

# *World-Building* **WARRIOR**

**A Comprehensive Guide to Developing  
Your Stories' Fictional Worlds**



**KRISTEN KIEFFER**

# Welcome To The Workbook

**Hey, writer! I'm delighted you chose to dive deep into world-building with me today.**

Fictional worlds can serve many narrative purposes. For some, they are an escape from our present reality. For others, they provide the distance needed to look at our world and its myriad issues with healthy objectivity.

No matter your personal reason for choosing to build a fictional world, this workbook is designed to help you make the process as organized and intentional as possible.

This workbook is comprised of seven major sections, each with their own activities and guided questions. Though I've organized these sections in what I feel is a natural flow, there is no need to work through them in chronological order, nor to complete certain activities if they do not apply to your story world.

World-building is a complex and personal task, and no two worlds are alike. Some world-builders choose to create fully fictional worlds (also called secondary worlds), while others build upon our present reality by crafting alternative histories, bringing legends or the supernatural to life, or launching humanity into an interstellar future.

There is guidance to be found in this workbook no matter which type of story world you'd like to build. You may even wish to complete this workbook several times over as you work on multiple projects. To do so, simply print the workbook as many times as needed or click File > Save As to save multiple copies to your computer.

# Welcome To The Workbook

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

There are many ways to approach world-building. Some authors seek only to develop the elements needed to contextualize their story's setting and advance its plot, while others wish to immerse readers in an expansive and fully-realized fictional world.

Neither option is inherently better than the other; which path you pursue depends solely on the type of story you'd like to tell. Your choice will affect how you approach the world-building process, however, so take a moment now to consider your intentions.

If you want to create a world solely to serve the story you'd like to tell, you'll first need to understand what purposes you need your world to fulfill. Develop your story's plot, characters, and themes before diving into this workbook to better understand how best to utilize it.

If hoping to fully immerse readers in your fictional world, however, world-building can be a great place to begin the pre-writing process. By first establishing your world, you can then create characters, storylines, and themes that make the most of the world you've created.

*( Continued on following page . . . )*



# Welcome To The Workbook

Of course, your approach to world-building may vary from these examples. Perhaps you're looking to strengthen an existing world's development, or maybe you have a vague idea of both your story and its world but would like help in fleshing out the details.

Have no fear! This workbook can provide helpful guidance no matter your world-building needs; simply take from it what will best help you develop your story world, using the table of contents on the following pages as a roadmap to your personal world-building process.

I can't wait to see what you bring to life, writer. If you have any questions as you work through this workbook, don't hesitate to get in touch at [kristen@well-storied.com](mailto:kristen@well-storied.com).

## *Who created this workbook?*

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**Hi, I'm Kristen Kieffer.** I'm an author of fantasy fiction and creative writing resources.

Through my website, Well-Storied, I strive to help writers craft sensational novels and build their very best writing lives. You can learn more about my work at [www.well-storied.com/about](http://www.well-storied.com/about).

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# **GEOGRAPHY AND COSMOLOGY**

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# Geography & Cosmology

## *Introduction*

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**When building our story worlds, a natural place to begin is with the world itself.** The land, the weather, the climate. Or, if your story takes place in space, the star systems and galaxies, asteroid belts and moons.

These physical features ground our characters in their stories, giving them a physical landscape in which to roam while also defining the foundations of our world's civilizations. How so? Nature is both mother and danger to man and beast alike.

Civilizations arise in areas of fertile ground and temperate climate — and fall just as quickly to natural disasters and extreme weather. Likewise, the areas of most difficult terrain and climate often harbor none but the most daring or desperate, or those that have specifically evolved to survive in such places over time.

The state of the land shapes quality of life, both that of the individual and of civilization as a whole, and it's for this reason that we're going to explore our worlds' geographies, climates, and cosmologies in the pages to come. This section may prove most helpful to those creating fully fictional worlds, but some questions will also apply to dystopian writers or those telling alternative histories.



# Geography & Cosmology

## **Activity #1: Study the map!**

It's time to lay out the geography of your fictional world. Rather than utilizing guided questions, as much of our workbook will, this activity is designed to help you sketch a realistic map of your world's physical landscape.

Have no fear — you don't need to be an artist or cartographer to put together a basic map. Rudimentary drawing skills are just fine. If your story takes place on multiple planets, you may wish to complete this section for each major planet your characters visit.

**Prompt #1:** Use the blank space on the following page to sketch your world map as you work through the steps provided on pages 11 - 14.

If using the digital version of this workbook, grab a blank piece of paper to sketch your map.



# Geography & Cosmology

**Step #1: Coastlines.** Consider your world's continents and oceans and begin to sketch their boundaries on your map.

Keep in mind that land masses are rarely smooth-sided, sharp-angled, or uniform. Create continents with curves and juts, using a real-world map or Google Earth for inspiration.

(Note: Land masses nearer a world's poles often have ragged coastlines as a result of glacial action. Conversely, coastlines in warmer climates are typically smoother in comparison.)

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**Step #2: Mountain Ranges.** Begin to sketch your world's mountain ranges, bearing in mind how mountains are formed.

The tallest ranges result from collisions of tectonic plates, while volcanic mountains form when molten rock from the world's core bursts through the surface of the earth and piles upon itself. More moderate ranges form when stress from tectonic shifts buckles the earth's rocky surface.

Mountain ranges can appear nearly anywhere in your world, but rarely do they emerge in any form other than a long, thin, slightly curving strand. No zig-zags, circles, or other strange shapes. Consider underwater ranges as well, as the tallest peaks will form many of your world's islands and archipelagoes.

# Geography & Cosmology

**Step #3: Rivers and bodies of water.** Water is a powerful source of life, providing nourishment to the land and to civilizations.

When sketching your own rivers, lakes, bays, and beyond, consider the source. Rivers most often form from snowmelt or rainfall in mountainous areas and flow downhill until they empty into lakes or oceans. Springs bubble up from overflowing aquifers deep in the earth. Fjords are formed by glaciers butting up against land.

Do research on bodies of water with which you may not be entirely familiar (e.g. lagoons, marshes, bayous, coves...) and remember to keep it realistic. Rivers can't flow continuously uphill or stretch from coast to coast, but a spring can pop up in the middle of the desert if it's fed by a well-watered aquifer.

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**Step #4: Forests and grasslands.** Let's add some vegetation to our story worlds, shall we?

As always, when sketching a new geographic element, consider how and where such elements would reasonably form. Most forests can't grow in hot, dry climates, though savannas can form in areas with seasonal rainfall. Steppes, or grasslands, form in areas too dry to support forests but not dry enough to turn to desert. And deserts, of course, well... I think you get the picture!

# Geography & Cosmology

**Step #5: Climate.** Take time to consider the climates of different regions on your map. You've likely already defined some areas as hot or cold, dry or humid, since you've created forests and deserts and grasslands to match.

Climate, however, is a bit more complex. For example, consider your world's mountain ranges. The climate of the lands on either side of a range can vary greatly, as mountain ranges can stall storms, making the land on the opposite side drier.

Similarly, global wind patterns can shift cloud cover, leaving some areas notoriously hot and dry while other areas experience onslaughts of wind- or storm-related weather phenomena (think: hurricanes, tornadoes, and monsoons).

Use these and other such climate-related details to add nuance to your world's geography now, forming tundras, cliffs, rainforests and other features or modifying any unrealistic features you've created in past steps.

