World Building Questionnaire
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Contents
Physical World.................................................................................................................................................................................. 1
Government.................................................................................................................................................................................... 4
Society........................................................................................................................................................................................................ 9
Religion..................................................................................................................................................................................................... 19
Technology................................................................................................................................................................................................. 21
Magic.................................................................................................................................................................................................... 24
Species....................................................................................................................................................................................................... 27
Characters.................................................................................................................................................................................................. 29
Weapons and Armor........................................................................................................................................................................ 30

Physical World
• Geography:
  o What is your world called?
    ▪ If there are regions, what are their names?
    ▪ What are the names of cities, towns, and villages used in the story?
      • How does the geographical location affect this city, town, or village?
      • Are there bridges?
      • Are there tunnels?
      • How many people live there?
    ▪ What about names of rivers, forests, deserts, oceans, lakes, etc.?
    ▪ What are the names of important roads?
    ▪ Are there nicknames for certain places? If so, what are they?
- How large is the population?
  - Average life span?
  - Life expectancy?
  - Average family size?
  - How diverse is it?
- Where does your story take place? An island? A landlocked country? A peninsula?
  - What are the borders made of? Are they manmade or naturally occurring borders such as rivers?
  - Does your land share borders with other places? What are they?
  - Have borders ever changed?
- What is the climate?
  - How long are seasons and days?
  - What seasons are there?
  - How much rainfall is there per year?
  - How much sunlight is there?
  - What hemisphere is this place in?
  - What climate zone is it in?
- What is the ecosystem?
  - Have any species gone extinct? Why?
  - Are any species overpopulated?
  - Have certain species (like humans) destroyed the ecosystem?
  - How does the ecosystem change throughout the year?
- Foreign lands:
  - What foreign places are nearby?
  - Are their climates, ecosystems, and geography similar to other places?
- Astronomy
  - How many moons are there?
    - Do these moons have names?
    - Is time counted by one of these moons?
  - What about constellations?
    - What are their names?
    - What shapes do they form?
    - Are there stories behind them?
  - What other planets are visible?
- What are their names?
- Are they visible to the eye? When?
Government

- General government:
  - What type of government is used?
    - How is the next leader chosen?
    - How does the population feel about this method?
    - How does the population feel about the current leader(s)?
    - How was this form of government chosen?
    - What past forms have been used?
  - Does government structure differ between regions?
    - Is there one major power that rules over all regions and smaller powers in each region?
    - Are there any independent regions within one country or nation?
    - Is there any rule over foreign land?
  - Have there been major changes in government:
    - Structure?
    - Rule (as in, a new queen or prime minister)?
    - Law?
  - How is the morality?
    - Are there any corrupt politicians or government officials?
      - Why are they corrupt?
      - Are there punishments for this?
  - Are there political parties?
    - What are their names?
    - What do they represent?
    - Is there a clash between parties?
    - Which party is in power?
  - How much raw power and influence does the government have?
  - How powerful is the region it rules?

- Laws:
  - What laws have been put in place?
    - Is there “ten commandments-esque” set of rules? As in, major rules that define a society?
    - Are there documents about laws?
    - Who makes laws?
- Can anyone repel laws?
- Who is obligated to follow these rules?
- How often are laws broken?
- When were these laws put in place?
- Why were certain laws created?
- What rights does the population have?
- Do certain people have special rights?
  - Are there taxes?
    - How often are taxes paid?
    - Who collects taxes?
    - How much must the population contribute?
    - What are taxes used for?
    - How do your characters feel about taxes?
    - How are taxes collected?
    - What happens if someone does not pay taxes?
  - What type of law enforcement is there?
    - What happens when someone breaks the law? Are they arrested?
    - Can citizens make an arrest?
    - What punishments are there?
      - Torture?
      - Jail time?
      - Is there a death penalty?
      - Are there fines?
      - Bails?
      - Are punishments kept track of?
      - Is there a trial? Is it fair?
      - Who decides punishment?
      - Is the system prejudice against a certain group of people?
    - How does one work for law enforcement?
    - Do they engage in brutality?
    - Are they corrupt?
    - Are they paid well?
    - Are they respected? Feared?
What about warfare?

