# World Building:

*Hard vs Soft World Building*

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## What is World Building?

World building is the process of creating (or building) the universe your story is set within. Without the world around them, your characters exist on a blank slate.

Hard vs Soft World Building

* Which method is better?
* What’s the difference between them?
* What are some examples of each?
* Which method should **I** choose for my story?

## Hard World Building

Examples of Hard World Building:

* “The Lord of the Rings” by J.R.R. Tolkien
* “A Song of Ice and Fire” by George R. R. Martin
* “Memory, Sorrow and Thorn” by Tad Williams

Hard world building immerses your readers by creating a world that is believable and grounded, with concrete rules.

## Hard World Building: Concrete Rules

* Languages
  + *Elvish*
* Complex Histories and Politics
  + *Gondor vs Rohan, Dwarves vs Elves*
* Systematic Racial and Social Hierarchy
  + *Men vs Elves vs Dwarves vs Hobbits, etc*
* Heavy with Detail
* Logical and Realistic themes
* The World IS a Character.

## The Method

How can you use Hard World Building to create your world?

* Shares as much detail as possible
* Creates believability with complex histories
* Leaves little room for speculation
* Uses plausibility and total immersion

## Soft World Building

Examples of Soft World Building:

1. “Howl’s Moving Castle” by Diana Wynne Jones
2. “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” by Lewis Carroll
3. “Spirited Away” by Hayao Miyazaki & Studio Ghibli

Soft world building immerses your readers by creating a world that is unknown and imaginative, with flexible rules.

## Soft World Building: Flexible Rules

* Atmosphere and Mystery
  + *Howl’s door, the Wastes*
* Reader’s Imaginative Involvement
  + *What do the Wastes look like?*
* Creative Freedom
  + *Howl travels between worlds unquestioned.*
* Room for Possibility.
* Themes Lacking Logic and Realism.
* The Characters MAKE the World.

## The Method

How can you use Soft World Building to create your world?

* Uses the unknown to create atmosphere by keeping your readers guessing.
* Encourages the reader to suspend disbelief by creating a sense of enchantment or otherworldliness.
* Allows and invites speculation, meaning your reader feels welcome to “fill in the missing pieces” with their own imagination.
* Creates possibility and wonder, allowing for you to build your world as you go without limitations created by your universe.

## The Middle-Way

World building is a **spectrum*.*** There is no right or wrong way, and, of course, there is a middle ground.

**Hemingway’s Iceberg Method:**

* Used by Neil Gaiman
* Author knows everything but shares a small amount
* World is fully constructed but only reveals what is necessary for story

**Which method is right for you?**

My advice to you is to read books from each method and try out each style to see which one is a better fit. Generally speaking, (but not always):

1. Plotter = Hard World Building
2. Pantser = Soft Worldbuilding
3. Plantser = Iceburg Method (Middle way)