BUILDING A BETTER WORLD

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STORYTELLING AND EVOLUTION

- Groups of people told stories of defeat and triumph
  - Not for bravado, but to teach HOW TO SURVIVE
  - Scariest stories of childhood teach survival lessons: darkness, taken, wolves, strangers

- Story is the language of experience
  - Does not have to be ours to teach us survival– but needs to be meaningful to us
  - Can still provide a new mapping pathways in our brain to possible scenarios

THREE PARTS OF A STORY

- <u>For our brains to process this new experience</u>, to understand this new struggle, we must have a focus, a person who we can identify with to guide us into the story
  - HERO (Character)

- <u>For our brains to process this new experience</u>, it must have a common pattern to make it meaningful
  - HERO'S JOURNEY (Plot)

- <u>For our brains to process this new knowledge</u>, it must identify a place in the scheme to add this information – to help delineate what is broken or needs to be overcome
  - SPECIAL WORLD (Setting & Antagonistic force)

World Hero Plot
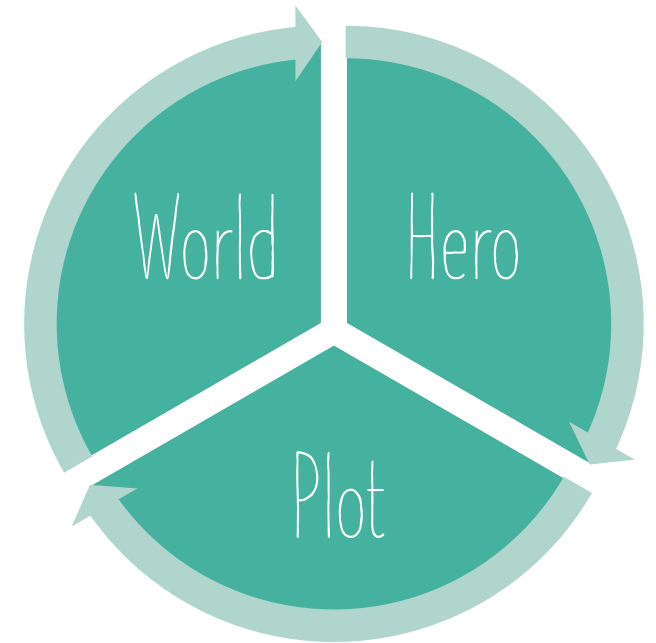
FOCUS ON THE RELATIONSHIPS OF THE HERO AND WORLD AND PLOT

- Why this story in this world?

- Did you fall in love with the character and now you are trying to figure out the obstacles? Did you fall in love with the world first and are you trying to find a story in it?

- Neither way is wrong, but it will shape the way you walk through world building.
  - Character first– Know the person you want to explore and create the obstacles using the world around
  - World first– In knowing the world, you know where there is conflict and create the hero who can overcome or fix it.
  - Plot First– Know the story you want to tell and create the obstacles in the world around to test the hero in the best way to highlight your lesson

THE LAW OF CONSERVATION OF DETAIL:

Anything in the story which does not serve the story, harms the story.

DEFINING YOUR WORLD

It can be as big or as little as you need it to be to serve your story

A whole planet to a whole city to a whole office to a whole family

But that world needs to be your entire sandbox from which your character and conflict arises.

BUILD DIFFERENCES

- Understand what a general reader would know- build around that
    - Know your audience- who they are, what they have read/watched
- Focus on how this world is DIFFERENT from ours- don't reinvent the wheel, just develop the differences.
    - Regency historical- focus on what they could/couldn't do and who they could date- which are much different from our current culture- these things drive the stories
    - Urban fantasy- it's the normal world, but there are new rules that are laid on top of it to create the fantasy piece- that fantasy piece is where the conflict is
- Readers will willingly suspend their disbelief about this world, but if you create inconsistencies, they will be pulled out of the stories.
    - The goal – keep readers reading so they can learn what you are trying to tell them.

