



Forge Your Imagination, Episode 2, Before We Begin

Transcript:

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Tom

[TOM] Greetings, adventurer. Welcome to the Ocean County Library's second episode of Forge Your Imagination: A Guide to Immersive World Building. A podcast series that will point creative individuals in the right direction when attempting to create your own world. I'm your host, Tom, a world building enthusiast and professional dungeon master with over 13 years of experience. In today's episode, I will be discussing the three key details that we need to figure out before writing. This will cover genre, timeline, and technology. Now, without further ado, let's get this quest on a roll. Jumping right on into world creation, we need to establish three key details. The first key detail we will be deciding will shape what kind of world is desired. Key detail number one is genre. Whether the world is nonfiction, fantasy, or sci fi will change the theme and natural traits of the world around it. Nonfiction - This genre is built upon facts and historical information. Nonfiction worldbuilding is technically already completed, but it's up to you to do your research and find the truth. In this genre, not much is needed in the case of worldbuilding. For example, let's say the main character lives in Plumsted, New Jersey. If they were supposed to take a long and perilous journey to a new location and you chose Toms River... that second location isn't very far, so this might not be the location you want to pick at all. In fact, by car ride, it would only be a 36-minute drive. That's why looking at a map is crucial for nonfiction writing and worldbuilding. It's always good to have in mind what nearby cities are and the distance between them would be. Another good thing about nonfiction, though, is that you could research the laws around the desired time period that you want to write in. That information might give insight into why people made those decisions in that timeline. For example, if you use the nationwide prohibition law in time period, this would explain why your main character as a police officer was often busy making arrests on the daily. This also gives you the chance to provide a more in-depth building to your characters. You know, maybe your character doesn't believe in arresting people for something that they believe shouldn't be illegal. Then we come down to fiction. Fiction comes in all different shapes and subgenres. A few of my favorites when it comes to worldbuilding would have to be high fantasy, low fantasy, magic realism, and science fiction. We'll start with high fantasy. This is where the realm of fantasy is wild, where imagination reigns supreme and reality is thrown to the wind. The impossible becomes possible and the supernatural runs amok. In this case, anything is possible unless you, as the world builder, decide otherwise. This way, you could create a high fantasy world that is entirely its own world and has no

connection to the earth or to our version of reality. This is one of my favorites that I love to read and write. A great example of this would be Lord of the Rings. Any writer could see just how much work was put into this world, and the characters that appear in J.R.R. Tolkien's expertly crafted nations, magical beasts, classifications of people, and intricate political standpoints. This example is one of the many that we have at the Ocean County Library. For Lord of the Rings, we actually have the books, DVDs, Playaways, ebooks on Libby and Hoopla as well as the game LEGO Lord of the Rings for patrons to check out and borrow. Please keep in mind all of the titles mentioned in today's episode will be available to borrow at the Ocean County Library. Now let's move to low fantasy. This is where you merge reality and fantasy. It's a blend of both magic elements, like spells and creatures in the universe, as well as reality. A good time to use this subgenre would be if you wanted to use the world we live in as a base. So in this case, you would already have a map created as well as people and their belief systems. This would allow you to have more time to build a plot and less time would be needed to be spent on making laws and complex administrations. A few examples of this would be Harry Potter and Percy Jackson. Both of these universes use the Earth as a base location, but they also include various magical locations that are hidden within the real world. This is what ties together what humans see versus what the magical community sees. These are really fun. One of my favorites, because, you know, history of one side could technically be translated into another. For example, when the United States have its prohibition, the magical community most likely had something to do with it. For example, Salerra, the one universe I spoke about before that I created, I use a low fantasy setting, so I use that to make parallels between the worlds. So for mine, I wrote down that it never came as a surprise to the magical community when the United States banned the distribution of alcohol. This time the issue started on the magical side. It was a huge scandal that almost uprooted the magical markets. See, there is a special drink called Mystic Mirage that mages love and use as their primary drink of choice for get togethers and parties. No one other than the manufacturer knew what was in this drink, and no one questioned it until the emergence of Ectopox. This was an epidemic of mysterious properties. It would make those sick individuals unable to control whether they stayed a solid mass or became corporeal. It was luckily only a temporary issue that would fix itself over time. But regardless, an investigation was made to find the cause of this illness. But in the end they were able to track it back to one processing plant. See the Prosthesis, which for clarification, are my world's version of police who busted them, realized that the drink was made with a special brewing component called ectoplasm. It was discovered that ectoplasm can be harvested from specific ghosts with abnormally high emotions. However, the company in question was forcing ghosts into emotional breakdowns through any means necessary, like making them afraid or sad, which was the easiest emotions to evoke. Using this method, they would produce ectoplasm that'd be more of a sapphire-colored slime instead of the safe opaque color scheme. After this came to light, the drink was banned by the Prosthesis. They began to research how the sickness came to be. However, the magical community refused to be deprived of their favorite drinks. They began smuggling the drink any way they could, including using mortalis, forms of travel. For clarification mortalis is my version of mortal, which combines the two words mortal and humanis. This forced the Prosthesis to shut down the distribution of mortalis alcohol, which caused a spark of outrage in their realm. Finally, after 13 years of research, they discovered that anything other than opaque ectoplasm had an adverse effect on living bodies. The drink was then cleared and continued to produce. However, they needed to pay a hefty fine and only use the opaque ectoplasm in the future.

