

HOW TO USE THIS WORKSHEET

Hello, worldbuilder!

If you're ready to start worldbuilding for your novel and you don't know where to start, you are in the right place! This worksheet will guide you through a similar process that I use when I am worldbuilding, and hopefully you'll find it helpful.

I often caution the use of templates and worksheets because while they might be useful tools for guiding a process and sparking ideas, overusing them can lead to weaker, more shallow results. What's important isn't filling out the information, but brainstorming more deeply and making connections.

That is especially true in worldbuilding. When you're writing a story, there needs to be an internal logic to everything that is happening. Even if things aren't explained outright to the reader, there may be cues in the scene itself or in other scenes in the book that explain why people do what they do and react the way they do in this world you've created. Part of the fun of any fantasy story is getting to immerse yourself in someplace completely different from our world, but it can be really difficult to know where to start.

I designed the worksheet you're about to use with that in mind. What I find most useful when brainstorming is to lean on those aspects that I'm most excited about and work backwards. The present day is a reaction to everything that has come before, and I find that is a useful starting place when I'm building my worlds.

Feel free to skip any questions or prompts and come back to them when you are ready. This worksheet is not prescriptive - it is only meant to spark your imagination and help you build a foundation.

Worldbuilding can be a daunting process, but hopefully this worksheet helps to guide your brainstorming in a useful and purposeful way.

- Alyssa 

WORLDBUILDING WORKSHEET

INSPIRATIONS

What ideas inspire you? What books or movies are you drawing inspiration from? What concepts, people, or places do you want to explore?

THE "COOL FACTOR"

What is the "hook" of your world? What is/are the unique aspects you want to work with?

SCALE

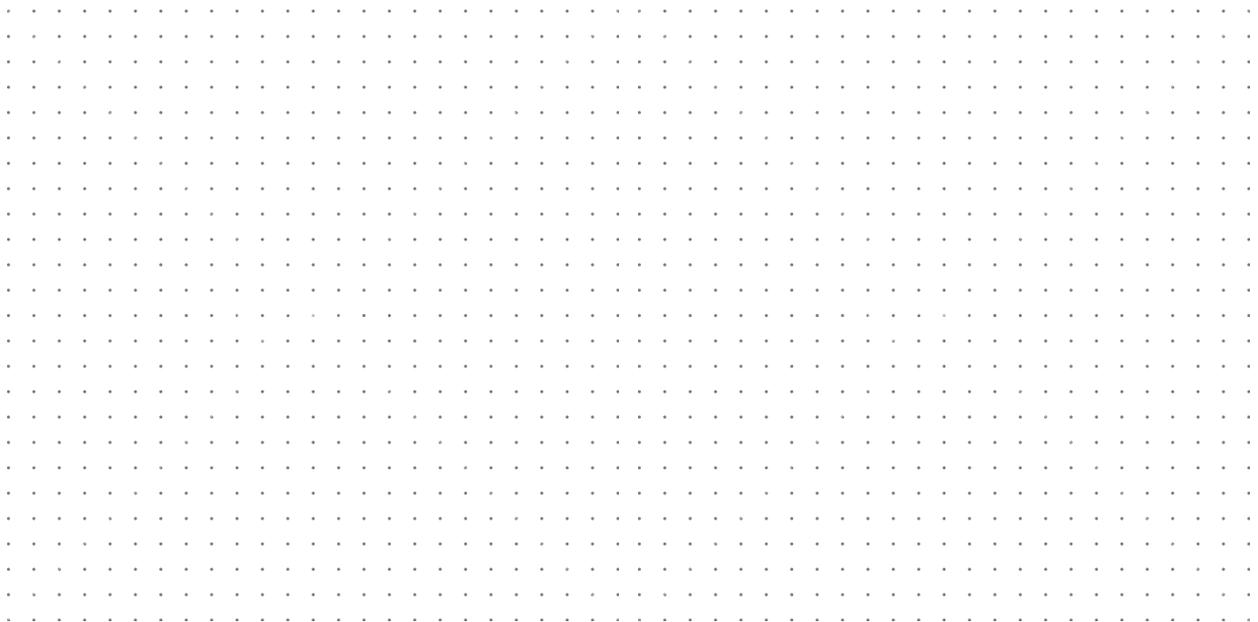
How big is the region you are building? A small town? A country? An entire world?