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**Step #6: Civilizations.** Civilizations need natural resources to survive — food, water, and shelter from the elements being the most predominant needs.

This is why civilizations most often form in fertile regions and spread outwards over time. (Continued on the following page... )



# Geography & Cosmology

As you begin to dot your landscape with cities and towns, countries and empires, consider where they're obtaining natural resources.

If you set civilizations away from fertile lands, take time to discern how they'll receive the resources they need. Will they employ an aqueduct system or use irrigation techniques to water their fields? Will they import grain and other goods from more fertile regions?

Keep in mind the boundaries nature creates as well. Mountain ranges and coastlines often serve as natural boundaries for large countries, while forests or rivers may serve to divide smaller towns or tribes.

**Activity #2: Across the universe.** If your story sees your characters in space, let's take time now to map out your version of the universe, or galaxy, or star system.

Use the questions on the following pages to define your story's stellar setting.

# Geography & Cosmology

**Question #1: How much of outer space will feature in your story?** Planets, solar systems, galaxies, or entire universes? Define the scope of your setting and list each major location your characters will visit below.

**Question #2: Does your world consist of multiple universes?** If so, do these universes feature alternative versions of your characters' lives or are they entirely separate realities? Describe each universe briefly below.

# Geography & Cosmology

**Question #3: How do your characters travel through space, time, and/or to alternate realities?** Describe any methods of transportation briefly below.

**Question #4: How is space governed?** Are there whole societies in space or are your characters merely exploring its yet undeveloped expanse? Describe any major established societies briefly below.

# Geography & Cosmology

**Question #5: Do your characters inhabit planets, moons, or other heavenly bodies?** Did life develop there or were such bodies chosen or made suitable for life? List the names of major civilizations below.

**Question #6: Do non-human species exist in your version of outer space?** If so, briefly describe their appearance, societies, and any other important factors below.

# Geography & Cosmology

**Question #7: What major challenges does humanity (or the predominant species in your story) experience by living in or traversing outer space?**

**Question #8: Are there any other pertinent details you wish to note as you map out your stellar setting?** List them in the space below.



# Geography & Cosmology

**Activity #3: In the beginning.** Whether or not your story takes place in outer space, understanding the origin of your world, or at least the origin as your characters believe it to be, can be a fantastic exercise in world-building.

Use the questions in this activity to define the predominant cosmology(s) of your world.

**Question #1: Are the origins of your world founded in religious belief, scientific study, or common legend?**

**Question #2: Who or what existed in the beginning, before your world came into being?** What, if anything, was taking place? (Answer box provided on the following page... )

# Geography & Cosmology

**Question #3: Does this cosmology teach the existence of a deity or other pre-human figures?** If so, list these figures in the space below.

# Geography & Cosmology

**Question #4: Where do these figures live?** Do they have or can they take physical form? Describe any important details about your deities' existence below.

**Question #5: Does this cosmology teach the existence or origin of good and evil?** If so, describe the origin below.

# Geography & Cosmology

**Question #6: Does your world contain a heaven, underworld, or other secondary realms?** If so, describe these realms below.

**Question #7: If other realms exist in your world, who can enter these realms?** How do they do so?

# Geography & Cosmology

**Question #8: How did stars, planets, moons, and other heavenly bodies come into being?**

**Question #9: How were humans and other creatures created?**



# Geography & Cosmology

**Question #10: Was there purpose in the creation of the world and its creatures?** Or was creation the product of nature or the whims (or mistakes) of the gods?

**Question #11: Are there any remaining details you've invented for your world's cosmology(s)?** If so, write them in the space below.

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# **GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY**

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# Government & Society

## *Introduction*

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**If geography grounds our characters in their stories, it's civilization that lends context to their characterizations.** How so?

A person is the product of the society in which they live, whether they choose to align with its values and beliefs or to rebel. By taking time now to establish our worlds' civilizations, we can better understand our characters' mindsets, develop plots and themes that are grounded in realism, and lend further richness to our story worlds as a whole.

What's not to love about building civilizations, right? Let's take a look at our worlds' governments and societies together in this section of our workbook, writer.

**Activity #1: Let's be civilized.** Understanding how our world's civilizations are born and structured is the first step toward developing believable fictional societies.

Using the questions on the following pages, lay the foundations of your worlds' civilizations today.

# Government & Society

**Question #1: Is this civilization nomadic or rooted in a specific region?**  
Describe the land in which they roam or live below.

**Question #2: How does this civilization access basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter?**

# Government & Society

**Question #3: What natural resources does this civilization rely upon for survival and/or use for trade?**

**Question #4: How vast is this civilization?** Does it contain towns, tribes, cities, states, territories and/or occupied countries? Describe its holdings below.



# Government & Society

**Question #5: Where are this civilization's borders?** Are they defined by natural landmarks or neighboring civilizations? Is there strife at its borders?

**Question #6: Who holds the most power in this civilization?** Is it ruled by an established government or hierarchy, or nothing at all?

# Government & Society

**Question #7: How did this civilization develop?** Can its history be traced to a specific origin? If so, describe its conception below.

**Question #8: What values does this civilization hold most dear?** (For example: harmony, pride, strength, honor, propriety, etc.)

# Government & Society

**Activity #2: Who will govern?** Governments often arise as civilizations grow, with structure and leadership becoming necessary to society's survival.

Use the questions in this activity to establish how law, order, and rule are run in your world's civilizations.

**Question #1: What type of government rules this society?** Is it, for example, an absolute or constitutional monarchy, a democracy, plutocracy, aristocracy, or a dictatorship? Describe the government's structure below.

# Government & Society

**Question #2: Who is the government's leader(s)?** Does anyone council the government's leaders or lawmakers? How so?

**Question #3: Who creates the laws in this society?** By what systems are they established and enforced?

# Government & Society

**Question #4: Does the government employ a system of checks-and-balances intended to stem corruption? If so, describe this system below.**

**Question #5: Can everyday citizens become members of the government or ruling class? If so, how?**

# Government & Society

**Question #6: What kind of power do everyday citizens have in affecting their society's laws and government?**

**Question #7: How much knowledge do everyday citizens have concerning the running of their government? How is this information shared?**

# Government & Society

**Question #8: What struggles or abuses of power frequently threaten the government?** Describe these items below.

**Question #9: Does the government employ an active military?** If so, describe its forces below.

# Government & Society

**Question #10: What civil rights are enforced by the government?** Which are denied? Are certain people groups systematically oppressed?

**Question #11: What property rights does the government permit?** Who is allowed to own property? Are certain items outlawed or regulated?



# Government & Society

**Question #12: Does the government collect taxes?** If so, what is taxed and how are taxes paid?

**Question #13: Does the government provide any form of healthcare to the people?** If so, describe this system. Additionally, how does the government handle outbreaks of disease?

# Government & Society

**Question #14: Does the government provide any assistance to the poor? If so, describe its efforts below.**

**Activity #3: Public Works.** Let's take a brief moment now, writer, to examine how your civilization's government serves — or fails to serve — its citizens.

Use the questions in this activity to define the public works practiced in your fictional society.

# Government & Society

**Question #1: Does the government fund any public buildings such as town halls, schools, libraries, courthouses, or hospitals?** If so, list these items below, describing any details especially pertinent to your story.

**Question #2: Does the government build and maintain infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports, canals, or railroads?** If so, list these items below, describing any details especially pertinent to your story.

# Government & Society

**Question #3: Does the government maintain any public services such as aqueducts, sewer systems, power grids, or dams?** If so, list these items below, describing any details especially pertinent to your story.

