

YOUR BEST BOOK
Description as a World-Building Tool
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Methods for using description in world-building:

1. Make word lists, descriptors that evoke the tone and feeling of the world. Choose a characteristic of the world—darkness, for example—then list every word you can to suggest that quality.
2. Make lists of verbs that might be relevant in your world. Does the atmosphere force people to move a certain way? Are there laws against running or talking loudly? Have people evolved into a certain manner of movement or unexpected physical ability? Does the emotional world impact physical movement?
3. Play with images—use Pinterest or collage boards, collect Google images, create shadow boxes or sculptures, and then list the feelings and moods they inspire, related words, etc.
4. Think about the sounds of your world, whether it's noisy or quiet, musical or industrial, and list words that describe what your characters typically hear.
5. Make a list of smells. If they don't actually exist in our current world, try to approximate them by blending other smells.
6. Think about food, about what people eat, what grows in the world, etc. Just as you did with smells, work to describe them, approximating the look or taste by combining other known tastes, colors, etc.
7. Consider the tactile elements of the world, whether it's Grandma's prickly couch or a fuzzy orange plant.
8. Challenge yourself to combine the above in new ways. Apply the verbs to your world's native plant life, think about how your food might make noise, etc. Play a little, reach for the unexpected, and remember that every world—fantastic or contemporary--can be made unique through specific and potent description.