WHERE TO START?
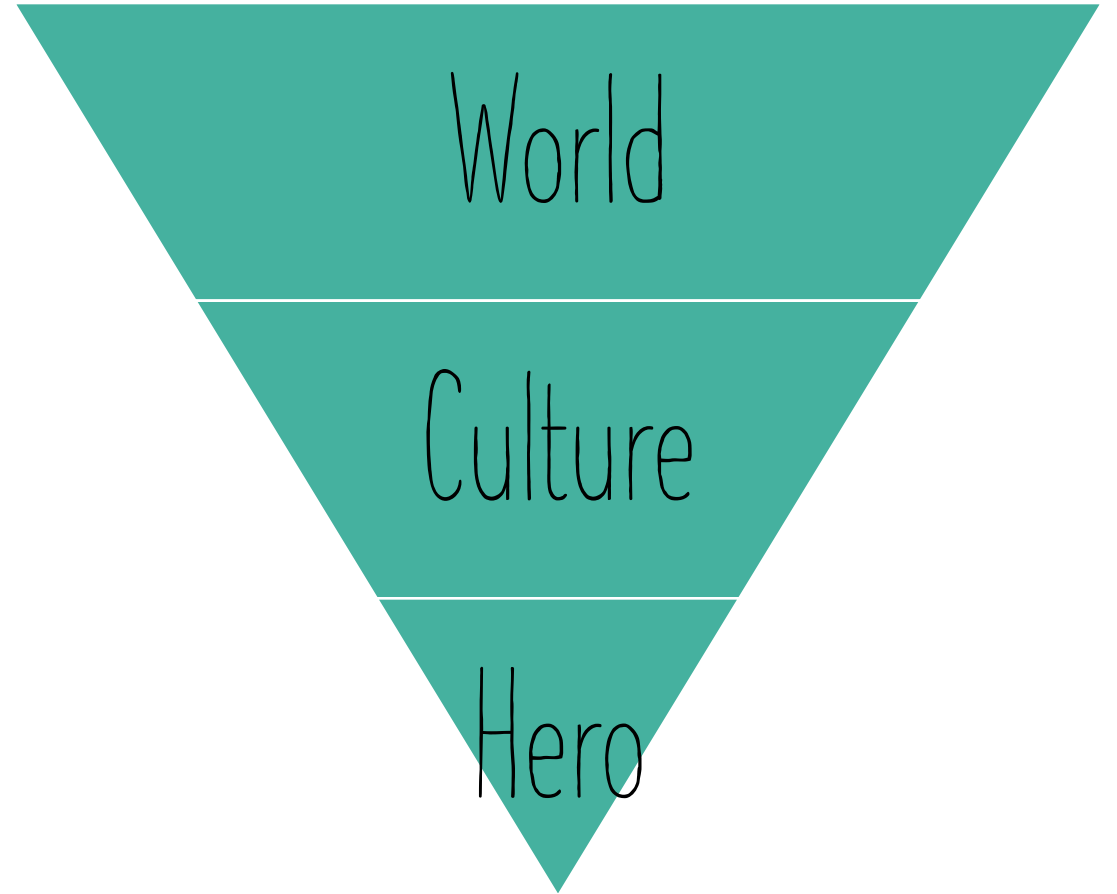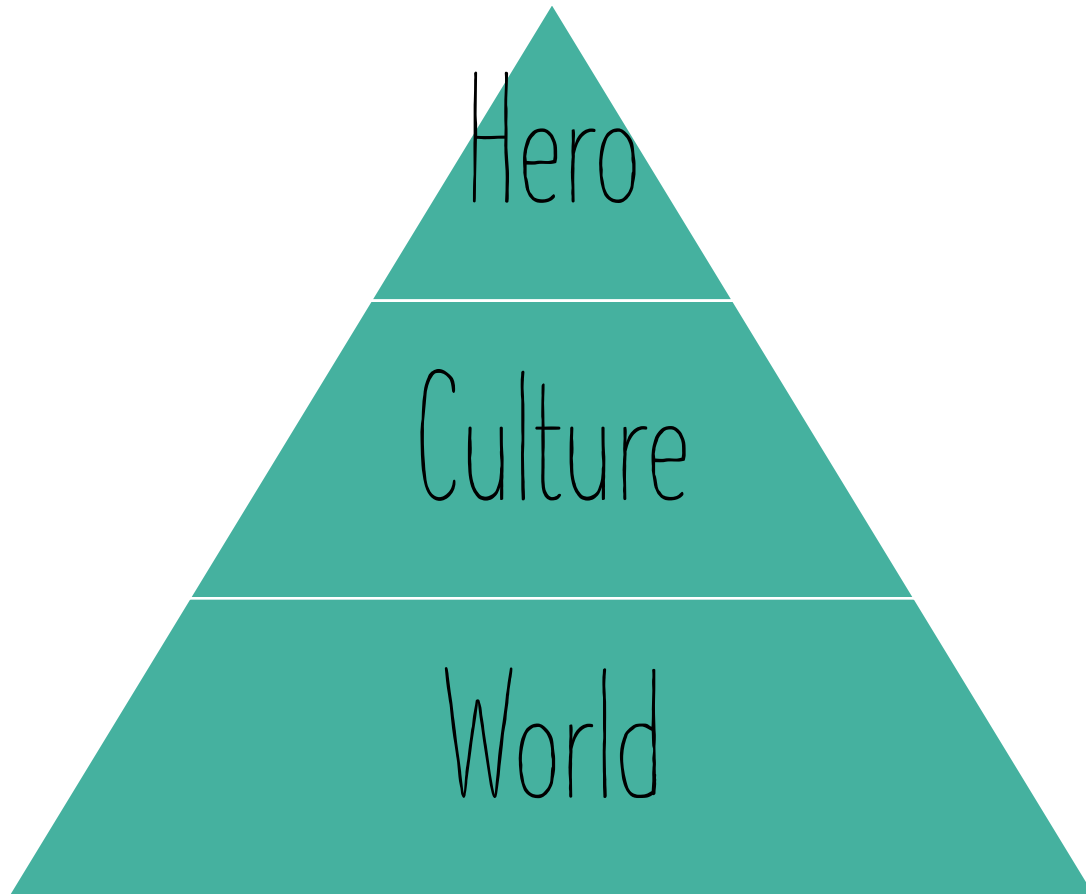
PHYSICAL WORLD BUILDING

Physical laws dominating your reality

- Magic or no magic?
- Alien planet or fantasy realm?
- Gravity? No Gravity?
- Time: past or present. Tech or no Tech?

