

World Building Basics

Worksheets for Writers Building Worlds created by S. J. Reisner

Feel free to reproduce these worksheets for your personal use.
Additional booklets of these worksheets can be purchased from www.sjreisner.com for
\$5 each, or can be downloaded for free in PDF.

Generalized World Building Outline Worksheet

GEOGRAPHY

Mountains, plains, desert, woodlands, swamp, etc...

CLIMATE

Distinct seasons, snow, rain, arid, humid, temperatures etc...

PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE

What types of plant life does the geography and climate sustain?

FOOD

What do the animals *and* people eat?

DOMESTICATED ANIMALS

What types of livestock can the climate and geography support? What about pets and companion animals?

WILD ANIMALS

What types of animals does this environment sustain naturally? How do the people and wild animals interact? Are the wild animals herbivores, carnivores, or omnivores? What is the food chain like? If you have wild carnivores, they need other creatures to feed on. If you have herbivores, there must be enough vegetation to sustain them.

CULTURES/SOCIETIES:

Village, town or city? Rural, suburban, inner-city?

GOVERNMENT and LAWS

What kind of government?

How and why did this government come to be?

Who makes the laws and who upholds the laws?

What are the laws and the consequences of breaking the law?

ECONOMICS

Money, coins, credits, gems, barter system?

Trade, import and export, etc... (look at natural resources available to your people based on their geographic location)

How are goods exported and imported? Transportation?

TECHNOLOGY AND MAGIC

What types of technology/magic are present and how do they work?

How does this technology/magic affect transportation?

How has the technology/magic played a role in building or destroying the society that uses it? How does it affect individuals?

What are the consequences (globally, locally, or individually) of this technology/magic?

If the society is advanced – what kind of medical technology and care is available to the people? If the society is pre-industrial do they have herbalists, medicine men, or do they use magic to cure their sick?

What kinds of diseases/illnesses are common?

SOCIETAL STRUCTURE

Social classes – Warrior/Spiritual, Wealthy/Working Class/Poor etc, where do these people live and do the structures in which they live vary from class to class?

Family structure – Who raises and teaches the children, who cooks, who takes care of ill family members, do extended families live together?

Gender roles – Which sex is dominant, or is there no difference? How do educational and societal expectations differ between the sexes?

Clothing, earthly possessions, jewelry, hairstyles based on class and/or gender?

Food – is there a difference in what and how people eat based on their place in society?

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

Holidays/Celebrations, rites of passage, family traditions.

What behaviors are frowned upon? What behaviors are appropriate?

What phrases or words are only used by people from this particular place?

What are the origins of these phrases or words?

RELIGION

Religious Holidays? One god vs. many gods. No gods. Spiritual philosophy etc... What are their beliefs about birth, death, and the afterlife? Do they prefer burial, cremation or something else? Why? Who is in charge of the place of worship?

WORLD AND LOCAL HISTORY

Wars and Peace Treaties

Major discoveries, events that altered history

The history of the interaction between different societies.

Natural disasters that affected or altered history.

Important historical figures.

BASIC WORLD BUILDING TECHNIQUES

LISTS – Get the basics down onto paper.

RESEARCH – Research items on your list that require it.

MAPS – Give yourself a visual representation of place.

GENEALOGY – use visual maps of bloodlines.

SNIPPETS/SCENES: - Pre-Writing

You can easily begin writing snippets or scenes to show technology, customs, history, social classes, economic and government systems, manners of dress etc... even though these paragraphs of text may not make it into the novel.

Scene Setting Worksheet

Scene: _____

Where: _____

When: _____

Time: _____

Surroundings: _____

If outside, what does the sky look like? _____

What does the air feel like? _____

What does the air smell of? _____

List the sounds your characters can hear: _____

If inside, describe furnishings, textures, walls, colors, and light quality: _____

Why are your characters here? _____

How do your characters feel while here? _____

Who else is here and why? _____

What is the overall mood and why? _____

Add any additional questions you can think of and your answers here:

Three-Dimensional Character Sheet

General Information:

Name _____
Sex: _____ Age: _____
Birthplace: _____
Nationality: _____
Religion _____
Feelings about Religion: _____

Languages Spoken: _____
Political Affiliations: _____
Social Class: _____ Marital Status: _____

Family:

Father's Name: _____
Profession: _____
Is he living or dead, if dead, how did he die?

Mother's Name: _____
Profession: _____
Is she living or dead, if dead, how did she die?

Are parents happily married or divorced? _____
of Brothers: _____
Names: _____

of Sisters: _____
Names: _____

Description of family escutcheon (coat of arms):

Interesting information regarding family:

Marriage to whom and when:

Number of children ages and names if any:

Type of relationship with family:

Thoughts about family:

Physical Appearance:

Height:_____ Weight:_____ Eyes:_____ Hair:_____

Forehead:_____

Jawline:_____ Lips:_____ Mouth:_____

Eyebrows:_____

Hands:_____ Fingers:_____ Shoulders:_____

Limbs:_____

Complexion:_____ Breasts:_____ Waist:_____

Hips:_____

Neck:_____ Ears:_____ Nose:_____

Teeth:_____

Type of body:

Birthmarks or scars:

Posture:_____

Overall Appearance:_____

Education and Work:

Profession:_____

Guilds:_____

Education:_____

Poorest Subjects:

Favorite Subjects:

Quality of work performed:

Hours worked per week:_____

Income:_____

Reputation with those worked with:

Military Service:

Branch: _____

Enlisted Rank: _____

Highest Rank achieved: _____

Unit or Legion: _____ # of years served: _____

Served under what ruler(s): _____

Campaigns of note: _____

Decorations: _____

Weapons trained to use: _____

Proficiency with weapons used: _____

Where trained and by who: _____

Official opinion of character as a soldier: _____

Traits and Personality:

Major Traits: _____

Minor Traits: _____

Outstanding Qualities: _____

Character Flaws: _____

Habitual Expressions: _____

Habitual Mannerisms: _____

Fears: _____

Psycho-Analysis of Character: _____

Temperment: _____

Emotional Level (i.e. cries at the drop of a hat): _____

Attitude toward life:

Is (s)he a leader, follower, or dropout:

Personal Information:

Hobbies or pastimes:

Favorite books and/or songs:

Favorite colors:

Favorite foods:

Favorite drinks:

Taste in Jewelry:

Taste in clothing:

Favorite entertainment:

Type of women/men attracted to or preferred: _____

What is his/her attitude toward small children:

Attitude toward animals (pets, horses etc...):

City background:

Country background:

Describe furnishings in characters home (colors and materials):

Mode of transportation (i.e. car, ship, plane, wagon, horse, walking etc...):

Additional Questions:

What does he/she value most:

What does (s)he carry with her/him:

What was the worst crime (s)he committed:

What do friends and neighbors really think of him/her?

Who are his/her closest friends?

What does he/she value most in his/her friends?

Who are his/her worst enemies and why?

Other Character Information:
