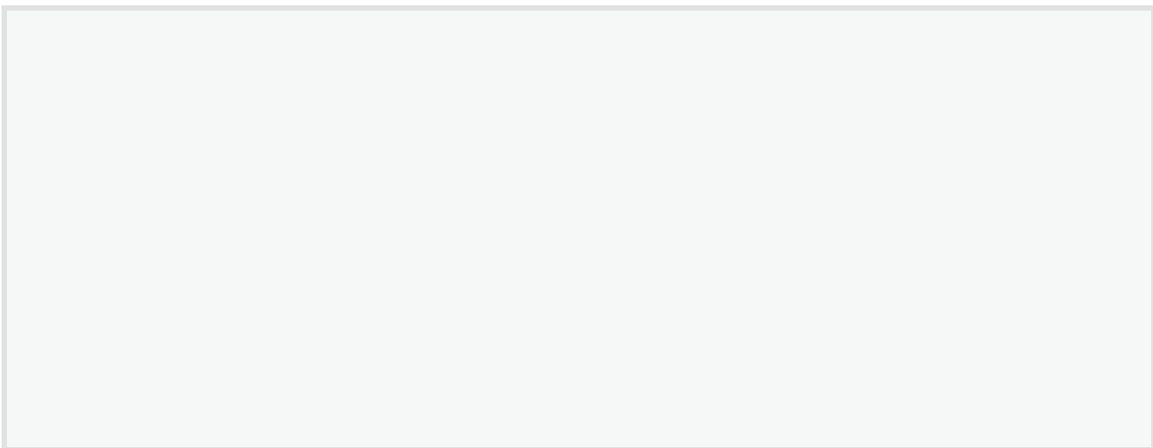
Begin outlining those technologies today using the prompts provided in this activity.

Outline available technology.

What everyday problems do people in your fictional society face?

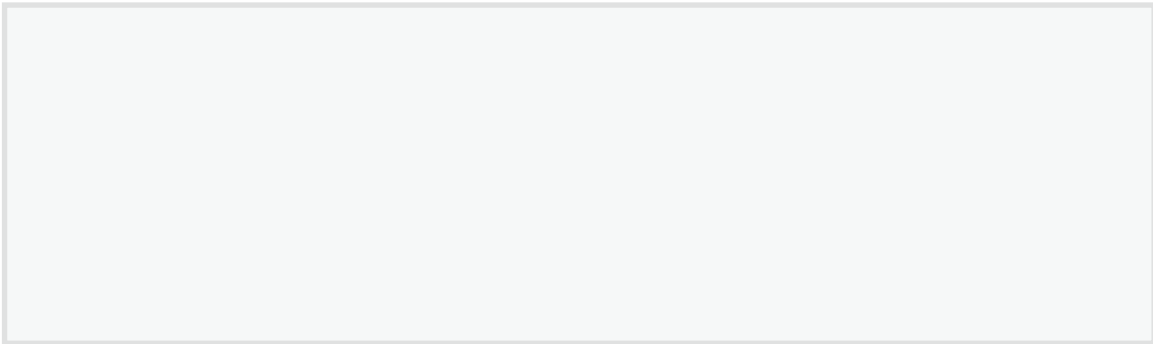


What technologies are used to combat these problems?