- Is there a military? An army? A navy? A militia?
  - What are the uniforms like for each group?
  - What ranks are there?
  - What awards are given?
- Who is allowed in the military?
  - Why are some people not allowed?
  - Is there an age requirement?
  - Are there tests to determine eligibility?
  - Who is discharged?
- Is there a draft? Volunteers? Both?
  - What happens if the draft is avoided?
  - Are soldiers paid?
- What weapons are used?
- What type of transportation is used? Vehicles? Horses?
  - What types of boats are used?
- What tactics are used?
- How much money is spent on war?
- Have there been past wars?
  - Have these wars affected borders? Population? Society? Foreign relationships?
  - Have there been treaties to end wars?
  - What was the most recent war?
  - What are these wars about?
  - Are there any famous wars?
  - What are these wars called?
    - Are there nicknames for them?
    - Do they have more than one formal name?
    - Does the name change depending on where you are?
- How do your character view wars or certain wars?
  - Do they prefer not to talk about certain wars?
  - Do they feel some were unnecessary?
  - Is the population eager to volunteer to fight?
• Who are the allies and enemies?
  o Why are they allies?
    ▪ Are there agreements among allies?
  o Why are they enemies?
• Foreign Lands:
  • What are the relationships between foreign lands?
    o How do they communicate?
  • Have borders changed between surrounding lands?
  • Are there policies regarding trade?
    o What goods are imported and exported?
    o Is it expensive?
    o Is there smuggling?
    o How are they traded?
    o Is trading regulated? How much?
    o Are certain goods illegal?
  • What are the borders like?
    o Are they heavily guarded?
    o Is it hard to cross borders?
  • How does your land handle non-citizens?
    o What happens if a non-citizen commits a law in another land?
      ▪ Are they returned to their home land?
    o How many immigrants are there? Why are there immigrants?
• Economy:
  • What kind of economy is used (mixed, market, etc.)?
  • How is the economy?
  • How does the population feel about the economy?
  • Does the economy affect the hierarchy of wealth?
    o Is there a hierarchy of wealth?
    o Are there lower, middle, and upper classes?
    o How large is the gap between classes?
    o What is the poverty line?
      ▪ How many people are under this line?
- How many people are wealthy?
- How much does the average person make in one year?
  - Who works?
  - Are there labor laws?
  - What are some common jobs?
- What currency is used?
  - Can trade be substituted for money?
  - Is counterfeit easy?
  - What is money made of?
  - How is the money decorated?
- What are major goods?
- Is there scarcity?
- Are there banks?
Society