**Question #4: Does the government fund the arts, architecture, research, technological advancement, guilds or trades, or any other elements of a well-developed society?** If so, list these items below, describing any details especially pertinent to your story.

# Government & Society

**Activity #4: High class, low class.** Rarely are societies truly egalitarian. With civilization often comes a social hierarchy, a class system separating citizens by their status.

If your fictional society has adopted a social hierarchy, use the questions on the following pages to define each class and how they interact.

**Question #1: What classes exist in your society?** What factors determine each class? (For example: wealth, gender, religion, race, income, education, ability, etc.)

# Government & Society

**Question #2: Are citizens born into their social class or are they in some way assigned?** If they are assigned, what does that process look like?

**Question #3: Are citizens provided the opportunity for social mobility or are they bound to their original class?** If mobility is possible, how could a citizen move between classes?

# Government & Society

**Question #4: What kind of lifestyle, appearance, profession, behaviors, or other defining markers are expected of each social class?**

**Question #5: How do certain social classes view one another?** Are classes respected for their purpose or are some looked upon with greed or disdain?

# Government & Society

**Question #6: Does the government in any way restrict the opportunities, rights, or experiences available to certain social classes? If so, how?**

**Question #7: Is there political disparity between social classes? If so, what values and beliefs does each social class stand for?**



# Government & Society

**Question #8: What struggles do the members of each social class face?**  
Conversely, what privileges are they afforded because of their class?

**Question #9: Does this society rely upon a class of slaves or other unfree laborers?** If so, how are slaves and servants acquired, what tasks are required of them, and how are they treated by society as a whole?

(Additional space provided on following page.)

# Government & Society

**Activity #5: Money, money, money!** Civilization would be little without its economy. Use the questions on the following pages to define your fictional society's economic system, resources, currency, and more.

# Government & Society

**Question #1: Is your society's economic system driven by individual choice, by government regulation, or some mixture of the two?** In other words, who holds the power to shape the economy?

**Question #2: What natural resources are available for use in sale or trade?** Who is allowed to harvest such resources and/or who controls the sale and trade of them?

# Government & Society

**Question #3: How are goods transported for sale or trade?** Is the transport or sale of goods taxed in any way? If so, how?

**Question #4: What common professions can be found in this society?**  
What skills or services are highly valued?

# Government & Society

**Question #5: Are any jobs considered menial, immoral, or irresponsible?**  
If so, why? Who works these jobs?

**Question #6: Can citizens decide on their profession?** If so, how does social class or education affect one's professional opportunities?

# Government & Society

**Question #7: What goods or services are often outsourced?** Does the government impose tariffs on certain imported goods?

**Question #8: Is there a black market for certain goods or services?** If so, explain why the market exists, what it offers, who uses it, and how goods or services are obtained.

# Government & Society

**Question #9: Does this economy in any way contribute to systematic oppression or the degradation of the environment? If so, how?**

**Question #10: What forms of currency exist in your society?** Is currency inherently valuable (e.g. gold, silver, iron) or is has it been deemed valuable by a government or organization (e.g. paper money)?

# Government & Society

**Question #11: In the space below, define how your society's currency works.** How much of the lowest form of currency is needed to buy basic goods (e.g. food, clothing, etc.)? How many units of one form equal another? How much money would one need to be considered wealthy?

**Activity #6: Get Your Education.** Education often has a massive effect on a society's economy, advancement, and global standing, never mind that it serves as a hallmark of advanced civilization.

In this activity, let's work to define the educational practices established in your fictional society.



# Government & Society

**Question #1: What forms of education are practiced in your society?** Are there established schools, universities, and guilds, or is some form of education taught within the home instead?

**Question #2: What subjects or skills are taught in schools, universities, or guilds?** In the home?

# Government & Society

**Question #3: What forms of education are available to members of each social class?** How much education do members of each class receive?

**Question #4: What trades are commonly taught to upcoming laborers?** Is the teaching of trade regulated in any way? Who can learn a trade?

# Government & Society

**Question #5: Who teaches each form of education?** What must one do or achieve to become a teacher?

**Question #6: Does education come at a price?** Who can afford to be educated?

# Government & Society

**Question #7: What types of maths and sciences are often taught?** If none, why is that so?

**Question #8: What forms of literature and philosophical thought are often taught?** If none, why is that so?

# Government & Society

**Question #9: What medical practices are popular in society? Who practices medicine, and how is it taught?**

**Question #10: Does the government fund and/or regulate education? How so?**

# Government & Society

**Question #11: Does religion play a role in common education?** Or are students encouraged to study religion? What are they taught?

**Activity #7: Let's discuss!** Communication is the foundation of society. People groups often share a language, a form of written communication, accepted manners of conversation, and even unique mannerisms and gestures.

Use the questions on the following pages to define these elements, as well as any communication politics that come into play in your society.

# Government & Society

**Question #1: What language(s) is predominant in your civilization? Are multiple dialects spoken, signed, or otherwise communicated? If so, describe them below.**

**Question #2: Does society employ a common writing system, such as an alphabet, characters, or pictographs? Who is commonly taught to write in your society?**

# Government & Society

**Question #3: Are any mannerisms, gestures, and/or facial expressions unique to this society? If so, describe them below.**

**Question #4: What attitudes and manners is one expected to adopt when speaking to family members, friends, authority figures, or strangers?**



# Government & Society

**Question #5: Is it improper for certain members of society to speak to others?** Are certain topics considered off limits? If so, describe them below.

**Question #6: What terms of address or endearment (e.g. ma'am, my lord, my love, my dear, etc.) are commonly used in society?** What fictional curse words or common expressions?

# Government & Society

**Question #7: Do members of society use any unique technologies to communicate long distance?** If so, describe them below.

**Question #8: Do you want to build a fully fictional language for your story world?** Find my top tips at [www.well-storied.com/language](http://www.well-storied.com/language), and use the space below to take down notes.

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# **CULTURE AND RELIGION**

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# Culture & Religion

## *Introduction*

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**At its core, culture can be defined as the customs, attitudes, symbols, and social institutions of a society or people group.** Complex business, indeed. What's makes culture so important?

Like society, culture plays a major role in shaping your characters and lending depth and realism to your story world. But because of its complexities, many writers skim or skip this vital world-building step, relying heavily on established real or fictional cultures instead. Don't settle for less than originality, writer.

Drawing inspiration from established cultures can be a great starting point, but let's craft fully-realized fictional cultures to call our own in this section of our workbook. Over the course of eleven activities, we'll break down each major element of culture step by step. Let's get started...

# Culture & Religion

**Activity #1: What is normal anyway?** Social norms are the standards of behavior expected among a people group. Norms can be formal, such as those outlined by law or by a predominant religion, or informal, such as generally accepted attitudes, values, and gender roles.

Consider the following questions as you work to define the social norms found in your worlds' fictional cultures.

**Question #1: What values and beliefs does this culture hold dear?** How do these elements affect society's actions and attitudes?

# Culture & Religion

**Question #2: What does this culture consider to be rude behavior?** List common examples below.

**Question #3: What does this culture consider to be proper behavior?** List common examples below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #4: Are social classes or people groups expected to behave or present themselves differently from others?** If so, describe how below.

