



Forge Your Imagination, Episode 4, Map Creation

Transcript:

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Tom

[TOM] Greetings, adventurer. Welcome to the Ocean County Library's fourth episode of Forge Your Imagination: A Guide to Immersive World Building Podcast, a series that will point creative individuals in the right direction when attempting to create your own world. I'm your host, Tom, a worldbuilding enthusiast and professional dungeon master with over 13 years of experience. In today's episode, I will be discussing how to create a map and the important details within it. Now, without further ado, let's get this quest on a roll.

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Tom

[TOM] Okay, so to be completely honest with you, this is my least favorite part about worldbuilding. I personally dislike mapmaking, and all of the in-depth information that's required or expected of you. I'm generally a simple minded man. I enjoy worldbuilding and elevating the history of a world and its people, but I prefer not to craft the specifics of the world. For example, I don't like to specify the elevation of the mountains or which way the river flows. I'm also not a fan of deciding landmarks or trading hubs of the nations, but this information has the opportunity to be elements the storytellers like yourself can use. However, despite my dislike of the subject, I will do my best to let you know which details I think are important and the different ways that they could be useful for you. But before we dive into the specifics, first let me cover the different ways to create the outline for your story's map. So we got map creation. There's several different ways to create your world's map. This just normally ends up being the rough exterior of the map, unless you use an online map generator. If you're naturally gifted and know how to draw, then this is probably the most flexible option available for you. You could draw the outline of the world and then improve it over time. This is a good method for creative individuals that already have a general idea of what shape the world will be, and how big the continents might be. However, if you're new and don't want to think too much about the world structure, then you could always use my favorite option. All you need for this is just some uncooked rice. It's simple and easy. All you do is take a handful of that rice, and you pour it down onto a piece of paper. After it spreads out, this will allow you to draw around the rice and get your own map that even comes with a few islands. Another option available for you is the creative writing method known as science.

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Tom

[TOM] Although if you don't want to put in all of this extra work, you could simply look up a good online map generator to help you keep track of the continents, their names, and borders. Certain generators are good for overall world views, and others are really more for in-depth cities. I was always personally a fan of Azgaar's fantasy map generator for my overall map scheme and then Watabou's Medieval Fantasy City Generator for more city-related topics. Please excuse me for mispronouncing the names if I did, but I believe that's how you pronounce them. I use the Azgaar generator to make my fantasy worlds map, and it saved me a lot of time and effort. With the time I saved using a generator, I've redirected my efforts into deciding how the universe itself was created. Your universe could have just been one of the many that were cultivated and needs no extra work for lore behind its creation. But I personally think that's boring. I like to tie in other details that make, you know, the world building itself more interesting and historical in nature. That's why in my fictional planet of Akkijan, the whole creation of the world itself was from the body of the supreme God of nature. This is a very shortened lore of my world creation. But the nature God had been betrayed by his closest ally and a person he called a close friend. This caused him to have a deep resentment toward the realm he came from. So when he fled and found some open space much farther away from this realm, he actually found his resting place, and from his mortal shell sprouted the planet known as Akkijan.

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Tom

[TOM] Now, considering I've explained the typical ways of mapmaking, I will shift our attention to delve into specifics of map making building for enthusiastic creators unlike myself. The first thing to mention is similar to what we discussed in the last episode, which was about climate and temperature control. As you could guess, the temperature of the nation will shift what plants will grow and what animals will be able to live in the biome. Those seemingly minor shifts can also affect major elements in different nations, cities, trading hubs, and markets in general. Since temperature can shift so many different elements of the nation and cities, I would advise you to start with that. Decide what temperature it will be and how this will help or ruin the ecosystem around the city you create. For example, if you did a desert with high heat, then animals and plants around it will likely diminish. Instead of lush forests, you would have sand, stones and maybe the occasional cactus. Whereas if you did a temperature simply close to like a rainforest, you would have almost endless possibilities for both plants and animals alike. A city in a rainforest would likely flourish. Unless you decide otherwise. I say this because the temperature and scenery would likely encourage tourists to visit the city. Maybe the city would give tours into the forest to show some different and unique species the nation has to offer. Another reason why the city would do well is because of hunting. I'm sure this is a place where animals are abundant. There'd be plenty of unique pets to be sold, and it'd also be a good opportunity to get extra hide or meat. Any extras could be sold for additional profits. I also think, you know, it's generally just good to think outside of the box. So maybe the forest has unique plants that are sold for special potions or medicines.

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Tom

[TOM] Oh no, adventurer! I fear we have fallen into an ambush. We are outnumbered by the abundance of resources the library has to offer. The Ocean County Library offers a variety of different databases that can be useful for world building on our website, theoceancountylibrary.org. One database in particular that might assist those curious about creating a novel or a world is called Universal Class. This resource includes several online courses to assist you in improving your writing skills like Novel Writing 101, Nonfiction Writing 101, Mystery Writing, and even more specific topics like paranormal romance writing or something even different, like cryptid creatures of folklore and reality. You know, that might be important if you plan on writing a story that includes any mystical creatures like cryptids. Now, adventurers, grab your anvil and hammer because it's time to return to forging your imagination.

