

World Building 101



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What is World Building?



**SIMPLY CREATING THE WORLD IN WHICH
YOUR STORY LIVES.**

**NOT JUST FOR SCIENCE FICTION AND
FANTASY.**

MORE THAN JUST THE SETTING.

What We'll be Doing Today



**FINDING THE INSPIRATION
CONSTRUCTING YOUR WORLD
PORTRAYING IT IN YOUR STORY**

Finding Inspirations



**IDEA
CONFLICT
PICTURE
HISTORICAL EVENT
WHAT IF?
OWN LIFE.**

Game of Thrones



Hadrian's Wall



The Wall

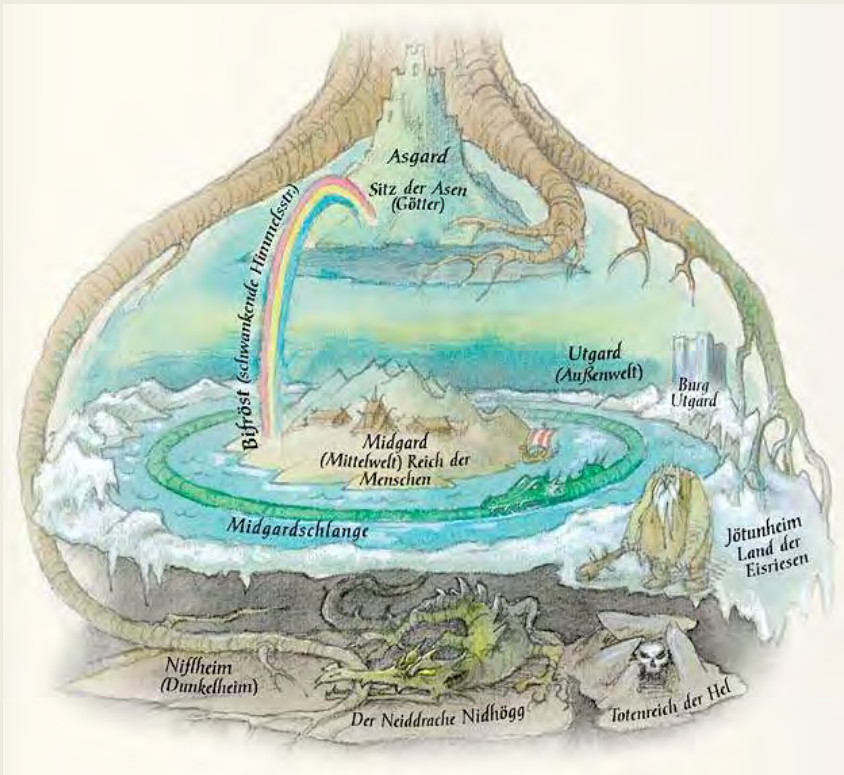


Lord of the Rings & Hobbit



Midgard (Norse myth)

Middle Earth



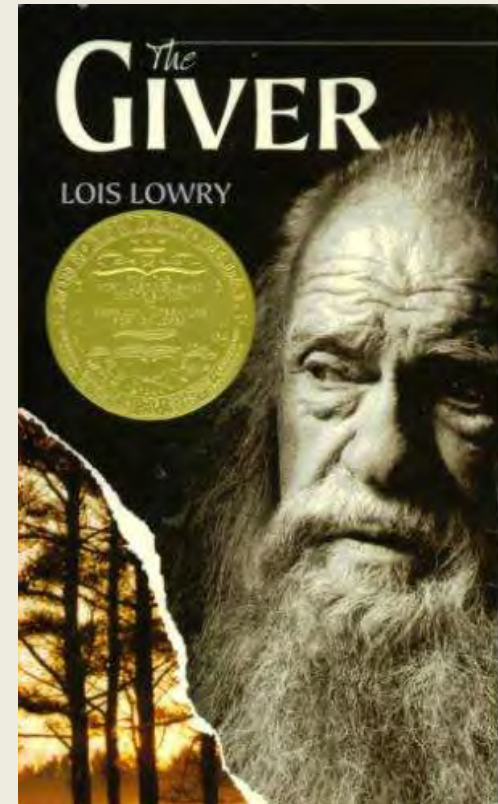
The Giver



Childhood Memories

- Lowry grew up in American compound in post-WWII Japan
- **Feeling of “Only us” versus “elsewhere”**