**Question #5: How are gender roles defined in this culture?** Are different genders expected to behave or present themselves differently from others? If so, describe how below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #6: What choices or actions are typical of those who deviate from society's social norms?**

**Question #7: Does society enforce laws against certain behaviors? If so, describe common laws and behaviors below.**



# Culture & Religion

**Question #8: Do those who break the law receive a trial?** If so, what is the process like and who decides their fate?

**Question #9: Whether or not they receive a trial, how are law-breakers punished for their crimes?** Who carries out punishment?

# Culture & Religion

**Activity #2: What do you believe?** Every culture has a set of moral and ethical codes that guide its actions and beliefs. Often, religion plays a major role in shaping these codes, though a culture's predominant thinkers, activists, and leaders also have a hand.

Use the questions in this activity to define the religion(s) and moral and ethical standards that are commonplace in your fictional culture.

**Question #1: Does your culture feature a predominant religion?** If so, describe any deity(s) worshipped below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #2: What are the tenets of this religion?** How does it instruct its believers to live?

**Question #3: Does this religion have an established leadership?** If so, describe leaders' roles and their hierarchy below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #4: Are there any texts, symbols, locations, or other motifs consider holy within this religion?** If so, describe them below.

**Question #5: Where and how do believers worship?** Are sacrifices made, prayers spoken, texts read, or songs sung? Take any relevant notes below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #6: Does this religion preach of an afterlife or of reincarnation?**  
If so, describe this place or process below.

**Question #7: Does this religion consider particular behaviors to be sinful?**  
If so, describe these behavior below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #8: Are those judged to be sinners punished, oppressed, or shamed by religious leaders or society? If so, how?**

**Question #9: Does this religion encourage its followers to change their appearance, complete certain tasks, or otherwise tailor their life to its devotion? If so, describe how below.**

# Culture & Religion

**Question #10: What actions are considered to be immoral within your fictional culture, whether or not they stem from religious belief?**

**Question #11: What are your culture's predominant moral beliefs? What actions or ways of life are generally considered to be good or right?**

# Culture & Religion

**Question #12: Do moral standards differ between genders or other people groups within your culture? If so, how?**

**Question #13: What ethical standards guide your fictional culture? Is emphasis placed on self, on community, on the stranger, or elsewhere?**



# Culture & Religion

**Question #14: How do this culture's moral and ethical codes affect how business, government, and other vital elements of society operate?**

**Question #15: Are there any predominant thinkers, activists, or leaders that have shaped your culture's moral and ethical beliefs?**

# Culture & Religion

**Question #16: How have historical events and intersocietal affairs affected the moral and ethical codes of your culture?** (We'll talk more about these elements in section four of our workbook.)

**Activity #3: 'Tis the season.** Whether religious or secular, it's likely that your fictional culture celebrates or observes their fair share of holidays and festivals.

Use the questions in this activity to define these popular events today.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #1: Are any religious festivals or events popular in this culture?** If so, describe the purpose of each event and how they are observed below.

**Question #2: Do people in this culture commemorate certain military or historical events?** If so, describe the origins of these events and how they are observed below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #3: Are any other secular celebrations celebrated in this culture?**  
If so, describe the origins of these events and how they are observed below.

**Question #4: Are birthdays, anniversaries, or deaths commemorated in this culture?** If so, describe how they are commonly observed or celebrated below.

# Culture & Religion

**Activity #4: Old wives' tales.** Cultures are often thick with legends and lore told as a means of entertaining, educating, or warning those that listen.

Use the questions on the following pages to define the old wives' tales and other stories that have played a memorable role in your fictional culture.

**Question #1: Are children in this culture often taught any specific legends or fairy tales?** If so, describe these stories and how they are intended to teach or entertain below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #2: Are any legends or stories often told among gatherings of adults?** If so, describe these stories and how they are intended to teach or entertain below.

**Question #3: Are any bawdy tales are often told among revelers?** If so, describe these stories below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #4: Are any popular historical events often retold at gatherings, whether as a tale of celebration or to commemorate a grievous affair? If so, describe these events below.**

**Question #5: Who tells tales in your culture? Are bards, actors, or other storytellers often employed at gatherings? Take any relevant notes below.**

# Culture & Religion

**Question #6: Are there any popular superstitions within this culture?** If so, describe them below.

**Activity #5: It's a sign!** Whether to show patriotism, commemorate fallen heroes, prove religious devotion, or flash social status, cultures often take pride in honoring certain figures, symbols, colors, and similar motifs.

Use the questions in this activity to both define these elements and explore how they are displayed and revered in popular culture.



# Culture & Religion

**Question #1: Are any patriotic flags, colors, symbols, or other motifs popular in this culture?** Describe these elements and how they are often displayed below.

**Question #2: Are certain figures honored in popular culture?** If so, do they appear as statues or on coins or other commemorative items?

# Culture & Religion

**Question #3: Do any religious symbols or motifs often appear in this culture?** If so, describe what they are and how they are displayed below.

**Question #4: Are any symbols or motifs used to identify certain households, businesses, institutions, or members of social classes?** If so, describe these elements below.

# Culture & Religion

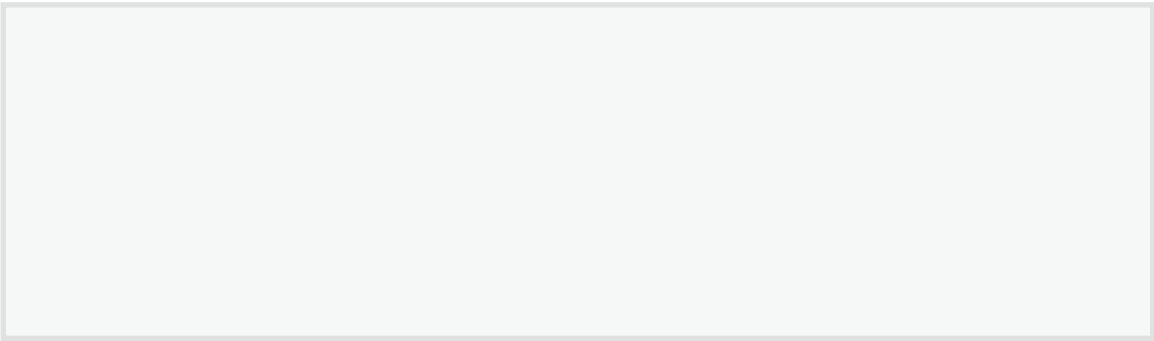
**Question #5: Do any other symbols or motifs popularly appear in household items, art, architecture, or personal adornments?** If so, describe these items below.

**Activity #6: A true masterpiece.** Cultures are often remembered just as much for the art and architecture they create as the most notable moments in their history. In some cases, even more so!