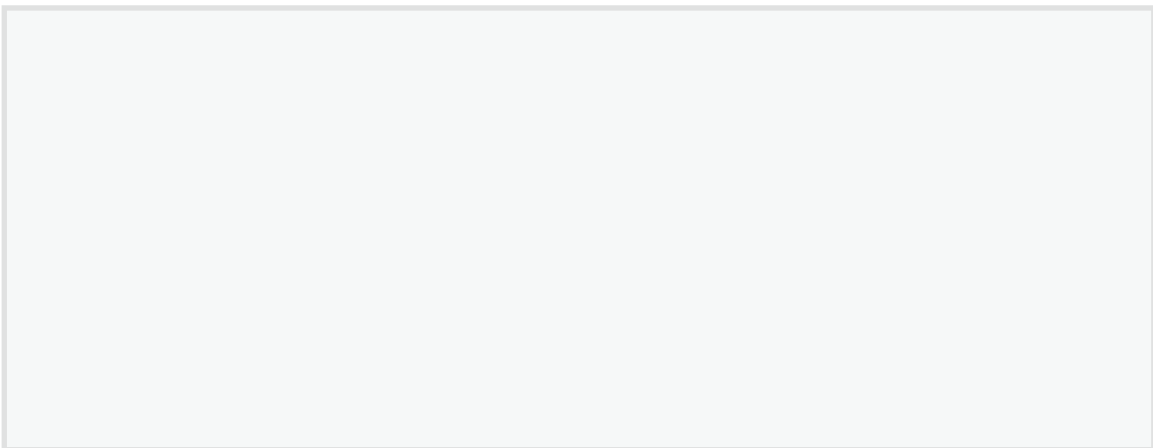


Outline available technology.

Do people in your world use any form of technology to communicate?

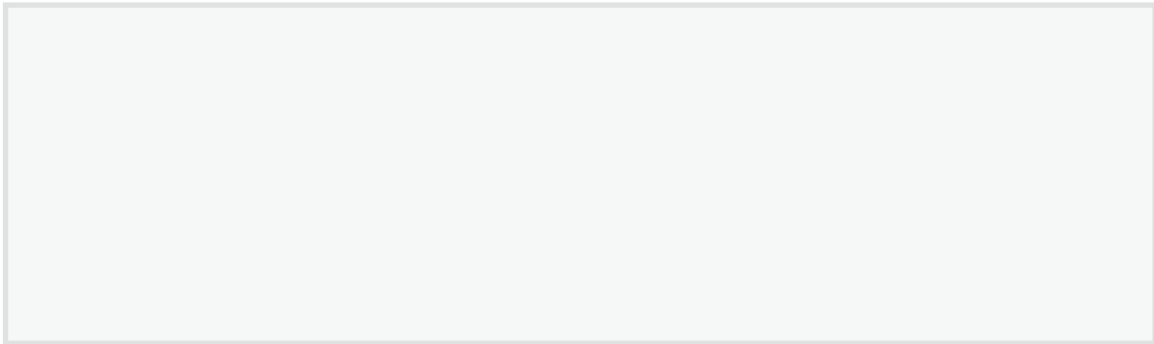


Do people in your world use any form of technology to travel?

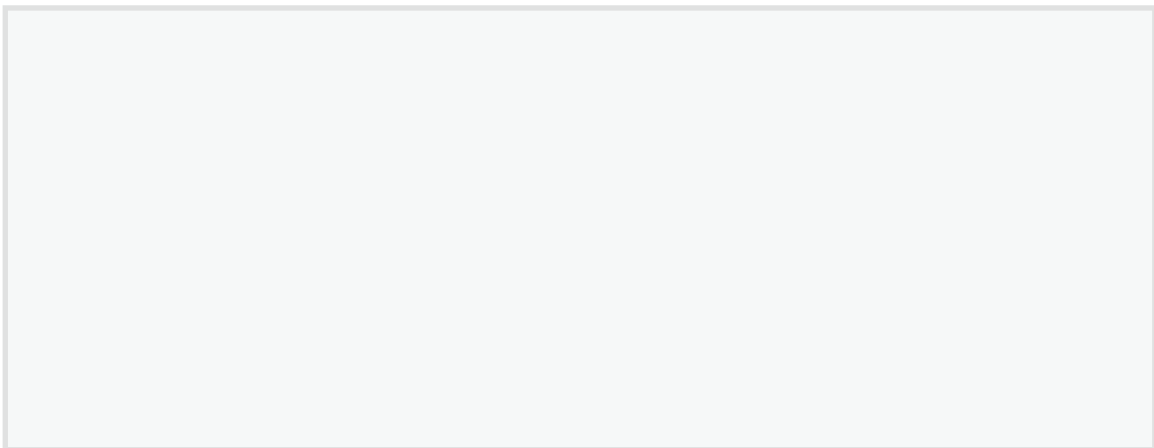


Outline available technology.

Do people in your world use any form of technology for education?