THEME/PLOT

What's your theme? What happens in the story that will affect the world at large?

INITIAL SKETCH

Sketch out an idea of what the world looks like, or jot down everything you already know about your world



THE FOUR PARADIGMS

To create a stronger connection between the elements of your world, I organize my brainstorming into one of the four paradigms outlined below. This worksheet will take you through each and give prompts to help you develop your world. On this page, take a look at each paradigm and jot down what comes to you or what you already know about your world.

PARADIGM ONE: PAST

Major historical events in your world that have helped shape it

PARADIGM TWO: INTERNAL

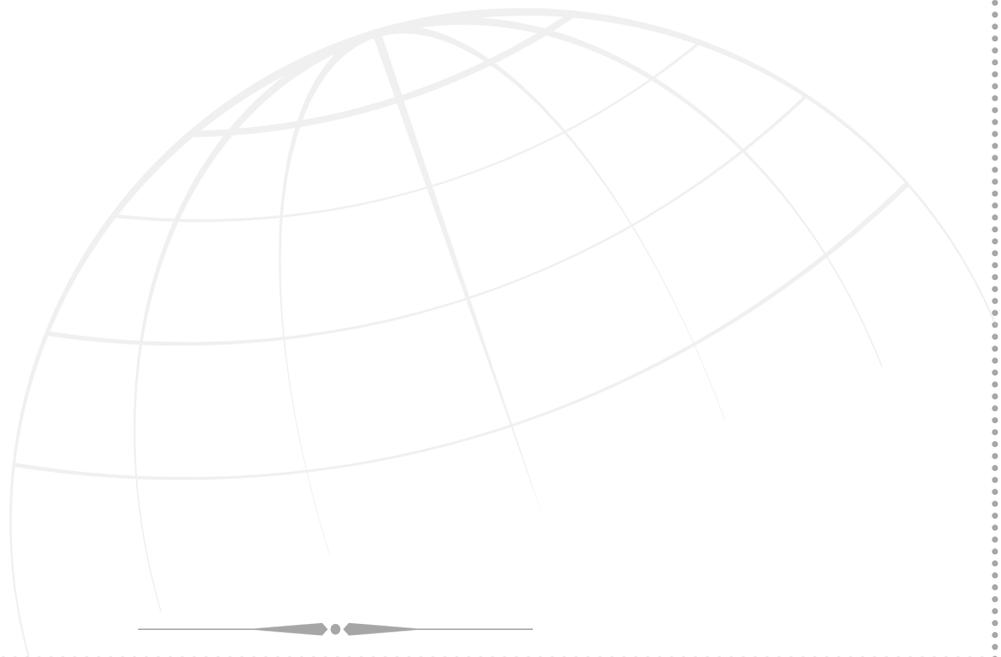
Values, ethics, faith, law - the things you can't see that help shape your society

PARADIGM THREE: EXTERNAL

Language, culture, climate - the aspects of your world which manifest externally

PARADIGM FOUR: PRESENT

The present state of your world and the conflicts impacting the people in it



PARADIGM ONE: PAST

What major events happened in this world in the last decade? In the last century? Or even further back?
(ex. technological or magical developments, natural disasters, wars, sweeping illnesses, etc)