Community

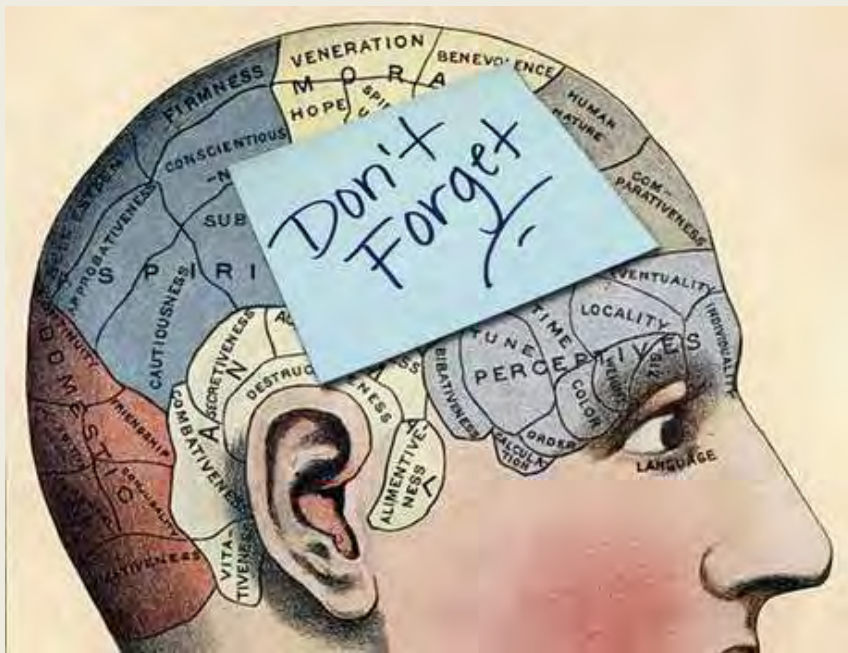


Memento Nora



Therapeutic forgetting

Therapeutic Forgetting Clinics



Making the story turn

You can start your story or world building anywhere but each element needs to drive the other.

(Not pictured plot, theme, etc.)



Constructing Your World



(AKA THE FUN PART)

Things to Think About



- Rules
 - Is there magic or advanced technology?
 - Who has it?
 - How does it work?
- Power
 - **Who's in charge? Why?**
 - **Who's left out? Why?**
- Environment
 - **What's the world like?**
 - Is something threatening it?
- Culture
 - What are some of the rituals?
 - What do people eat?
 - What do they do for fun?
- People
 - What kind of beings live in your world?

Exercise 1



**COME UP WITH A WORLD BASED ON ONE OF
THESE PHOTOS, OBJECTS, PEOPLE, IDEAS—
OR SOMETHING FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE.**

WHAT KIND OF WORLD MIGHT HAVE X IN IT?



Hallelujah Mtns, China

These are the
mountains that inspired
the world of *Avatar*.





Milky Way over Sylt, North Sea

Photographer Thomas Zimmer took this photo of himself—and no Photoshop. Could this be a portal to another realm?



Victorian Time Traveler

An urban legend was going around the internet that this picture was of a woman who claimed to be a time traveler from 2025. It was really a promotion for an anthology.





French Ink Bottle

Beautiful—and maybe
magical?





Paris 1952

The police officer is walking by a nightclub entrance. **There's** another entrance that looks like heaven.