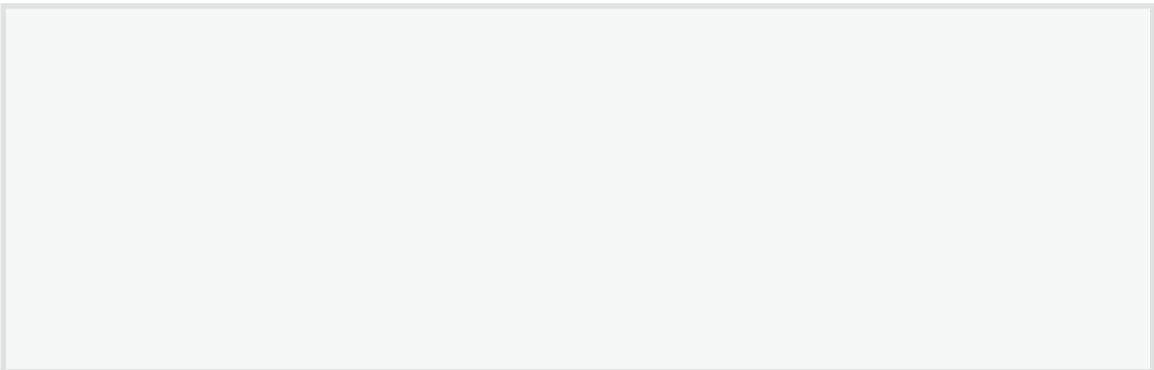
In this activity, use the questions to define your fictional cultures' unique visual and artistic style.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #1: What forms of art are popular within this culture?** (Examples: paintings, sculptures, pottery, dance, music, theater, poetry, or literature)



**Question #2: Is visual art created to be useful (e.g. woven rugs, quilts, clothing, urns), to be admired (e.g. paintings, sculptures, sketches, decorative household items), or both?** List a few examples below.



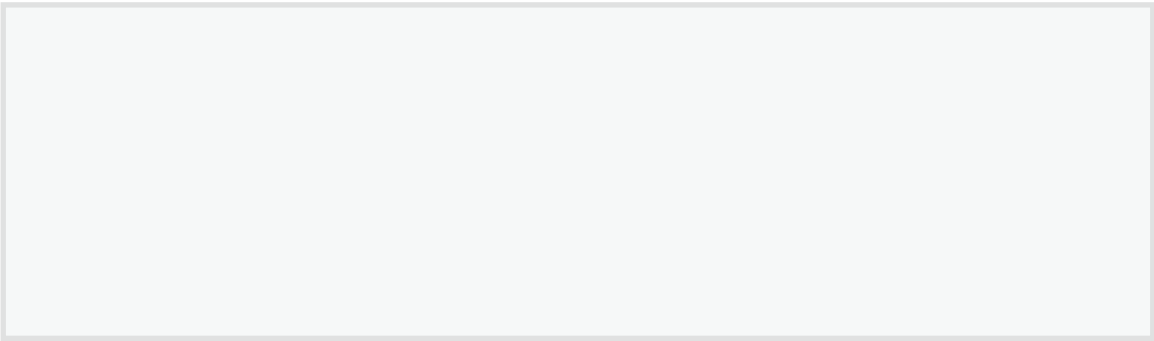
# Culture & Religion

**Question #3: How do cultural values and beliefs affect the art styles of this culture?** (Example: a society's peaceful nature might result in clean lines, natural tones, and simple melodies.)

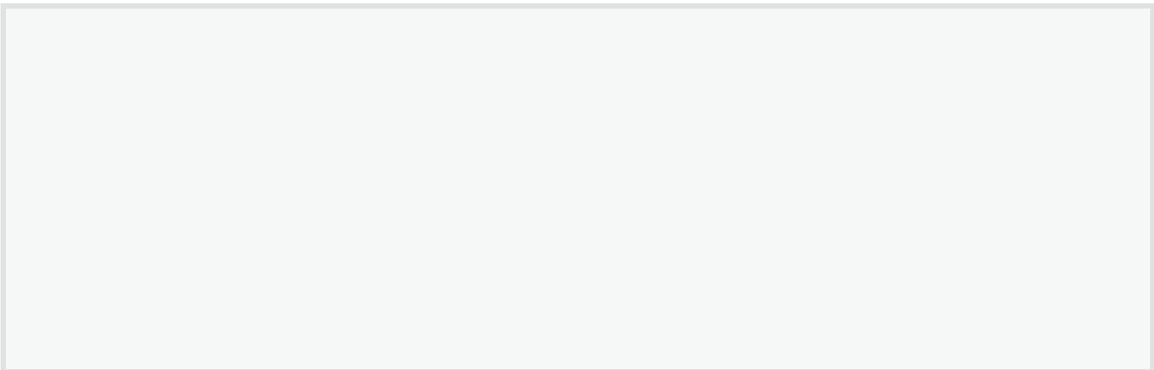
**Question #4: Is it possible to make a living as an artist in your society? If so, how?**

# Culture & Religion

**Question #5: Are there any pieces of art especially pertinent in this culture?** If so, describe them below.



**Question #6: What are some of the architectural hallmarks of this culture?** Are they known for grand columns, domed roofs, curved eaves, elevated buildings, etc.?



# Culture & Religion

**Question #7: Do the same cultural values and beliefs that shape art carry over into architecture?** If not, how do these design principles differ?

**Question #8: Has society built any grand monuments or shrines in honor of deities or other notable events or figures?** If so, describe such buildings below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #9: What do everyday dwellings look like in this culture?** What features and furnishings are commonly found inside them?

**Question #10: What raw materials is your culture known to use when building?** Does society import any materials or appropriate architectural designs from other cultures?



# Culture & Religion

**Activity #7: Are you not entertained?** Sports and entertainments are commonplace in many cultures, and spectators' love for these events often encourages the rise of related subcultures.

Use the questions in this activity to define which forms of entertainment are present in your fictional culture and how these activities shape society as a whole.

**Question #1: Are any sports played in this culture?** If so, which are most popular, how are they played, and who plays them?

# Culture & Religion

**Question #2: If sports are played professionally, has a spectator culture emerged around them?** If so, describe this culture below.

**Question #3: Are spectators allowed to gamble on certain sports?** Do any other forms of gambling exist? Take any relevant notes below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #4: Do citizens often attend music, comedy, literature, or theater performances for entertainment?** If so, describe these events below.

**Question #5: Are street performances, fairs, circuses, parades, or magic shows popular in this culture?** If so, describe these events below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #6: Does this culture idolize celebrities?** If so, describe the celebrities and how they are revered below.

**Question #7: Do citizens often throw parties or other gatherings?** If so, describe these events below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #8: Are any games popularly played by members of this culture?** If so, describe them below.

**Question #9: In what ways do citizens often entertain themselves when alone?** Do they read books, play music, watch films, make art, etc.?

# Culture & Religion

**Activity #8: And Bob's your uncle!** What is expected or commonplace among relationships between family members, spouses, friends, and co-workers can vary greatly from culture to culture.

Define the relationship dynamics commonplace in your fictional culture using the questions on the following pages.

**Question #1: What is expected of a proper, healthy marriage or romantic relationship?** Does society frown upon couples who separate?

# Culture & Religion

**Question #2: What roles do parents play in their children's lives?** Does it differ depending on the gender of the parent?

**Question #3: What actions and behaviors are expected of children as they grow?** When they become young adults?

# Culture & Religion

**Question #4: What do relationships between siblings, adult children and their parents, and other common familial relationships look like?**

**Question #5: In this culture, how are the elderly cared for?**



# Culture & Religion

**Question #6: What do proper, healthy friendships look like in this culture?**

**Question #7: How are people expected to interact with co-workers, with authority figures, and with strangers?**

# Culture & Religion

**Activity #9: Time to dine.** Cuisine is another popular cultural hallmark. In this activity, take the time to define the foods commonly eaten in your fictional culture and the customs surrounding meals and preparation.

**Question #1: What foods, beverages, and flavors are common in this culture?**

# Culture & Religion

**Question #2: How are meals typically prepared?** What methods and tools are commonly used, and who prepares the food for a family or community?