- Culture:
  - Food:
    - What type of food is eaten?
    - Does the population grow their own food rather than buy it?
    - What kind of crops are able to grow?
    - Is food imported from other places?
    - How is food eaten? With hands or utensils?
      - What type of utensils are used?
      - Are there formal and informal ways of dining?
      - What is considered “table manners”?
      - Is there a certain order to eat different types of food?
    - How often does the population eat per day?
    - How large are meals?
    - When do they eat?
    - How does food differ in seasons?
      - Is it scarce in the winter?
      - Can the population preserve food?
    - Are there any rituals that take place before meals? Such as prayers?
    - Are there any traditional foods or recipes?
      - Are these only eaten on certain days?
      - Are any foods forbidden?
  - Music:
    - What instruments are used?
      - What are these made of?
      - Are they used for certain reasons?
      - Do many people play instruments?
    - What type of music is played?
    - Are there lyrics?
    - What is the attitude toward music?
    - Are any songs sacred or used for rituals and holidays?
    - Who can play music? Who can’t play music?
• Is there dance?
• Are stories told through music?
  o Customs:
    • What customs do they have?
    • How does the population greet each other?
    • Is it customary to bow or take off shoes before entering a home?
    • What hand gestures are there?
    • Are any gestures considered rude?
    • Are gifts given on certain occasions?
  • Birth:
    • How is birth viewed? Is it considered a gift?
    • What birthing techniques are used?
      o Where does birth usually occur?
      o Who is present during the birth?
      o Are any medications or remedies used?
    • What is the infant mortality rate?
      o How many mothers die during childbirth?
    • Does the father have an important role in the birth?
    • Are there any birthing rituals or ceremonies (such as circumcision or baptism)?
      o When do these take place?
      o Why do these take place?
    • How are they named?
      o Does it happen right after birth?
      o Before birth?
      o Is there a waiting period?
      o Who chooses the name?
      o Are they chosen for a meaning? Or for liking?
    • Who is allowed to be around the newborn?
    • Are your characters aware of how babies are made?
    • How is childbirth outside of wedlock (or any other joining) viewed?
    • What is the average age for a woman to have a child?
    • How are birthdays celebrated?
Marriage:
- Does marriage or some type of joining exist?
- What are the laws about these unions?
  - Who can get married?
  - Is there an age requirement?
  - Are there legal benefits?
- Are these arranged?
  - Why?
  - Who marries who? The rich to the rich and the poor to the poor?
  - Are they married for money?
  - For power?
- What is the ceremony like?
  - How long does it last?
  - Are there only certain days it can happen?
  - Who performs it?
  - Besides brides and grooms, who is involved?
- What do those involved wear?
- Are same-sex marriages allowed?
- Are there any superstitions (such as the groom not being allowed to see the bride in her dress before the wedding to prevent bad luck)?
- How is sex outside of wedlock viewed? Why?
- What is the average age to get married? Why?
- What are engagements like?
  - Are rings given?
  - A certain type of flower?
  - Is there a waiting period between engagements and weddings?
- Is polygamy the norm? Monogamy? Both?
- Are those involved in the wedding prepared in anyway?
  - Do they have their own ceremonies, celebrations, or rituals (like a bachelor’s party)?
- Is there divorce?
  - How is it handled?
- How is it viewed?
  - Death:
    - How is death viewed?
      - Is it feared? Welcomed?
      - Is there some type of funeral?
    - What are burial rituals like?
      - Are corpses cleansed?
      - Are they buried? Burned? Sent out to see?
      - Are there any markers (such as headstones) for the dead?
      - How are they remembered?
      - Are there any rituals?
        - Are there any songs?
        - What are burial ceremonies like?
        - Who is involved?
    - Are there wills?
    - What about the afterlife?
      - Is there more than one?
      - Is there reincarnation?
    - How is suicide viewed?
      - What about assisted suicide (such as when a character is painfully and slowly dying and wishes to die quickly)?
    - What is the most common type of death?
      - Why is this common?
      - Is there a “danger zone” (usually between 0-2 years of age)?
  - Literature:
    - What genres are popular?
    - Are there magazines of some sort?
    - Are there newspapers?
    - Who can read?
    - Who can write?
    - What is the literacy rate?
    - Is there poetry?
[162x529] How are writers treated?
[180x515] How are books made?
  • Are scrolls used instead?
  • Or some other medium?
[216x472] How available is literature?
[216x458]o Fashion:
   What is the most common material used for clothing?
    • What colors are popular?
   How many layers do characters wear?
   Is there religious wear?
   Are there headdresses?
   What types of shoes are worn?
    • Do only the rich wear shoes?
   Does everyone make their own clothes?
   How many articles of clothing does the average person own?
   What undergarments are used?
   What styles are popular?
   Is jewelry used?
    • Does jewelry have meaning?
    • Does the placement of jewelry have meaning?
    • What is jewelry made of?
[216x345]o Sports:
   Are there any sports?
   How are sports viewed?
   What about athletes?
    • How are they treated?
    • Are they paid?
    • Who can be an athlete?
   Are sports played to settle disputes?
    • Are the losers punished?
    • Are there prizes?
   What is the most popular sport?
How did these sports come about?

Names:
- What is the naming system?
- Are names chosen for meaning?
- Are there common feminine and masculine endings?
- How many names does a person have?
- Are there surnames?
  - How did these come about?
- What are common names?
- Are names inherited?
- How are people addressed?
  - Are there titles of respect?
  - Are there offensive titles?

Language:
- What common phrases are there?
- What is the written language like?
  - Is there a written language that cannot be spoken?
- What is the alphabet?
- What is the primary language of certain regions?
  - Is it common for one to be bilingual?
- Are there any dead languages often used in phrases (like Latin)?
- Is the language strictly oral?