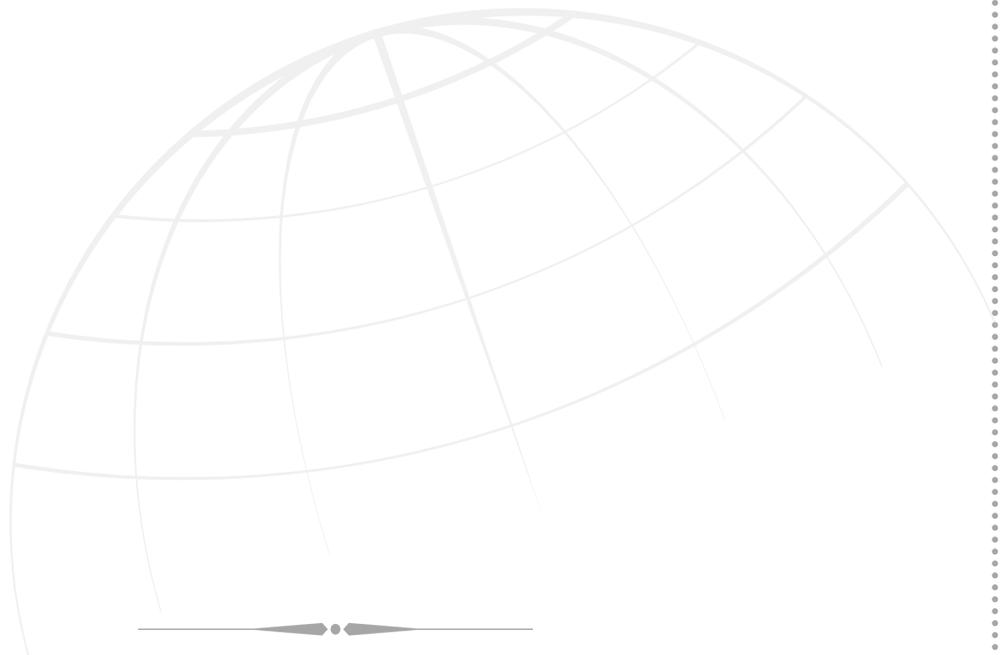
Are any of these events linked? If so, how?

What were the short and long term effects of these events?

Consider: government and law, ecology, geography, culture, religion, myths and tales, magic

SHORT TERM

LONG TERM



PARADIGM TWO: INTERNAL

What do the people of various regions value? What do they dislike? What are their prejudices?

What are their customs and gestures? How do they treat family? The elderly? A lover?

What do people believe in? What is/are the predominant faiths?

How do people demonstrate that faith? Why?

Where do they demonstrate it? At home? In a place of worship? Why?

What are the laws of this region? Why do they exist?

What do the people think of the law? Is it followed or largely ignored? What are the consequences of breaking it?

Are there well-known stories and tales? Myths? Superstitions? Where did they come from?

PARADIGM THREE: EXTERNAL

What are the common languages? Who speaks them? What do they sound like? Is there a written alphabet?

What are the most commonly eaten foods and why? What do they smell like? What do they taste like?

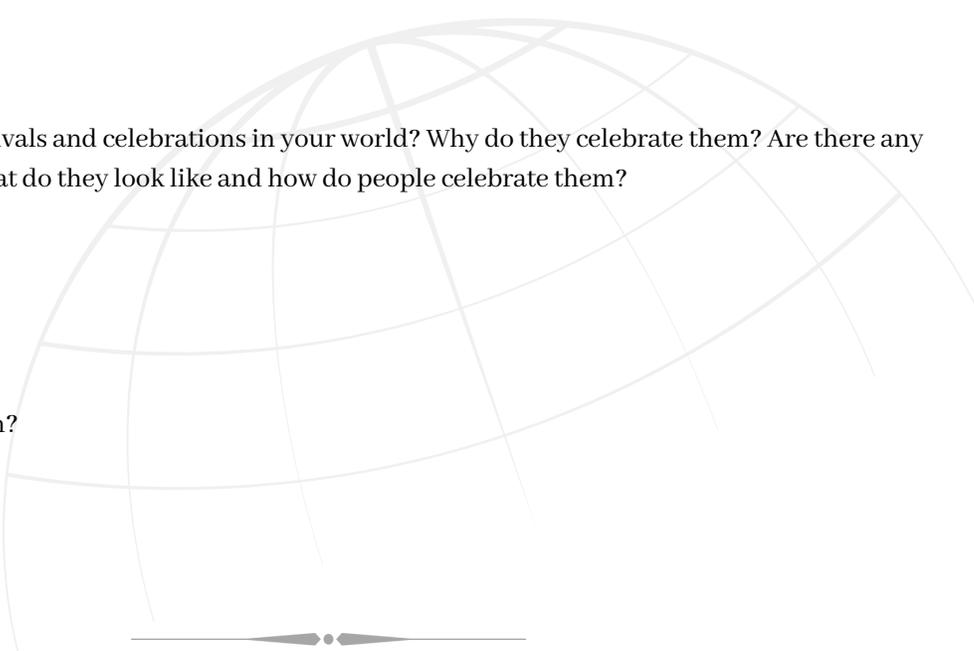
What do their clothes look like? Their armor? What dyes do they use and what accessories do they wear? Are there uniforms? Who wears them and what do they look like?

