



Scribble House
Prompt Journals

Explore Your
Sandbox

47 writing prompts to fully build
a speculative world



Introduction

Building a world isn't just about drawing maps and inventing new places. That's a part of it, certainly, but there's more to any world than the physical space it takes up. It's also the people, animals, and other things that live there, and how they engage with each other and their environment: their laws and government, the technology they use, and their culture and beliefs (and how they express those in their art and customs).

These details, more than the physical description of a setting, make a story's world feel like a real place that readers could visit and explore. You can tell when a writer has taken the time to think about their world to this level, even if those details aren't overtly stated. It comes across in how the characters talk, think, and act, in the assumptions and decisions they make, and in the details the characters and narrator notice about the world.

An iceberg analogy feels appropriate here. You can only see the tip of the iceberg from the surface, but you wouldn't even see that much without the unseen bulk beneath. The hidden part supports and anchors the top; if it weren't there, the top would fall or sink under its own weight. This is true of story worlds, too. The more exists outside the reader's limited view, the sturdier and more real the world on the page will feel.

The goal of this prompt book isn't necessarily to generate new story ideas (though they certainly can if one of the exercises unlocks a character or conflict you want to explore further). The main aim here is to think about aspects of your invented world you haven't considered before, adding that depth and dimension that makes it feel like a real place where the characters could really live.

Since this is a writing exercise book, it's primarily designed with novels and other written storytelling in mind. That said, you could use the same kind of questions to explore a setting for a video game, movie, TV show, comic book series, tabletop game, or whatever format you use to welcome other people into the world you've created.

One last note before we jump in: one of the tricky parts of writing prompts for invented worlds is that they might work differently than consensus reality. Prompts about characters at different ages, for example, might not apply to a world populated by robots, gods, vampires, or other beings that don't age like humans.

If you come across a prompt that doesn't quite fit, don't just skip it—figure out how to tweak it so it does apply. Thinking through what the equivalent concept would be in your world can help you get to know it better.

On to the prompts! I hope you find them both a fun and a useful way to get to know your created world better.



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#1:

*A visitor from
another reality*

Imagine a person from present-day Earth suddenly appears in your story's world. This could be you the writer, a person you know, or a made-up character—whatever you feel like will be the most fun and productive.

What would immediately stand out as different about this world for someone from Earth? What about your world would seem fantastical or unreal? What things would they be surprised by? Write a scene of this transplanted character navigating your story's world.