Appearance:
- Are there standards of beauty?
- What hairstyles are there?
  - Do different hairstyles have meaning?
  - Is hair often dyed another color?
  - How is facial hair viewed?
  - How is body hair viewed?
  - How is hair washed?
- What about weight?
  - Is being overweight a sign of wealth or beauty?
• Is most of the population under or overweight?
  o Why?
• How is weight viewed?
• Can one’s weight be an indicator of social class?
  ▪ How often does the population bathe?
  o How is their hygiene?
  o What do they use to cleanse?
  ▪ Is makeup used?
  ▪ Are certain aspects (such as nose size, jaw shape, eye color) desirable?
  ▪ Are there superstitions about certain appearances (like how many thought red haired women to be witches)?
  o Values:
    ▪ What does your culture value? Knowledge? Family? Death in battle?
    ▪ Is anything considered invaluable?
    ▪ How serious does the culture take values?
    ▪ Does anyone questions these values?
    ▪ Does everyone accept these values?
  o Morals:
    ▪ How do your cultures view:
      • Revenge?
      • Thievery?
      • Adultery?
      • Murder?
      • Abuse (physical, sexual, and emotional)?
      • Anything else you can think of?
    ▪ Are these morals reinforced?
    ▪ Do they have a link to religion?
  o Rituals:
    ▪ What rituals are there?
      • Are there every day rituals?
      • Are there holiday rituals?
      • Do they correlate to religion?
      • What is used during rituals?
Symbols:
- What symbols are important?
  - Are certain animals or plants used as symbols?
  - Any other symbol?
- Are certain symbols worn?
  - Who can wear these symbols?
  - Do religious figures wear certain symbols?

Relationships:
- Friendships:
  - Are friendships valued?
  - How many friends does the average person have?
  - How do friends treat each other?
- Romantic and Sexual relationships:
  - How much do your characters know about sexual health?
    - What forms of birth control are used?
    - Are there STDs?
  - What is the average age gap?
    - Is there an acceptable and an unacceptable range?
  - How long do relationships usually last?
  - Is casual dating common?
    - What age does this begin?
  - How is homosexuality viewed?
  - How is sex viewed?
    - Is it condemned?
    - Celebrated?
    - Private?
- Professional Relationships:
  - How do colleagues treat each other?
  - Are employees extremely submissive to their bosses?
  - What is considered inappropriate?
- Is there a hierarchy in your world?
  - What is it based on? Wealth? Power? Ancestry?
• How are those on the low end treated? The high end?
• Can one move between the low and high end?
• Are these levels of hierarchy ambiguous or not?
  o Are there names for these levels?
  o Are there offensive slurs for these levels?
• What groups are there?
  ▪ Does the population live in clans or tribes?
  ▪ Are they nomadic?
    o How do they live if they are nomadic?
    o What do they live in?
    o Where do they travel?
  ▪ Are there fights between groups?
  ▪ What are the names of these groups?
  ▪ Do these groups coexist with settled societies?
    o Are they independent from the law of these societies?
• History:
  ▪ Are there any major historical points?
  ▪ What affect did these have?
  ▪ Are these remembered by the population?
  ▪ What historical figures are there?
  ▪ Have there been any significant natural disasters?
    o Did these disasters ruin any regions?
  ▪ Is history kept track of somehow?
  ▪ Have borders changed?
  ▪ Has language changed?
  ▪ Is the population ashamed of their history? Why?
    o Do they dislike talking about a certain time?
  ▪ Are any historical periods romanticized? Why?
  ▪ Are there names for certain periods?
  ▪ Are certain places named after the historical events that took place there?
  ▪ How long have people lived in one place?
    o How did they get there?
Was anyone else there before them?

