

# Immersive World Building

By Sophie Carmichael-Hanlon

World building is the process of constructing a fictional world, its inhabitants and the forces enacting power within it. It is a major element of speculative fiction & a popular genre of video and tabletop games.

Selections for grades 7 and up.

## Books

**A Song of Wraiths and Ruin**  
Roseanne A. Brown — 2020



Brown weaves North American and West African folklore to create this immersive Afrofantasy world. Set in a prosperous desert empire, we follow the empire's Princess Karina and refugee Malik (who actually needs to kill her). After the kidnapping of his younger sister, Malik struck a deal to kill the Princess in return for his sister. Karina, grieving her mother, is intent on bringing her back with ancient magic requiring the heart of a king. When she offers marriage to the victor of a competition to obtain one, the two find themselves on a collision course. An action-packed, emotional read, this book offers a medium but intensifying pace, rich character development, and a subtle slow-burning romance.



**The Jasmine Throne (Burning Kingdoms #1)**  
Tasha Suri — 2021



A sensory masterpiece, *The Jasmine Throne* follows Princess Malini—imprisoned by her dictator brother—and her attending servant Priya. Not only a servant, she used to be a temple child of the Ahiranya and possesses ancient powers from before the Parjadtvipa empire dominated her people. As Malini's brother threatens his sister, Ahiranya rebels near, and the people begin falling ill to a mysterious disease, this book explores forms of strength beyond the physical. With beautifully detailed world-building and queer romance, this emotional and adventurous book is excellent for fans of high fantasy and complicated romance.



**A Phoenix Must Burn**  
edited by Patrice Caldwell — 2020



With sixteen stories by award-winning authors, *A Phoenix Must Burn* provides a collection of fantasy, sci-fi, and magical short stories that all centre on Black women and gender-nonconforming individuals. Filled to the brim with exemplary world-building, adventure, love, and hope, these character-driven stories are unforgettable.

**Chain of Gold (The Last Hours #1)**  
Cassandra Clare — 2020



Set in Victorian London this is the first of a trilogy and part of Clare's Shadowhunter Chronicles. Cordelia Carstairs is a demon-fighting Shadowhunter, who arrives in London with her brother and mother in hopes of escaping family ruin. While her mother hopes for a hasty marriage, she dreams of being a warrior. Reconnecting with childhood friends Lucy and James Herondale, she revels in her new life until a series of demon attacks with perplexing poison throw it all into disarray. For fans of historical fiction, urban fantasy and Netflix's *Bridgerton*, this book perfectly balances humour, heart-wrenching yearning and adventure.





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The Cruel Prince (The Folks of the Air #1)  
Holly Black – 2018



Ten years ago, Jude and her sisters were stolen to live in the High Court of Faerie, and their parents were murdered. At seventeen, Jude desires a place in court but is constantly looked down upon by the fey for her mortality. Among those with disdain for humans is Prince Cardan, the cruel yet beautiful son of the High King. Tough, stubborn Jude will do anything it takes to be accepted at Court while taking down Cardan... until betrayal shakes the Court to its core and Jude finds her alliances shifting. This book is medium-paced, with a thoroughly amoral antihero, extensive world-building, and the potential for a thrilling enemies-to-lovers arc.

## Graphic Novel

Graceling  
Kristin Cashore (Original Author)  
and Gareth Hinds (Adaptor/Illustrator) – 2021



Gracelings are people with extreme skill, though the particular skill varies. Katsa is a Graceling who can kill a man with her bare hands. After her skill reveals itself she goes from living a life of privilege as the niece of the King to serving as his enforcer and travelling the kingdom to do his bidding. That is until she meets Po, a fellow Graceling and a prince from another land whose skill is combat. She agrees to help him on his quest for information about his grandfather's disappearance and soon learns secrets about her Grace that may just change everything.

## Video Games

The Sims 4  
See it on Steam.

SimCity released in 1989 is arguably one of the first games of the world-building genre. Its later spinoff The Sims became one of the most successful video game franchises. Allowing the user to build households and populate entire neighbourhoods, as well as play on a micro-level by determining neighbour interactions and relationships, The Sims creates plentiful world-building opportunities. With the use of mods, users can also edit pre-created worlds in Sims 4 and change their characteristics to the user's liking and imagination.



Cities: Skylines

Recently remastered for Xbox and PS5 users, Cities: Skylines provides users with a large plot of land to use for creating roads, buildings, and infrastructure, and lure citizens. Users can collect taxes from citizens to continue developing the plot of land until it becomes the city of their dreams.



## Listening

World Explores: A World Building Podcast  
Cassie and Isaac  
Listen on Apple Podcasts



In this podcast, Cassie and Isaac build a new unique world in each episode. These fantasy worlds can be used to inspire creative writing, prompts, and world-building in games like Dungeons and Dragons. Some of the topics include fantasy creatures, a world of floating islands, and a city that eats anyone it perceives as doing something wrong. Excellent listen for anyone wishing to get into world-building or anyone who simply enjoys talking about fantasy worlds.

## On the Web

The Ultimate Guide to World-Building: How to Write Fantasy,  
Sci-Fi and Real-Life Worlds  
Claire Bradshaw for Writer's Edit

[Find it here](#)

For those interested in doing some world-building of their own, this article by Claire Bradshaw is an excellent resource for starting out. It walks the reader through world-building for imaginary worlds, alternative reality, and real-world locations. It touches on choosing the building blocks of your worlds as well as creating sensorial descriptions that heighten the immersive experience. It also poses questions to ask oneself when building a new world such as aspects of the people, the landscapes, and what forces are at work shaping it.