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Tom

[TOM] This will lead me to my next thought, which is water flow, like rivers and oceans. Any large body of water like lakes, rivers, oceans, seas, ponds, reservoirs they'll all change the theme of cities. For example, if a city lives off the ocean, it'll likely have a large fishing population with culinary dishes focusing on seafood. It will also likely be a large trading hub for nations across the sea, because any nation that wanted to get into this continent would likely have to start and pass here. This nation would be even more popular if there was a large river that flowed through the city and connected to the ocean. This way, if someone followed the river, they could connect to other towns and spread the wealth and find new trading opportunities. This development would allow quick new forms of boat travel, and the city themselves would probably dive into naval warfare and see an increase in taxation opportunities. Maybe even an increase in building or inventing new boats. The next concept that is important in a nation or city it would probably have to be elevation. See, the height of a town can directly connect to the weather. For example, for those who don't know, the higher you go, the more the heat decreases. Also, those who are in the higher elevations, like some cities who have made their homes in the mountains, they typically have less oxygen than those below them. I don't claim to know the science behind it. I just know that's typically how it goes. I also know that the wind increases the farther up you are, so that's something you might want to take into consideration when deciding where to build your nation. I also remember altitude sickness is a sickness that a person can get if they move to a higher altitude too quickly. Once again, I do not claim to know the science behind it, but I would assume it's because of the lack of oxygen. So if you wanted to make a trading hub and then decided on a city high in the mountains, I would probably say that's not the best decision. You could always choose that, despite what I say. But it wouldn't be the best decision because it would really limit the amount of tourists and how quickly people could come into the city, because they'd need to adjust to the altitude.

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Tom

[TOM] However, just because a city isn't good as a trading hub doesn't mean the city is forced to be in poverty. Plenty of cities and nations get their currency from valuable natural resources that they can maintain and trade. For example, maybe the city high up in the mountain mines a special type of metal that can be traded for a substantial amount of money. There are several different resources that can naturally increase trade and income for all cities. A few options that I could think of off the top of my head would be precious metals, gemstones, pets, livestock, food, and sources of fuel like gas or coal. There are nearly endless ways to increase the wealth and power of a nation. It's up to you adventurers

to minimize or maximize its potential. Another way to do such a thing would be to rely on landmarks that could help increase tourism. These can either be made by people or formed naturally through history. This will typically draw attention to the nation itself. For example, in my universe Salerra, it contains a very large tree, probably the biggest in all the realms. This is a tree that the elves live on and take care of. It's known as the Tree of Yigdersil, and one of the many wonders of the universe that people from across the world travel to see. Those people even stop and learn about the beliefs of the elves while they're there, learning their customs, and sometimes even the national holidays.

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Tom

[TOM] Another crucial piece of information when it comes to map building is deciding how and what nations connect, as well as the travel routes between them. You can make some nations have alliances or wars. There could be uncharted land in between them, or just typical dangerous terrain that holds some fierce beasts. So if someone has to travel in such a place, how do you think the best form of travel would be? Is there a river that someone could go down that will bring them safely to their next destination? Or is that river infested by some type of river monster? Maybe the best form of travel is by air and travelers could purchase a ride on a griffin to get from one city to the next. Or alternatively, maybe they can't get to the city via flying because the harsh winds surrounding the city. The same concept applies for uncharted land. A normal family wouldn't dare risk their lives traveling through uncharted land. Who knows what manner of beasts or monsters might be lurking about. They would also probably do their best to avoid any nations at war, because they wouldn't want to be dragged into something dangerous. I want you to also remember that for ground travel, consider what type of terrain the road would be. If the road is paved and nicely laid out, then it'll be a much smoother ride for either a car or a horse drawn carriage, depending on what genre you're working on. But if the road is underdeveloped, if it's just dirty, you know, sand, rocks, bumpy dirt road, it's likely to have fewer travelers because no one will want to take the route unless they're less well-off. All of these things are just great things to think of. Before lastly, deciding the names of the cities and empires, which in my opinion is the only fun part.

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Voiceover 1

[VOICEOVER 1] If you are hearing this message, you've officially listened to the entire episode. And for that, I'd like to thank you. I hope you enjoyed this episode, and if you did, please take a look over some of our other OCL Sound Waves podcasts. Feel free to leave us a rating on Spotify, Radio Public and Pocket Casts. Most importantly, safe travels, adventures.

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Voiceover 2

[VOICEOVER 2] Are you looking for a blast from the past? Don't forget to tune in to Wheeler Talk: The History of Ocean County, a podcast brought to you by me, the local history librarian. Episodes of Wheeler Talk are released monthly right here on OCL Sound Waves. Learn about the rich history of Ocean County with topics such as shipwrecks, historic storms, Ocean County's role in the Revolutionary War, tales of local hauntings, and much, much more.