Education:
  - What is the view on education?
  - What is the education system like?
    - Who is educated?
    - Who is not allowed education?
    - Is education expensive?
    - Is it open to the public?
    - Are there schools or private tutors? Both?
  - How long does education last?
    - What knowledge does your world have?
    - Is education passed from parent to child?
Religion

- How many religions are there?
  - What are they?
  - Do they have sub-religions?
  - What is the main religion?
- How many people are religious?
- Is religion commonly accepted as fact?
- Is there one god?
- A pantheon of gods?
  - Who are the gods?
  - Why are they important to the population?
- Is there prayer?
  - Altars?
  - Sacrifices?
  - Rituals?
  - Holidays?
- Are the deities personified?
  - What do they look like?
- How does religion affect everyday life?
- How are other religions treated?
- Are there rules to follow?
- Is there scripture?
  - What form does it come in? A book? A scroll?
  - Who wrote it?
  - Is it taken seriously?
  - Is it considered sacred?
  - What are the contents?
- Is the knowledge passed on orally?
- Are there important religious figures that are not deities?
  - Who were they?
  - What role did they play in religion?
- Did they actually exist?
- Is there a hierarchy of religious rankings?
- Is religion private or shared in a community?
  - Are there places of worship?
  - What do these places look like?
- How organized is the religion?
- What myths are there?
  - Do myths tell a lesson?
  - Do they reflect the culture’s morals?
  - What are the important myths?
    - Why are they important?
    - Who is involved?
  - Is there a creation myth?
    - A myth about the end of the world?
  - Are there any creatures that come from myths?
Technology

- Science:
  - What do your characters know about science?
    - Biology?
      - Do they know about human organs and their functions?
      - Are there biologists?
      - Are they aware that traits are passed from parent to offspring?
      - Are there any hybrid species? Remember, hybrids cannot reproduce.
    - Physics?
    - Chemistry?
  - Is science condemned?
  - Are there scientists?
  - Does science contradict religions?
    - What effect does that have?

- Time:
  - How is time kept?
    - Sundials? Clocks? Lunar cycles?
  - What does the calendar look like?
    - Are there days? Weeks? Months?
      - What are the names of days and months?
      - How long are weeks and months?
      - Are there seasons?
      - How long is a year?
      - Is the new year celebrated?
        - When is it celebrated?
      - Are there any sacred days?

- Medicine:
  - What is used for medicine?
    - Herbs?
    - Chemicals?
  - What is the view on medicine?
  - What conditions are considered deadly?
o Are there cures for any diseases?
o Are there doctors?
  ▪ Surgeons?
  ▪ What do doctors wear?
  ▪ How are they treated?
  ▪ How does one become a doctor?
• Transportation:
  o What is the most common form of transportation?
    ▪ Why is it common?
  o What other forms are there?
  o Do the rich travel differently than the poor?
  o Do government officials have special means of transportation?
• Communication:
  o Is there mail?
  o How long does it take to deliver a message?
  o Are there messengers?
    ▪ Are there special messengers for emergencies?
  o What other forms of communication exist?
• Architecture:
  o What materials are used?
    ▪ How does this affect the architecture?
    ▪ What are the most common materials?
    ▪ What are the cheapest materials?
    ▪ What are the roofs made of?
  o What is the structure?
    ▪ Are buildings tall or wide? Why?
    ▪ What type of structure is most common?
    ▪ Are there basements?
    ▪ How many floors are there?
      ▪ What floor do people sleep on?
    ▪ What shape are doors?
    ▪ What shape are windows?
- Are windows not supposed to face a certain direction? Why?
  - Is glass used in windows?
  - Screens?
- What rooms are there?
- Are there ladders or stairs?

  o Decoration:
    - What decorations are there?
      - Do these have any meaning?
      - Are they only on certain buildings?
      - Where are they placed?
    - Are there different types of architecture?
      - Does it differ based on region?
      - Is some architecture purple for aesthetics?
      - What other structures are there?

  o Furniture:
    - What materials are used?
    - What are common furniture styles?
    - Is furniture made for comfort or style?
    - Is furniture more angular or rounded?
Magic

