

Story World Checklist

Reminder: Your story world can be as big as a galaxy or as small as a family. For the purposes of some stories, defining the “natural world” might mean identifying the plants in the backyard. For others, you’ll need to know how many moons are on each neighboring planet. Adapt this checklist to your needs. If something doesn’t apply, skip it.

Natural world Including geography, plants, weather, animals, bodies of water, rock formations, and available food and resources. Is your story world cloudy all year round? Are there mountains? Does it snow? What kind of food is available to eat? How long are the days?

Infrastructure Is this an urban world? Rural? What kind of transportation systems are available? How about public hygiene? Do people get water from a tap, a well, the creek? Does the government provide and maintain infrastructure, or are people on their own?

Science Includes physics, chemistry, and geology. Does your world feature non-standard laws of physics or math (like magic)? What is the level of scientific knowledge and advancement? Have recent changes in science impacted your story world?

Technology What kind of technology is available? Does everyone have access to it? What is the technology used for—personal use, military, scientific, all of the above? How do people feel about technology? Does it help people live better lives, hinder them, both?

Economy What do people do for work? What kind of currency do they use? What are the main sources of income or industry? How does their work impact their lives? Is this a capitalist, socialist, or communist economy—or something else altogether? What kind of class system has arisen from this economy? How do people organize to get work done, and to get what they

want and need? Have there been recent changes in the economy that have affected life for your characters?

Politics & Government What's the political situation? Are there elected leaders? Kings and queens? Any political tension worth mentioning? Who makes political decisions? Are those people liked? Is the political climate stable, peaceful, conflict-ridden, polarized, violent? What kind of power structures come along with this political system? Is there race or gender inequality? Who has power and who is oppressed? Who creates laws and how are they enforced?

History How long has this world, and the people in it, existed? Have they always been there? Have there been wars, natural disasters, deaths, divorces, or other significant past events that inform the story? How do the people in your story world keep track of history? What is your main character's family history and genealogy? Have there been traumatic events, power shifts, or other historical events of significance?

Culture What groups of people live in your story world? What kind of families, tribes, nations, or empires do they cluster into? What are their customs, rituals, and taboos? How about their eating habits? Their clothing? Their religion? Their language(s)? Holidays? Gender roles? Is there just one cultural group in your story world? Several? Hundreds? If they interact, how do they get along? What kinds of conflicts come up?

Conflict Even fantasy stories about utopias begin the moment something goes *wrong*. What's the potential for conflict in your story world? Is it political? Religious? Cultural? Interpersonal? *Interspecies*? With the natural world itself? What's the status quo and why is it changing or being threatened?

Education What kind of education is available? Is it valued? Who gets to partake? How do people learn what they need to know to get by in this world? Are people literate? Who teaches whom—Do parents teach their

children? Professionals their apprentices? Teachers their students? Does everyone get the same education?

Food & Drink What foods are available in this world? Why? Is there ever a shortage of food? Who is involved in growing, producing, or procuring the food? Is there alcohol? Where do people get food—a corner store, grocery store, food bank, right in their own backyard? Are there local delicacies or treats?

Arts & Recreation What do people do for fun? What kinds of arts and entertainment exist in this world? Music? Movies? Games? Sports? Who can afford these luxuries? Who makes art? Are there media celebrities? What do teenagers do on a Saturday night? How do people create and express joy?