Sworn man (*burrnesha*)

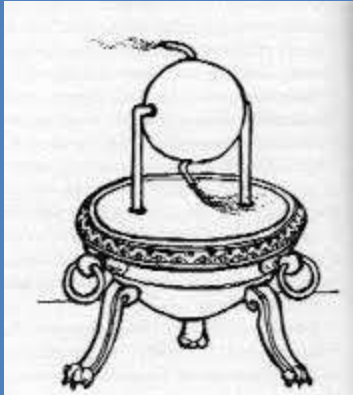
According to the Kanun: "A woman is known as a sack made to endure as long as she lives in her husband's house." In remote areas of Albania and Kosovo, girls can **"choose" or be chosen** to assume the role of a male—and live that way the rest of their lives.



Roman Steampunk

What if the Romans had invented steam engines or computers?

Heron of Alexandria drew this steam engine 2000 years ago.





Exercise 1

Rules

Power

Environment

Culture

People

- DESCRIBE YOUR FICTIONAL WORLD:

Keeping track of your world



START A NOTEBOOK OR STORY BIBLE

Portraying the World in your Story



AKA THE HARD PART



What you show the reader

The rest of your world



Showing vs. Telling



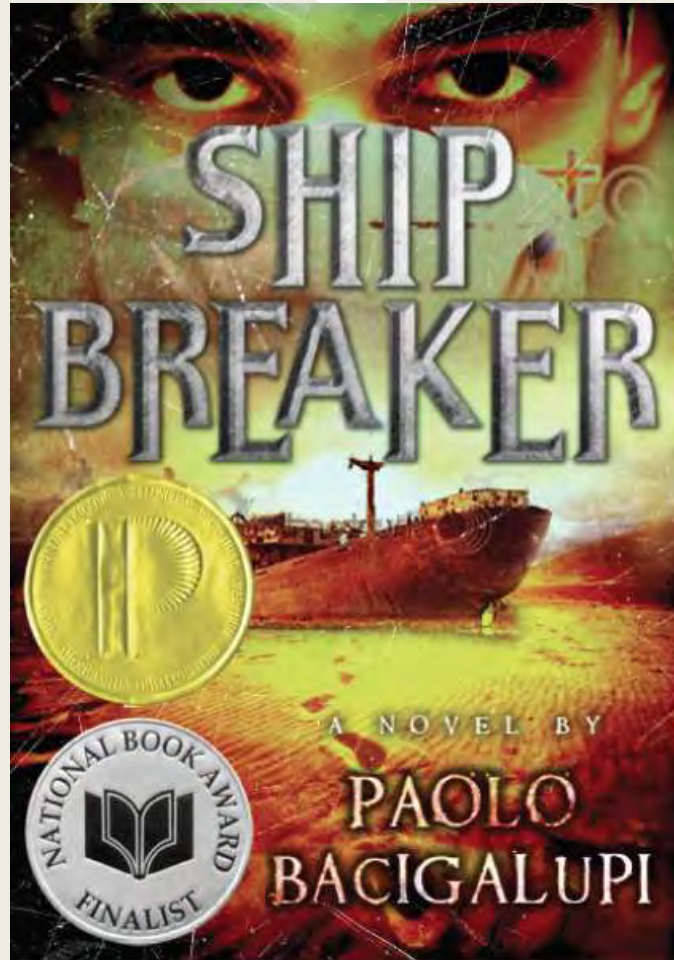
Do (Show)

- Weave details and clues into the story as you go along.
- **Make words do “double duty”**
 - Ex. “The door dilated open.”

Avoid (Tell)

- Infodumps
- **“As you know Bob”** dialogue
- Explaining too much.

