

FANTASY

Draw a rough map, including major cities and major changes of terrain (big rivers, mountain ranges, inlets, etc.)

Weather?

Castles or modern architecture?

Will the story take place mostly in an urban area, farm country, forest, desert, ocean or grassland (etc.)?

Swords or guns?

What's the magic system?

Average level of education and types of schools?

Standard fantasy animals and races, D&D versions, or other countries' folklore?

Magic plants?

Typical meals?

Money?

Trade goods and marketplaces?

Class structure?

Ruler (King/Queen or council or Demon/Elf Lord, etc.)?

Roman calendar or a calendar invented for the story world?

Modes of travel?

Languages spoken?

Major wars, recent or past?

Major political upheavals recently?

Basic civil laws?

Police force?

Religion?

Demons and/or other evil beings?

SCI-FI

Time period?

Money?

Average education level?

Class structure?

Governance (one government, many countries, alien overlords, etc.)?

Roman calendar?

Modes of travel?

Interstellar travel?

Languages spoken?

Major wars, recent or past?

Major political upheavals recently?

Police force?

Religion?

Relationships?

Apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic?

Will the story take place on Earth, another planet, or on spaceships?

How advanced is the science?

Is the planet at risk?

Aliens?

Plant and animal life?

Weather & geology issues?

Clothes and food?

Robot companions?

24 hour days?

BIOGRAPHY

Time period?

Rural or urban story setting?

Country?

Politics?

Gender hierarchy?

Social hierarchy?

Social values?

Modes of travel?

Government?

Average level of education?

Modes of communication?

Media?

Common store brands and typical meals?

Typical school day?

Recent wars?

Top news stories?

Home country's relationship to other countries?

Trade?

Common illnesses?

Level of medical and scientific advancement?

Typical dwelling?

Slang?

Music & Arts?

HISTORICAL FICTION

Time period?

Rural or urban?

Country?

Politics?

Gender roles?

Age of majority?

Average age of marriage?

Social idea of nuclear family?

Cultural values?

Modes of travel?

Government?

Modes of communication?

Media?

Clothes and food?

Typical school day?

Top news stories?

Home country's relationship to other countries?

Common illnesses?

Level of medical and scientific advancement?

Slang?

Music & Arts?

Drug and alcohol consumption?

Weaponry and warfare?

Fashion?

MEMOIR

Time period?

Rural or urban?

Country?

Politics?

Gender hierarchy?

Gender roles?

Average age of marriage?

Social idea of nuclear family?

Cultural values?

Shame culture?

Modes of travel?

Government?

Modes of communication?

Media?

Common store brands and typical meals?

Typical school day?

Top news stories?

Common illnesses?

Level of medical and scientific advancement?

Slang?

Music & Arts?

Drug and alcohol consumption?

Fashion?

How much social influence did people in their teens and twenties have?

NONFICTION

List the topics you are expert in

Choose the topic you most want to research and write about. NOTE: it must be something that made a lasting change in the world, or will produce a lasting change in others' lives.

Decide whether you want to discuss the leadup to the change in the world, or the aftermath of the change.

Start building a picture of the events, objects, social conditions etc. in that time period.

MYSTERY

Time period?

Rural or urban?

Country?

Age of majority?

Gender roles?

Cultural values?

Modes of travel?

Government?

Modes of communication?

Top news stories?

Common store brands and typical types of meals?

Common illnesses?

Level of medical and scientific advancement?

Level of forensic advancement?

Slang?

Drug and alcohol consumption?

Fashion?

Laws and Penalties?

Police force?

Types of investigators?

Modes of ID?

Gangs or secret societies?

Weapons?

Religion?

ROMANCE

Time period?

Gender roles?

Cultural values?

Is marriage the ultimate goal for women in this time period?

Are men primarily the property owners and the ones in charge of money?

Male-female friendships frowned on?

LGBTQ status?

Religion?

Locale?

House or apartment?

Workplace?

Economic status of main character's friends and family?

Modes of travel?

Social media?

Are animals/pets a major part of the characters' lives?

Are children a major part of the characters' lives?

Fashion, decor, vehicles?

Stores, restaurants, brand names, typical menus?

Wars or political upheavals?

Sports?

Ghosts and the supernatural?

Magic or fantastical creatures?

Parties?

HORROR

Time period?

Urban or rural?

Inside or outside?

Terrain?

Source of water nearby?

Gender roles?

Supernatural elements?

Monsters?

Psychics?

Religion?

Transportation?

Day or night?

Condition/state of repair of surroundings?

Weapons?

Police presence?

Secret places (basements, caves, attic rooms, etc.)?

Social media?

Technology?

Food & clothing?

Post-apocalypse (earthquake, viral outbreak, etc.)?

THRILLER

Time period?

Country?

Urban or rural?

Transportation?

Day or night?

Condition/state of repair of surroundings?

Available weapons?

Police presence?

Spies?

Secret places (tunnels, underground rooms, etc.)?

Social media?

Technology?

Power and cell signals?

Access to medical care?

Invaders or enemy occupation?

Military base?

Post-apocalypse (earthquake, viral outbreak, etc.)?

Civilian presence/hostages?

Top news stories?

Oppressive/corrupt organization or system?

Supernatural elements?

JUVENILE & YA FICTION

Time period?

Predominant cultural values?

Predominant cultural areas of contention?

Gender roles?

Parent/Guardian presence significant or absent?

Average level of education?

Average income in the area?

Types of families in the neighborhood?

Predominant race in the neighborhood?

Influence of religion?

Primarily indoors or outdoors (if outdoors, what's the terrain)?

Magic?

Magical animals?

Talking animals?

Supernatural elements (ghosts, ESP, etc.)?

School type (middle school /high school /parochial /boys-or-girls-only /magical etc.)?

Bullies/gangs?

Oppressive organization/authority figures?

Police or other punitive presence?

Typical meals?

Modes of transportation?

Sports or music a major factor in the story?