**Question #3: Where are meals eaten?** What conversations and behaviors are commonplace during meals?

# Culture & Religion

**Question #4: Where is food sourced?** Is it grown, hunted, or imported? How is food acquired by everyday citizens?

**Question #5: Are certain foods eaten on special days of the year?** If so, describe these foods and the events that take place when they are eaten.

# Culture & Religion

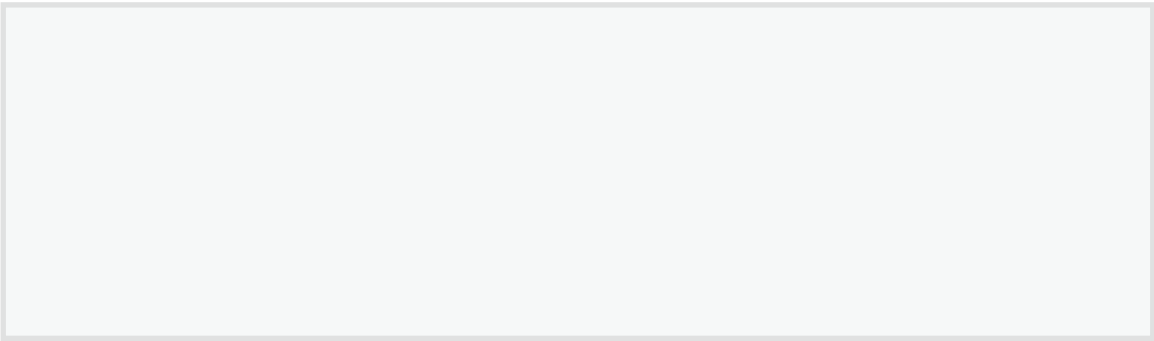
**Question #6: Are certain foods outlawed or seen as unsavory in this culture?** If so, which foods and why?

**Activity #10: After a fashion.** Another hallmark that sets cultures apart is the appearance of its people.

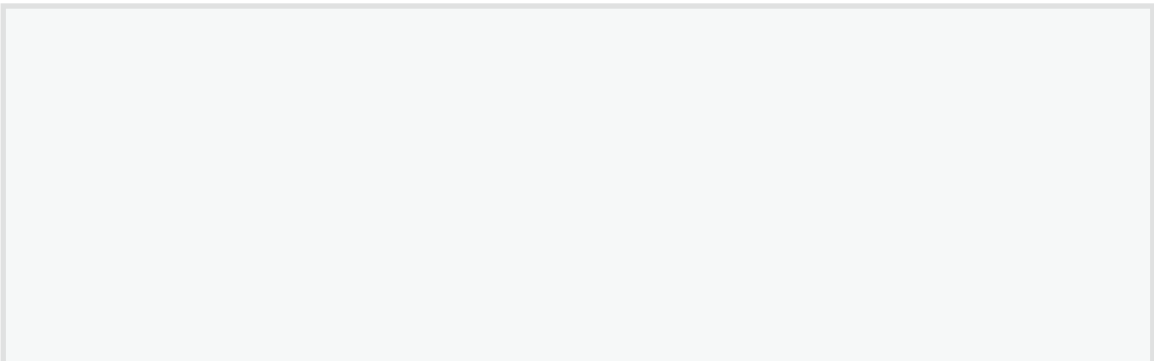
Using the questions in this activity, define how the people in your fictional culture dress and adorn themselves.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #1: What articles of clothing are commonly worn by the people in this culture?**



**Question #2: What hairstyles, including facial hairstyles, are common in this culture?** Are jewelry and makeup also worn? If so, describe popular looks below.



# Culture & Religion

**Question #3: Do people commonly tailor their appearance according to particular social norms or codes of religious behavior?** If so, describe how they do so below.

**Question #4: What raw materials are available and/or imported for making clothing?** Who makes clothing in this culture?

# Culture & Religion

**Question #5: Does this culture practice any forms of body modification?**

(For example: tanned or lightened skin, dyed hair, piercings, tattoos, scarification, surgically-modified features)

**Question #6: Does this culture have any forms of attire worn only for special events such as religious ceremonies or marriages?** If so, describe these items below.



# Culture & Religion

**Question #7: If the people in this culture are relatively homogenous, what common features mark their appearance?** (For example: build, coloring, or facial features)

**Activity #11: Beyond the grave.** Death practices among cultures often vary, and with death so frequently a theme or threat in speculative fiction, taking the time to consider the culture surrounding death can be vital.

Use the questions in this activity to define your culture's death practices today.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #1: Do people in your culture believe in an afterlife?** If so, describe what this afterlife is like and how it can be reached.

**Question #2: Do people in this culture make any preparations before their deaths, such as choosing their grave sites, participating in a religious ceremony, or creating a will?**

# Culture & Religion

**Question #3: Who cares for a body after death?** How is it prepared for respectful disposal?

**Question #4: How are bodies respectfully disposed of in this culture?** (For example: interment, sky burial, cremation, mummification, burial at sea)

# Culture & Religion

**Question #5: Are funeral rites or other services held?** What rituals and customs are performed during this time?

**Question #6: How is death mourned in this culture?** Is there a mourning period? Must any actions be taken to cleanse or re-sanctify oneself or one's home after the death of a loved one?

# Culture & Religion

**Question #7: What happens to the wealth and belongings of the person who passed away?** How are these goods distributed or donated?

**Question #8: Are festivals or memorials held that honor the dead or mark the anniversary of a passing?** If so, describe them below.

# Culture & Religion

**Question #9: Do people in this culture believe in ghosts or spirits?** If so, are these spirits malevolent or kind? Can they be communicated with? Are they lingering or is there no other afterlife?

**Question #10: Does this culture commemorate martyrs or other honorable deaths?** If so, what is considered honorable and how are these figures celebrated?

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# **HISTORY & INTERSOCIETAL AFFAIRS**

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# History & Intersocietal Affairs

## *Introduction*

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**As we've worked through the last two sections of our workbook,** we've taken pains to develop fully-realized societies and the cultures that define them. But thus far, these societies have largely stood as individual entities.

In most story worlds, interaction between societies is bound to take place — and likely has for many years prior. That's why it's important that we take a look at the histories of our worlds in this section of our workbook, as well as the intersocietal affairs that define some of the large-scale conflicts taking place when our stories begin.

**Activity #1: And the rest is history.** Historical events, even when not directly relevant to a present-day narrative, often have a major effect on the evolutions of culture and society over time.

That's why it's important that we take a look at our world's histories using the questions in this activity, writer. Let's get started.



# History & Intersocietal Affairs

**Question #1: What events brought about the formation of your world's predominant societies?**

**Question #2: What major wars and attacks mark your world's history?**  
Describe these events, their origins, and ultimate consequences below.

# History & Intersocietal Affairs

**Question #3: What natural disasters or plagues played a major role in shaping your world?** Describe these events and their effects below.

**Question #4: Did any governmental shifts or other political events majorly affect the evolution of your world's societies?** If so, describe these events and their consequences below.

# History & Intersocietal Affairs

**Question #5: What major religious events or upheavals have taken place in your world?** Describe these events and their consequences below.

**Question #6: Have any technological advancements revolutionized societies in your story world?** Describe these events below.

# History & Intersocietal Affairs

**Question #7: Are there any remaining historical events that played a major role in shaping your story world?** If so, describe them below.

**Activity #2: Quite the affair.** As various cultures and societies in your world begin to interact, international conflicts and accords are bound to arise.

Let's take a look at these elements using the questions in this activity on intersocietal affairs.

