

World Building Questionnaire

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Physical World

- Geography:
 - 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 repeal 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?
 - Why are they allies?
 - Are there agreements among allies?
 - Why are they enemies?
- Foreign Lands:
 - What are the relationships between foreign lands?
 - How do they communicate?
 - Have borders changed between surrounding lands?
 - Are there policies regarding trade?
 - What goods are imported and exported?
 - Is it expensive?
 - Is there smuggling?
 - How are they traded?
 - Is trading regulated? How much?
 - Are certain goods illegal?
 - What are the borders like?
 - Are they heavily guarded?
 - Is it hard to cross borders?
 - How does your land handle non-citizens?
 - What happens if a non-citizen commits a law in another land?
 - Are they returned to their home land?
 - 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?
 - Is there a hierarchy of wealth?
 - Are there lower, middle, and upper classes?
 - How large is the gap between classes?
 - 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?
- 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?
 - Where does birth usually occur?
 - Who is present during the birth?
 - Are any medications or remedies used?
 - What is the infant mortality rate?
 - 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)?
 - When do these take place?
 - Why do these take place?
 - How are they named?
 - Does it happen right after birth?
 - Before birth?
 - Is there a waiting period?
 - Who chooses the name?
 - 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?

- How are writers treated?
- How are books made?
 - Are scrolls used instead?
 - Or some other medium?
- How available is literature?
- 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?
- 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?
 - Why?
 - How is weight viewed?
 - Can one's weight be an indicator of social class?
 - How often does the population bathe?
 - How is their hygiene?
 - 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)?
- 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?
 - 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?
 - 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?
 - Are there names for these levels?
 - Are there offensive slurs for these levels?
- What groups are there?
 - Does the population live in clans or tribes?
 - Are they nomadic?
 - How do they live if they are nomadic?
 - What do they live in?
 - Where do they travel?
 - Are there fights between groups?
 - What are the names of these groups?
 - Do these groups coexist with settled societies?
 - 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?
 - 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?
 - 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?
 - 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?

- Are there cures for any diseases?
- Are there doctors?
 - Surgeons?
 - What do doctors wear?
 - How are they treated?
 - How does one become a doctor?
- Transportation:
 - What is the most common form of transportation?
 - Why is it common?
 - What other forms are there?
 - Do the rich travel differently than the poor?
 - Do government officials have special means of transportation?
- Communication:
 - Is there mail?
 - How long does it take to deliver a message?
 - Are there messengers?
 - Are there special messengers for emergencies?
 - What other forms of communication exist?
- Architecture:
 - 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?
 - 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?
- 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?
- 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:
 - Are there laws regarding other species?
 - Are certain species allowed to be kept as pets?
 - Are there animal cruelty laws?
 - Is it illegal to use certain species for potions, medicines, etc.?
- Relationships:
 - What are the relationships between species?
 - Is there a reason for bad or good relationships?
 - Have one species hunted another in to extinction?
 - 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?