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Tom

[TOM] At this far, I fear, something slipped past our perception check. It looks like we forgot to mention that the Ocean County Library offers adult writers groups for creative writing at multiple branches like the Brick, Jackson, Manchester, Point Pleasant Borough, and Waretown library. If this is something you're interested in, adventurers, please keep an eye out for a group near you. More information on exact dates can be found on our website theoceancountylibrary.org under Calendar of Events. Or if you're feeling extra adventurous, feel free to inquire about making your own writers group with you as the leader at any branch without an existing writers group. This is something available at all Ocean County Library branches, with the exception of the Bay Head Express and the Whiting Reading Center. The next adult writers Group meeting that I'm aware of will be at the Manchester branch on February 11th, 2025 at 2 p.m. through 4 p.m. Now, adventurers, grab your anvil and hammer because it's time to return to forging your imagination.

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Tom

[TOM] Next up is magic realism. This is very similar to low fantasy. However, the main differences between low fantasy and magic realism is that the magical effects are considered as a normal part of everyday life. See, no one's supposed to question the magic effects in magic realism, it's seen as normal by the world. Whereas like Harry Potter, they end up trying to hide magic from the world of mortals. And then lastly, we have science fiction. This genre's all about futuristic concepts. This could be conveyed in multiple ways. Usually with advances in technology, science, space, and exploration. This genre also comes with a variety of subgenres. My personal favorites being cyberpunk and steampunk. Science fiction has a lot to cover because you aren't in charge of building just one world. In this case, you'd be often creating a minimum of two worlds with their own quirks and specialties. A great example of this would be Star Trek. Or you could combine fantasy and sci fi like Star Wars and Stormdancer too. In this version, you would have some magical powers and beasts as well as science and high tech gadgets. Regardless of what genre and subgenre you decide on, it'll be easier for you as the creator to keep the world on track if you decide this first. After you decide that, it'll help create a general guideline of what's possible and not possible for your world - in sci fi's case, usually the many worlds that you create or the two at least usually at minimum. The next two key details really kind of merge into one. See key detail number two is timeline and key detail number three is technology. Technology and timelines are crucial to determining the fine tuning that'll carve your world into the image you desire. Please decide the time period beforehand so you could avoid continuity errors. This is important to decide because if you move your timeline from the 1700s to the 2000s, many mistakes can be made. Leadership would change and so would the laws and societal norms of that time period. For example, if I decided to make the time period 1848, and then I decided to write that a character needs to use a phone to alert his friends of mortal danger, it would be impossible because phones in our world had not even been created yet. It's the same concept as if the world was based in a medieval setting, but then suddenly they had light switches, just like common folk that could turn on and off. But then at the same time, energy wasn't a thing. The world builder just didn't explain where the energy came from, or maybe common folk, you know, they had this, but for some reason the king or queen did not. These are the kind of continuity errors that we as world builders, would like to avoid, if possible, by just adding a slight bit more detail. It doesn't matter if the solution is simple. A simple one is often better than none. Maybe in this case scenario, the world was once like ours 2025. But after a big large EMP, the world may be

reverted back to a time before technology. They lost the information on how to create such inventions, and then for some reason, after time, technology began to work again. And now they have electricity. But they don't know that solar panels on their buildings are the things that give them power. So now maybe when they try to create new devices, those devices lack a power source, and they're confused on how to make it work. And maybe this is something that even like requires assistance from another nation or a specific character that you could build upon. Maybe when it comes to the king or queen not having power in the castle, you could say it's possibly just recently built. Maybe that's why it doesn't have power lines. Or maybe the king had them removed beforehand because he doesn't trust things he can't understand. Either way, that's two great ways of building up your world and the important characters within it, without compromising the continuity of your whole story and the integrity of it.

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Voiceover 1

[VOICEOVER 1] If you were hearing this message, you've officially listened to the entire episode. And for that, I'd like to thank you. I hope you enjoyed this episode, and if you did, please take a look over some of our other OCL Sound Waves podcasts. Feel free to leave us a rating on Spotify, RadioPublic, and Pocket Casts. Most importantly, safe travels, adventures.

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Voiceover 2

[VOICEOVER 2] Are you a student in 8th through 12th grade? Are you looking for a dress for your junior or senior prom? Or perhaps a spring formal or 8th grade dance? Then keep these dates in mind. This March and April, the Ocean County Library is returning with the 17th annual Prom Dress Giveaway. The Prom Dress Giveaway allows you to take home the dress of your dreams for free. Simply come to one of our participating branches, find a dress, and take it home. The giveaways will be from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Toms River Branch on Monday, March 17th, Tuesday, March 18th, and Wednesday, March 19th, the Little Egg Harbor Branch on Tuesday, March 25th and Wednesday, March 26th, and finally the Jackson Branch on Tuesday, April 1st and Wednesday, April 2nd. For more details, check out our website at theoceancountylibrary.org, visit your local branch, or call us at 732-349-6200. We look forward to seeing you then.