# History & Intersocietal Affairs

**Question #1: Which societies act as allies in your story world?** What events or circumstances encouraged them to ally with one another?

**Question #2: Which societies act as enemies in your story world?** What led them to view one another as adversaries?

# History & Intersocietal Affairs

**Question #3: Which societies actively trade with one another in your story world?** What goods are traded, and how is trade performed?

**Question #4: Do certain societies in your world oppress others?** If so, describe how below.

# History & Intersocietal Affairs

**Question #5: Do empires exist in your story world?** Describe their leadership, territorial holdings, and other relevant items below.

**Question #6: Have certain societies in your world made treaties or established international laws?** If so, describe them below.

# History & Intersocietal Affairs

**Question #7: Are there any outlying societies such as pirates or exiled people groups in your story world? If so, describe them below.**

**Question #8: What elements of culture have been appropriated or adopted by other cultures in your story world?**



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# **ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY**

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# Advanced Technology

## *Introduction*

.....

**Many science-fiction stories make use of advanced technologies to add a futuristic ambience** to their settings and to serve as a vehicle for powerful conversations about humanity and the potential consequences of technological advancement.

In this section of our workbook, we're going to tackle not only the technologies that are available in your story world but how those technologies affect nature and society as a whole. Ready to dive in?

(P.S. If you aren't writing science-fiction, this section of our workbook can instead help you define what technologies are available in your world, even if they aren't advanced. Give it a try!)

**Activity #1: It's a dream machine!** The first step to understanding how advanced technologies affect your story world is to define what technologies are present.

Use the questions on the following pages to get to know your world's technological advancements today.

# Advanced Technology

**Question #1: What advanced communications technologies are available in your story world?** Consider potential systems and devices, and how they are used.

**Question #2: What advanced technologies have changed the face of transportation?** Consider space and time travel in addition to everyday modes of transportation.

# Advanced Technology

**Question #3: What advanced weapons exist, both those wielded by individuals and those created specifically with warfare in mind?**

**Question #4: Can technology be used to manipulate the elements or sources of energy?** If so, describe how below.

# Advanced Technology

**Question #5: What advanced household technologies exist? How do they improve or perhaps complicate everyday life?**

**Question #6: How has technology changed the way people dress and groom themselves?** Can advanced technologies manipulate appearance? If so, describe how below.

# Advanced Technology

**Question #7: What materials are used to create advanced technologies?**

What fuels their use? Take any relevant notes below.

**Question #8: What other notable advanced technologies exist in your world, especially as related to the arts, agriculture, education, industry, or medicine?**

# Advanced Technology

**Activity #2: The user experience.** You've defined the advanced technologies available in your world, but how do those technologies affect humanity, society, nature, and beyond?

Use the questions in this activity to define how the available technologies in your world have changed it for the better and worse.

**Question #1: How do advanced technologies affect the average citizen's everyday life?** What are the positive and negative effects?

# Advanced Technology

**Question #2: Are everyday technologies widely available to citizens in society?** Or, are technologies limited in availability or affordability, or even barred from use for certain groups of individuals?

**Question #3: Does technology have a hand in defining social class, gender roles, or other civil matters?** If so, describe how below.



# Advanced Technology

**Question #4: How has the advanced technology in your world positively and/or negatively affected the environment?**

**Question #5: How has the advanced technology in your world positively and/or negatively affected humankind?**

# Advanced Technology

**Question #6: Are there laws banning or regulating the use of certain technologies?** If so, describe them below.

**Question #7: How does the government make use of technology to shape the nation?** To protect or control its people?

# Advanced Technology

**Question #8: How have advanced technologies changed commerce in your world, both how goods are sold and the economy as a whole?**

**Question #9: How does technology affect the face of warfare in your story world?**

# Advanced Technology

**Question #10: How has technology shaped other keys areas of culture and society, especially as related to the arts, agriculture, education, industry, and medicine?**

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# **MAGIC SYSTEMS**

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# Magic Systems

## *Introduction*

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**Abracadabra, Alakazam — let's talk about crafting magic systems, writers!**

Though not every speculative fiction story needs to be threaded with magic, adding a few fantastical powers to your story world can be a fun way to liven up the narrative. In many cases, magical powers also symbolize bigger themes, serving as a vehicle for conversations about privilege, oppression, pride, and other compelling topics.

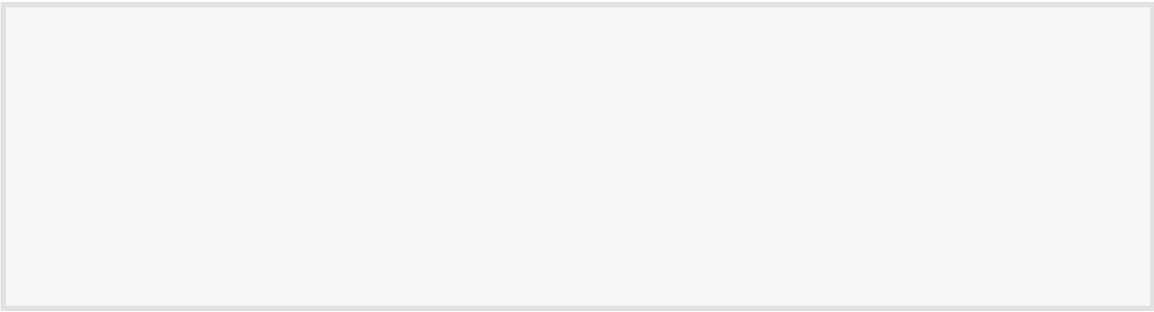
No matter your approach, building an original and believable magic system requires a fair amount of time and care. Feeling a bit overwhelmed? Give your characters some incredible powers by working through this section of our workbook!

**Activity #1: Let's make some magic!** When crafting a believable magic system, the natural place to begin is in defining how magic manifests and who has the ability to wield it.

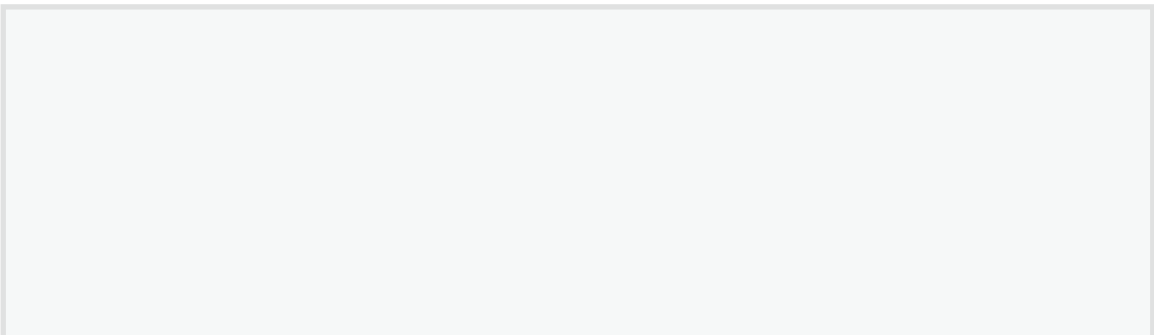
Use the questions on the following pages to define the nature of your world's magical powers today.

# Magic Systems

**Question #1: How does magic manifest itself?** Does it produce a physical change in the user, create the ability to manipulate others, produce an external effect, or something else entirely?



**Question #2: What fuels the use of magic?** Does power come from within the user, is it summoned, or is there a source users must manipulate?