- Is magic feared or embraced?
- Is there an origin of magic?
  - Are your characters aware of what it is?
  - If not, do they question it?
- Types of Magic:
  - What types are there? Physical? Mental? Elemental?
  - Are there any forbidden forms of magic?
  - Does magic type differ from place to place?
  - How is magic used?
    - Do objects channel the magic?
    - Are there spells?
  - Do different species have different types of magic?
- Rules and Limitations:
  - Users:
    - Who uses magic?
      - Who can or cannot use magic?
    - Is it learned?
      - Is it something one is born with?
    - Are magic practitioners shunned or embraced?
      - Do they hide in secret?
      - Are they respected?
  - Laws:
    - Are there any laws regarding magic?
    - Is magic illegal?
      - Are only certain types illegal?
      - What are the punishments for use?
    - Are there no laws at all?
    - Are magic users independent from the government?
    - Is there a separate government or a special branch of government to handle magical affairs?
  - Limits:
    - What can’t magic do?
- Is there a limit to how much magic a person can use in a time period?
  - Are there consequences for using too much magic?
- Does magic deteriorate or strengthen with age?
- Can one gain or lose magic?
  - Can they lose it altogether?
- Are users able to kill with magic?
- **Titles and Names:**
  - What are magic users called? Wizards? Witches? Warlocks?
  - Are there any formal or special titles?
  - Are there any slurs?
  - Are there any nicknames?
  - Are there ranks of magic users?
    - What are the names of these ranks?
- **Jobs:**
  - Are there any jobs that require magic?
  - Has magic replaced jobs?
    - Is employment rate high because of this?
  - Is magic shunned in the workplace?
- **Uses:**
  - Magical Objects:
    - Can magic be applied to objects to give them magical connotations?
      - How are these objects used?
      - What are some common magical objects?
      - Can they be bought or do users prefer to make their own?
  - Everyday Life:
    - How does magic affect everyday life?
    - Are simple problems fixed because of magic?
    - Is life easier for magic users?
    - Are non-magical users envious?
  - Transportation:
    - Is magical transportation available?
      - Who is it available to?
- Is it expensive?
- Are there drawbacks?
  - Does it deplete magic?
  - Can only really powerful users use it?
  - What limitations are there?
- What forms are there?
- Communication:
  - How do magic users incorporate magic in communication?
  - Who is able to communicate this way?
  - Are there many forms?
    - Are some forms faster than others?
- War:
  - Is magic used in war?
  - How does the use of magic change battle tactics?
  - Does a magic army have an advantage over a non-magical one?
Species

- Humanoid Species:
  - Do humanoid species (such as elves and humans) share a common ancestor?
  - Why have they evolved the way they did?
  - How many humanoid species are there?
    - Do they coexist in the same society?
    - What is their relationship like?
    - Do they live under the same laws?
  - Where do these species live?

- Hybrid Species:
  - Are there any hybrid species?
    - Are they rare?
    - How are they treated?
    - How do they cope with being from two different cultures?
    - What laws do they follow?
    - How is their magic affected, if they have any?

- Mythological Creatures:
  - What creatures come from myths within the story?
  - Are these creatures believed to be real?

- Mythical Creatures:
  - What creatures from myths in our world have you used?
  - Where are these creatures found?
  - How are they treated?

- Other Creatures:
  - What other species exist?
    - What are they called?
    - What do they look like?
    - How do they live?
    - Where do they live?
    - How do they reproduce?
    - Can they be domesticated?
    - What is their life span?
• Laws:
  o Are there laws regarding other species?
  o Are certain species allowed to be kept as pets?
  o Are there animal cruelty laws?
  o Is it illegal to use certain species for potions, medicines, etc.?

• Relationships:
  o What are the relationships between species?
    ▪ Is there a reason for bad or good relationships?
  o Have one species hunted another into extinction?
  o Are there stereotypes about certain species?
Characters

- What do the people of a region look like?
  - What is a common hair color? Texture?
  - What is a common eye color?
  - What is the skin color of the native people?
  - What are common facial features?
  - What is the common build, height, or weight?

- What are common traits?
  - Are certain values common in the population?
  - Are they violent or peaceful?
  - Brave or cowardly?
  - Loud or quiet?

- What are common skills?
  - Are most characters hunters and thus know how to use weapons?
  - Are they gatherers and know a lot about nature?
  - Is there a common form of martial arts?
  - Are certain weapons commonly used?
Weapons and Armor

- Weapons:
  - What weapons are common?
  - What are these weapons?
    - Who has these weapons?
    - Are there laws about these weapons?
    - What do they look like?
  - Are weapons used in combat? Hunting?
    - Are they more like collectables or relics?

- Armor:
  - What is armor mostly made of?
  - What is a common form of armor?
  - How does this armor affect movement?
  - Are there decorations or heraldry?
    - Do these hold any meaning?
    - Are they earned?
    - Are they chosen or given?