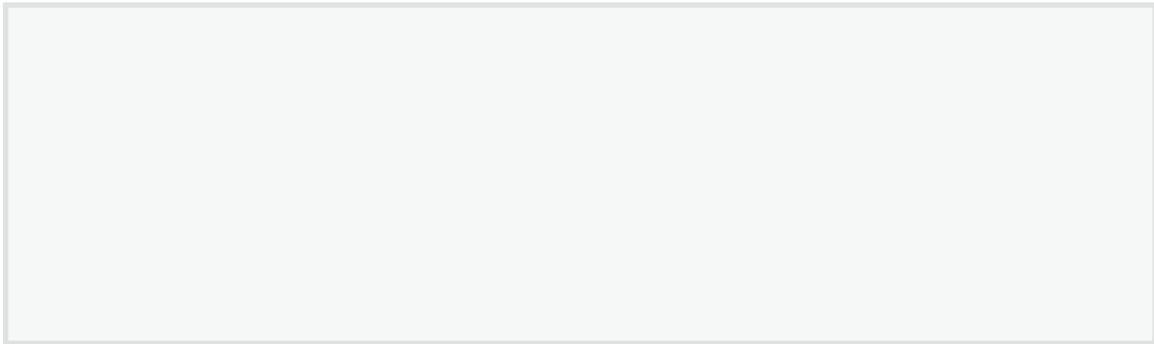


Do people in your world use any form of technology for entertainment?

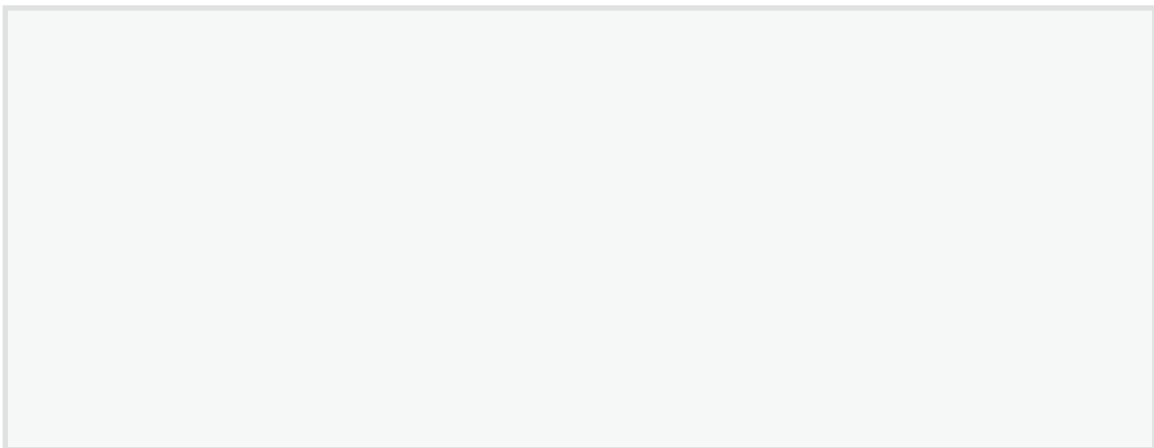


Outline available technology.

Do people in your world use any form of technology as weaponry?

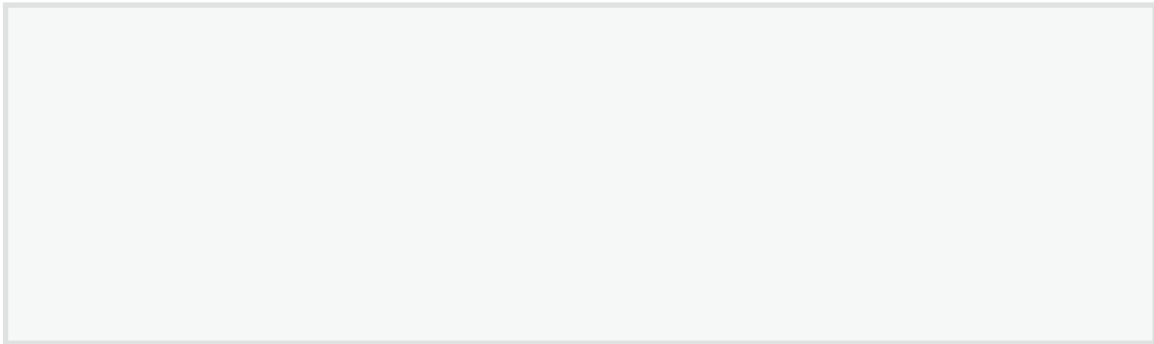
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Who can afford each type of technology in your world?

