

Questions for Fantasy World Builders

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- What kind of world is this? Like Earth? How similar? How different? Be specific.
- Are the natural laws different in any way (gravity, type of atmosphere, moon with tides, etc.)?
- Is there any magic in your world? If so, who or what practices it? How is it viewed? Who considers it a positive thing? A negative thing? What kind of magic is it and is it used for good, evil, or both?
- Who populates your world? How many sentient species? What are their attitudes regarding the other?
- What are the societies like? If more than one, how do they differ? Are they at odds?
- Is there conflict in your world between groups (nations, clans, kingdoms)? If so, why? How long has the conflict been going on, and what does each side want [this is very important!]?
- How did life originate on this world? Is there a creator? Evolution? Is there a theology the beings on this world believe? How do they practice it?
- What sizes are the population groups? Are there large cities? Small villages?
- What is the natural environment like? Biome regions and what types? What is the weather like in the different areas?
- How much do the people know about science, astronomy? Are they superstitious and uneducated, or do they have learned ones among them? How much do they know about the universe?
- What is the geography like, and how does it impact those who live in these different regions?
- How much of this world is involved in the scope of your story? How much of it do your characters know about, and is what they know true?
- What are the important aspects of the locale in which your characters live? How does the environment affect and shape their lives and beliefs?
- Where in their world do they live—in communities? In caves? In buildings? Describe these.
- Are there different status groups within the culture? What occupations do they have? Are some rich and some poor? How do the classes treat each other? What type of government is in place, and how do your characters feel about it?
- What animals are there, and how many and what kinds interact with humans? Do humans use and/or eat other species?

There Be Dragons

- What is society like? Family groups? Are there parents and children? If there are families, what is the hierarchy? How are children raised and treated?
- What is the rich history of your world? What key events took place that shaped the present situation (politically, socially, environmentally)?
- What languages do they speak, and if more than one, do they all know all languages or is there some language barrier? If the latter, what problems does that pose?
- How advanced are the people in your world? Do they correspond to any age in human civilization development (bronze age, iron age, etc.)? Do they use weapons and if so, what kind?
- How much technology is there, and how does it work? How is it used in daily life and in the life of your main characters?
- How advanced is your world in medicine? How are illnesses and injuries treated and viewed? Are medical people respected or not?
- Is there crime in your world? How is that handled? Are criminals punished? Are there law courts, judges?
- What about the arts and creativity? Do people have creative talents or gifts? How are they used or viewed?
- How do people dress, speak, eat? What is their food like? How often do they eat, and is there any ritual with eating?
- Do they have social functions like dances or parties? What do they do in their spare time? What are common hobbies/activities?
- What are the manners and social customs like? Is respect shown to certain types of people? What are their views on sex? (Do they have it? Do they reproduce?)
- What is the furniture like? Dress? Who makes it?
- What are the general ethics and morals of your society or societies? What is valued and honored? What is considered dishonorable or unlawful action or behavior? Do you have any "thou shalt not's"?
- Is there history of war? With whom and when? What key battles were fought, and what were the lingering consequences? How much presence does any military group have in your world? How much power?
- What type of education do people have? What are they most knowledgeable in? Least knowledgeable?
- How does this world smell, sound, taste, feel? Go deep into sensory details that bring the world to life. Is the air heavy, thick, moist? Does food taste different from Earth?