Universal Laws = Rules

- Establish *rules,* and what happens in the story follows them

PLANET

- Environment

- Flora and Fauna? Friendly not friendly?

- WEATHER– rain, no rain. Wind, no wind. Storms all the time or never at all?

  - Oppressively Hot? Deathly Cold

- Terrain: Mountains? Rivers? Deserts?

- No planet? Spaceship?

MAP MAKING CONTINENTS

- Create a map to help you remember to help gauge how far the journey might take you (but know that until it is published, everything can change)
  - Then find the obstacles your hero will need to overcome

- Develop cultures based on availability of resources, predominant weather patterns, distance from other cultures.
  - Look at the land inside the country– desert, ocean, where are the seats of power? Would access to water be scarce? Would access to information/education be scarce?

CULTURE BUILDING

- <u>CULTURE-</u> defined as a shared common ground with common goals and world views in which individuals contribute to that goal and get a benefit from being part of that culture.
  - Bonded by a dominate struggle (humans versus nature) (humans versus humans)
- <u>WORLD VIEWS</u>
- Who are we?
  - How do we view/define ourselves as a people?
  - History/mythology/shared activities that brought the community together
- What has gone wrong?
  - There's no Utopia. Why not?
  - Perceived Sins and Perceived others
- What would fix it?
  - Only an apocalyptic event? Or just the right political program?
  - This will probably be the birthplace of your HERO

PARTS OF CULTURE

- Language
- Genders and roles
- Value of Education
- Entertainment
- Economy- what job makes the most money and why
- Politics/Government - who has the power, who determines the punishments.
- Religion- what is sacred and where did we come from (origin tales)
- Tech- How is tech different and what are the pleasures and pitfalls
- Transportation- How will characters get from A-B? Who controls that access?

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

- Family of Origin- a person's "family" they grew up in.
  - Parents, siblings, and other relatives i.e., grandparents, cousins, step-brothers, step-sisters, etc., that a person lived with during an entire/part of childhood.

- How people learn to interact with people, deal with emotions, form beliefs, and values

- Who we are/sense of self comes from how we were brought up in our families of origin.

- Playground of Therapists!

PLACING YOUR HERO IN THE WORLD

Where did your hero bloom?

- Consider a day in the life– 5 senses and Family or Origin

- Who were her mentors and tormentors

- What were her dreams and fears

- Common jobs, live, eat play, treatment of young and old, Education

ANTAGONISTIC FORCE

Has power within this world where your Hero does not

Make them the master of this realm

If your antagonistic force is something ethereal, like hunger, give the force a face a mouthpeace to be the obstacle that your hero will need to overcome.

AFTER YOUR WORLD IS BUILT

- Define the struggles the character might face given their tech and environment in their everyday life

- Explain obstacles to your character, or why this culture would be an obstacle to your characters wants.

- Find the antagonistic force that the hero can fight against

- Explain Why now– why is this story happening now? What was the final crack that started the ticking clock to fix the world before destruction.

BEWARE OF INFO-DUMPING

- Don't explain things that your POV character would take for granted
    - If he uses a sonic screwdriver all the time, then we will NEVER hear how it works
    - Just show it clearly working and the readers can figure it out (points screwdriver at something and it does everything)

- Specifics, not generalities
    - Allusions suggest depth– You only need to refer to a sacred text BY NAME - you don't have to write the entire sacred text

- Don't ever stop to explain
    - If you HAVE to for plot reasons, make it part of the narrative process– that's why we get those annoying characters that ask all the questions/ make stupid mistakes–so the readers can get the answers.

CREATING VS RESEARCHING

- Don't get lost down the hole of research

- Don't get lost down the hole of creating everything from scratch

- If you are writing something that actually exists in this contemporary world, research the world to get as close to the truth as you need it for – Follow internal logic.

- If you are writing something that doesn't actually exist, research the closest thing in our world to find the internal logic that your readers will understand.

"THEY LOOK LIKE RABBITS, BUT IF YOU CALL THEM SMEERPS, THAT MAKES IT SCIENCE FICTION."

–JAMES BLISH

REVIEW

- What are we trying to teach?

- Who is our focus?

- What is happening?

- Where and when is it happening?

- Why is it happening?

THANK YOU!

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