What is the climate? How does it affect their clothing? Their food sources?

What jobs or roles are common in your world? Which are unique? What do they do?

What are some of the festivals and celebrations in your world? Why do they celebrate them? Are there any celebrations of faith? What do they look like and how do people celebrate them?

What do people do for fun?



PARADIGM FOUR: PRESENT

What are some of the hardships that people are facing right now?

ECONOMIC

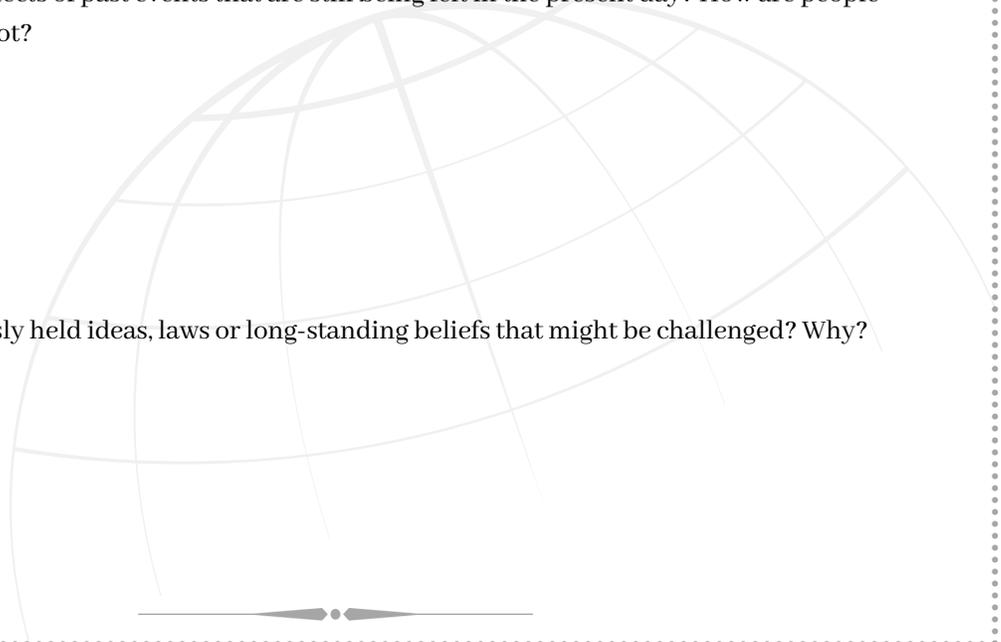
POLITICAL

ENVIRONMENTAL

CULTURAL

What are some of the effects of past events that are still being felt in the present day? How are people coping? How are they not?

What are some previously held ideas, laws or long-standing beliefs that might be challenged? Why?



BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that you've explored all four paradigms in detail, it's time to draw them together and make connections. How are these various aspects of your world connected? How do they influence each other? What are some of the conflicts that might arise between or as a result of what you've brainstormed?