Good Examples of Showing



Chapter 1



Nailer clambered through a service duct, tugging at copper wire and yanking it free. Ancient asbestos fibers and mouse grit puffed up around him as the wire tore loose. He scrambled deeper into the duct, jerking more wire from its aluminum staples. The staples pinged about the cramped metal passage like coins offered to the Scavenge God, and Nailer felt after them eagerly, hunting for their dull gleam and collecting them in a leather **bag he kept at his waist. He yanked again at the wiring. A meter's worth of** precious copper tore loose in his hands and dust clouds enveloped him.

Chapter 1



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Exercise 2



**DESCRIBE A CHARACTER DOING SOMETHING
IN YOUR WORLD. HE OR SHE CAN BE HAVING
BREAKFAST, GOING TO WORK OR CLASS,
ETC.**



Exercise 2

Show rather than tell.

Weave details.

Use double-duty words.

Avoid infodumps.

- WRITE A PARAGRAPH IN WHICH A CHARACTER DOES SOMETHING IN YOUR WORLD:

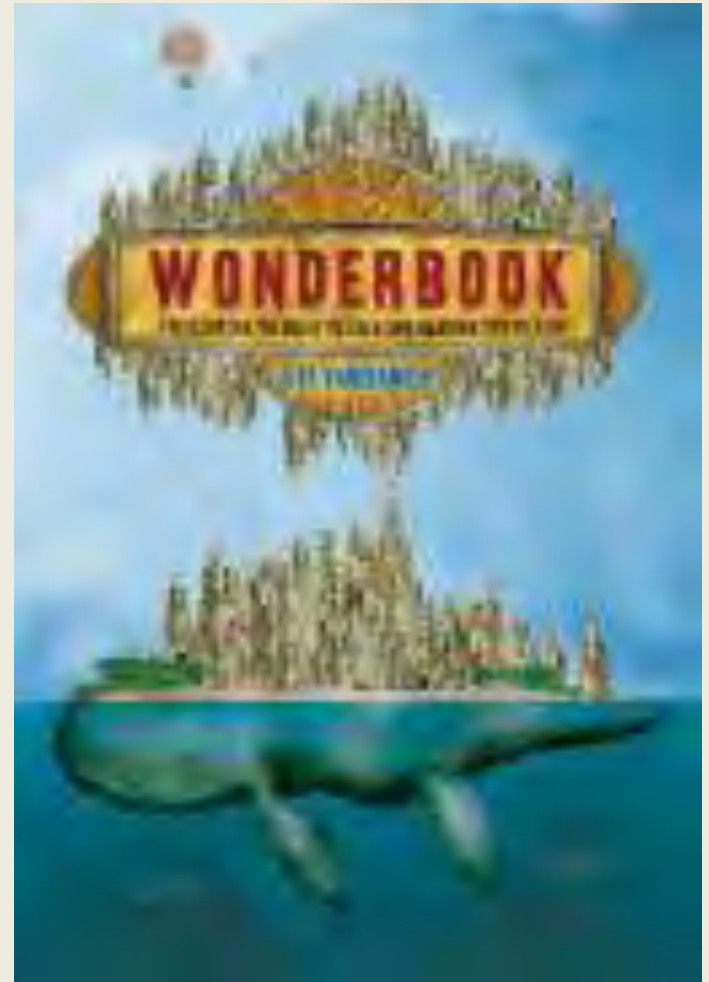
Resources for World Building



BOOKS
WEB SITES
BLOGS

Books on World Building

- *Wonderbook: The Illustrated Guide to Creating Imaginative Fiction* by Jeff Vandermeer
- *Aliens & Alien Societies: A Writer's Guide to Creating Extraterrestrial Life-Forms* by Stanley Schmidt
- *World Building* by Stephen Gillette



Web Sites / Blogs



- Fantasy World Building Questions by Patricia Wrede (<http://www.sfwa.org/2009/08/fantasy-worldbuilding-questions/>)
- Five Foundations of World Building by Malinda Lo (<http://www.malindalo.com/2012/10/five-foundations-of-world-building/>)
- Fantasy World Builder Guide (<http://www.web-writer.net/fantasy/days/days/01.html>)