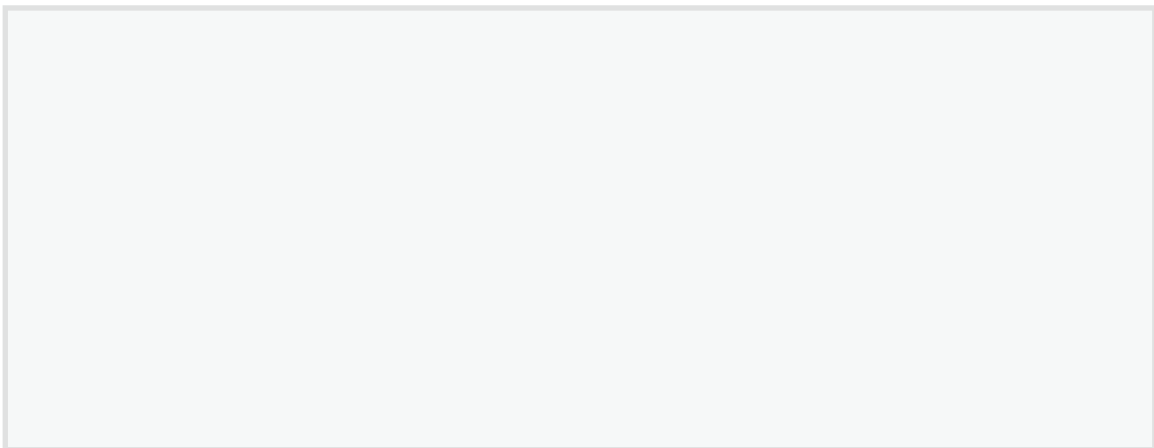
A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray border, intended for the user to write their response to the question above.

Outline available technology.

How does the government use technology to control or protect its citizens?

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray border, intended for a student to write their response to the question about government use of technology.

Who creates and/or holds power over the technology in your world?

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray border, intended for a student to write their response to the question about who creates or holds power over technology.

Outline available technology.

What powers the technologies available in your world?

How does technology create problems or conflict for the people in your world?

FACING THE FIRST DRAFT

Facing the first draft.

Congratulations on completing The Pre-Write Project!

Preparing to write your story takes time, but with a finished story guide now under your belt, the time has finally come for you to approach the first draft.

But where do you begin? The simple answer might be “With chapter one!”, but just as it is with pre-writing, there is no one right way to go about drafting your story.

Authors work in many different ways. Some fast-draft their stories, shedding care for how the words sound so they can get their story down as quickly as possible and move on to revisions.

Other writers prefer to take their time, carefully crafting the very best version of their story in the first draft—even if they’ll have to revise it later.

Some authors write their stories in sequential order, while others jump from chapter to chapter, drafting whatever most strikes their fancy on any particular day.

These examples are just a small sampling of the many ways in which you can go about writing your first draft. If you aren’t sure of your process just yet, it may take time and experimentation to get it just right.

And that’s okay!

Facing the first draft.

The best thing you can do is simply dive in and get started.

Trust in the power of your pre-writing. Lean on the story guide you've created throughout this workbook. Let it guide you as you work your way through the drafting process.

And remember, writing isn't always easy. You'll have your fair share of doubts, and you may be tempted at times to give up.

When this happens, keep in mind that you can't edit what you haven't written. First drafts aren't meant to be perfect. They're meant to be completed. It's in editing that the magic happens.

Consider setting a goal for yourself—whether it be to write a certain number of words per week, to write for a certain amount of time each day, or to finish your draft by a certain date—then get to work!

If you'd like additional guidance as you prepare to draft your newly pre-written story, I've gathered a list of articles and resources that you may find helpful.

You can find these additional resources over at www.well-storied.com/facingthefirstdraft.



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