# Magic Systems

**Question #3: Who can use magic?** Is it available only to a certain few or do all have the ability to harness its powers?

**Question #4: Is magic inherited, gifted, obtained, or learned?** Use the space below to take notes on your answer.

**Question #5: How does the user summon or enact magic?** Are any physical objects or spells needed to make use of its power?



# Magic Systems

**Question #6: Do all magic users manifest magic in the same way, or do certain users have particular powers?** If the latter, describe the varying powers below.

**Question #7: Are some magic users more powerful than others, or do all users manifest magic at the same level?** If there is a hierarchy of users, describe their varying levels of power below.

# Magic Systems

**Question #8: Can the use of magic be honed or improved?** If so, describe how this is done below.

**Question #9: Is magic or the source that fuels it a limited resource in your story world?** If the source of magic is limited, describe how it is sourced and obtained below.

# Magic Systems

**Question #10: Can magic be stolen or quelled?** How could a magic user be defeated?

**Question #11: What dangers does magic pose to the user, whether directly or because the use of magic is scorned or envied by society?**

# Magic Systems

**Question #12: Is there a cap on the user's magical abilities? What can't their magic achieve? What are its limitations?**

**Question #13: Can magic be used incorrectly or for selfish purposes? Can it be used to harm others or cause destruction? If so, describe how below.**

# Magic Systems

**Question #14: What are magic users called in your story world?** Are there derogatory names or slang words for describing a magic user?

**Activity #2: The power source.** Understanding how magic manifests and can be manipulated is helpful, but don't forget to dig into its roots.

Use the questions in this activity to define magic's origins and the culture that's grown around its use.

# Magic Systems

**Question #1: Was magic discovered, created, or gifted from a higher power?** Or, is magic a natural part of your story world? Describe the origins of magic below.

**Question #2: Has magic always manifested in the same way, or did its capabilities change over time?** If the latter, describe its evolution below.

# Magic Systems

**Question #3: What important historical events in your story world were affected by the use or failure to use magic?**

**Question #4: Is magic kept secret or hidden in your story world? If so, why? If magic is known, how is it viewed by varying people groups?**

# Magic Systems

**Question #5: Does your story world feature a magical society?** Describe the parameters of this society below or use the activities in section two of our workbook to develop your magical society.

**Question #6: Do magic users have their own language, religion, festivals, or other cultural hallmarks?** If so, describe them below or use the activities in section three of our workbook to develop your magical culture.



# Magic Systems

**Question #7: Is a magic user set apart by their clothing, appearance, or some other distinguishing factor?** If so, describe how below.

**Question #8: Is magic intertwined with the religion in your world?** How so? If not, describe how religion views magic and its users below.

# Magic Systems

**Question #9: Does the government harness magic in any way?** If so, describe how they do so below.

**Question #10: What value does magic have in society?** Can it be bought or can users offer magical services to others?

# Magic Systems

**Question #11: Do magic users make harness magic to improve the ease of everyday tasks or of those in their community? If so, how?**

**Question #12: How does magic play into your society's social classes, gender roles, and/or other civil matters?**

# Magic Systems

**Question #13: Does magic play a role in the arts, architecture, education, and/or other cultural hallmarks in your story world? If so, how?**

**Activity #3: Like a charm!** Magic serves as a powerful storytelling tool in many stories, creating external and internal conflict, empowering characters, and even serving as the foundation for a deeper conversation.

Use the questions in this activity to begin planning how you'll make use of magic in your own storytelling.

# Magic Systems

**Question #1: Will magic play a major role in your story, or will it serve simply to create a fantastical ambience in your story world?** If the latter, describe the type of ambience you'd like to create. Will magic be sinister, mysterious, whimsical, arcane, etc.?

**Question #2: How might magic create conflict in your story world?** What are its most threatening dangers? What potential consequences are unknown or underestimated?

# Magic Systems

**Question #3: Will characters use magic to solve conflicts in your stories? If so, how? How could magic complicate your characters' journeys?**

**Question #4: Will you use magic as a vehicle to discuss deeper themes in your stories? If so, take notes on how magic will serve your narrative below.**

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# **FANTASTICAL RACES & CREATURES**

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# Fantastic Races & Creatures

## *Introduction*

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**Many fantasy worlds are marked by their fantastical races and creatures.** From elves and dwarves to vampires and werewolves, centaurs, krakens, basilisks, and beyond...

The inclusion of such races and creatures isn't strictly necessary, but making use of them can be a fun way to further lend to the otherworldly ambience of your setting, to create exciting new conflict, and even to discuss deeper themes via the use of symbolism.

Ready to bring your own fantastical races and creatures to life?

### **Activity #1: Direwolves, dragons, and demons — oh, my!**

If you plan to include fantastical races or creatures in your own world, take the time to develop them before diving in by using the questions in this final section of our workbook.



# Fantastical Races & Creatures

**Question #1: What fantastical races or creatures are present in your story world?** Describe their physical appearances below.

**Question #2: Do these fantastical races or creatures serve as symbolism in your story world (e.g. vampirism for lust or elves for wisdom)?** If so, detail what they represent below.

# Fantastical Races & Creatures

**Question #3: Are these races and/or creatures a natural part of your world or were they in some way created?** Describe their origins below.

**Question #4: Are these fantastical races or creatures in any way feared, revered, or oppressed?** If so, describe how below.

# Fantastical Races & Creatures

**Question #5: Is the existence of any of these fantastical races or creatures kept secret or hidden? If so, why?**

**Question #6: Do these fantastical races or creatures have their own cultures and societies?** If so, take notes below or use sections two and three of this workbook to define these elements in depth.

# Fantastical Races & Creatures

**Question #7: If these races or creatures have their own societies, how do they interact with the societies of other races or creatures?**

**Question #8: What historical events in your story world were marked by the involvement of fantastical races or creatures?**

# Fantastical Races & Creatures

**Question #9: Will fantastical races and creatures play a major role in your story, or will they serve simply to create a fantastical ambience?** If the latter, describe the type of ambience you'd like to create. Will it be sinister, mysterious, whimsical, arcane, etc.?

**Question #10: How might fantastical races or creatures create conflict in your story world?** What are their most threatening potential dangers, known or unknown?

# Fantastical Races & Creatures

**Question #11: How might fantastical races or creatures aid your characters in their journeys?** Do they have any particular knowledge, skills, or abilities that could prove helpful?

**Question #12: If utilizing established races and creatures, will you work to distinguish them from past iterations?** If so, how? Or will draw on readers' nostalgia by utilizing familiar versions of their favorite races and creatures?

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**SO, YOU'VE  
BUILT A STORY  
WORLD.**

**(NOW WHAT?)**

---

# From Story World to Written Story

## **Congratulations on crafting your fully-realized fictional world, writer!**

After spending so long working through this workbook (it was a bit hefty, wasn't it?), you might be feeling a little overwhelmed. You've created an entire fictional world, but now what?

If you've yet to pre-write the other major elements of your story and would like to do so before drafting, I have two fantastic free email courses I think you're going to love. Take a look:



### **Mapping Powerful Plot Arcs**

Strong plot arcs drive stories forward, but outlining them can be overwhelming. This ten-day free email course will walk you through the process step by step in just 10 to 15 minutes each day.

[www.well-storied.com/map](http://www.well-storied.com/map)

### **Developing Complex Characters**

Learning to craft characters that feel as real as the people around us is tough. This ten-day free email course will help you bring your characters to life in just 10 to 15 minutes each day.



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