YOUR NOVEL TITLE

BOOK BIBLE

# How to use this bible

*A book bible is a ‘go-to’ document that contains all the key information about your novel, from plot to characters and world-building. It can be a really useful way to organise thoughts and information, so you can refer back with ease if you can’t remember a specific detail.*

*If you are just starting out with your novel, you might not be able to fill this bible in. Don’t panic! My bibles grow with me and my understanding of my work. Some areas I can fill in the details before starting to draft, whereas others I might not have a clue. I add to sections, and even amend them, as I write, and in between drafts. Just like your novel, this isn’t a static document.*

*The bible is organised into different sections, but try look at the document holistically. One element in worldbuilding might affect something in your antagonist’s background and vice versa.*

*Try to remain focussed, and don’t get too bogged down in details, especially when you’re on a first draft. You might find out more about your characters whilst you write them, and forcing goals or motivations or unique ticks on them before writing may only succeed in killing your enthusiasm.*

*Be ruthless in what areas you fill in, and which you just glance over. This is especially poignant in the worldbuilding section. Ask yourself whether the section in question has a large bearing on your plot and/or characters. If not, save yourself time and effort and concentrate rather on something that is more important.*

# OUTLINE

*This section is for you to provide a rough overview of your novel. From experience, filling this in can really help when you finish your novel to make a synopsis. It’s also a great way to ‘test’ your plot for holes or conflict. For a full flat plan, go to the end of this document.*

## Summary

*One sentence that sets out the premise of your novel*

## Archetypes

*Does your story fit a specific story archetype e.g. vengeance or coming of age – this can help you navigate the story arc for your novel and individual characters*

## Story beats

*You may like to plot your story in a different document, or using different software. It can be helpful, however, to include key beats in the bible, so you have an overview of the plot. Record more detail in the flat plan at the end of the bible*

### Beginning

*The inciting incident or scene that kick starts your main character’s transformation and journey*

### Middle

*The crunch point in your novel, often a point of no-return*

### Finale

*The overall climax of the novel and the end of your main character’s transformation*

# MAIN CHARACTERS

*Your main characters are the ones who have POVs in the story. You may also like to include characters who don’t have a POV, but do play a large role in the novel and plot. These are characters who you want to know really well.*

## Character A

### Characteristics and background

*You might like to split these two sections up, but I find they fit together well. Think of what makes your character unique, and why they have developed these behaviours. Their background will often the greatest effect on their actions, thoughts and beliefs.*

*E.g. “From a young age, she has been told what to do, and is constantly frustrated with her lack of power in the world. It means she is more prone to lashing out.”*

### Unique ticks

*Does your character have any little ticks that make them stand out from others? Perhaps they have a permanent frown, or an inability to keep still, or have a unique voice tone? I like to link these ticks back to their characteristics and background (e.g. a calm person probably won’t be fidgety). This is also a great place to record any of their hobbies – again try and link these back to their background/characteristics.*

### Appearance

*Bullet point your character’s physical appearance here, including age, hair colour, eyes, skin tone, defining features like tattoos or birthmarks etc.*

### Goals and motivations

*Goals are what you characters is chasing and motivations are why they are chasing their goals. Goals might be what you characters wants but not actually what they need. If this is the case, this is a good place to record the difference between the two and conflict it creates. Remember that these goals and motivations are most effective when they link back to the background and characteristics.*

### Arc

*I find it helpful to describe the arc for the character e.g. redemption.*

## Character B

### Characteristics and background

### Unique ticks

### Appearance

### Goals and motivations

### Arc

## Character C

### Characteristics and background

### Unique ticks

### Appearance

### Goals and motivations

### Arc

# SIDE CHARACTERS

*Side characters still play a vital role in your novel, but don’t have a POV and don’t have as much page time as your main characters. You still want to spend some time filtering through their background, characteristics and motivations, but not as much as your main characters.*

## Side Character D

*Record your character’s background and characteristics, their appearance and what they are trying to achieve in the novel. You may want to describe their relationship to your main character(s), and if they go through any arcs or transformations. If they have unique ticks, record these here too.*

## Side Character E

## Side Character F

## Side Character G

## Side Character H

# ANTAGONISTS

*I treat antagonists in the same way as I do main characters, even if they do not have a huge amount of dedicated page time. It is really useful to understand why they are the way they are, to increase the tension and conflict for your main characters. I often have a main antagonist, and some ‘side’ antagonists.*

## Antagonist I

### Characteristics and background

### Unique Ticks

### Appearance

### Goals and motivations

## Antagonist J

### Characteristics and background

### Unique Ticks

### Appearance

### Goals and motivations

# ROLE CALL

*Here you can list all the characters in your story, no matter how small or big their role. It’s a useful reference tool to quickly find the name and relationship of minor characters who might just appear in one or two scenes.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Role** | **Notes** |
| Character’s full name | Their role or relationship in the novel e.g. MC’s father, or innkeeper | Any additional notes, like where they live or defining features/characteristics/sayings |
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# WORLDBUILDING

*Whether you are writing a fantastical world or not, it’s important to set the scene for the world in which your characters are inhabiting. I have tweaked the worldbuilding method that Brandon Sanderson uses to help me explore my characters’ world. This method splits the world into neat sections: Physical and Cultural.*

*I get to worldbuilding detail last of all. It is absolutely intrinsic to the plot and the characters, but at the same time it can be easy to get lost in areas that don’t actually have any bearing on the story you’re trying to tell. If you’re a methodical planner – unlike me – coming to this part last will mean that you know what sorts of things will bring conflict to your characters, make their tasks harder, and elements that will compliments their arcs. As a discovery writer, I tend to dip in and out of this section during drafting, when ideas and elements come to me. I’ll then fill it in more completely after the first or second draft.*

*Remember that none of things stand alone – they all affect one another. For this reason, it’s a good idea as Sanderson suggests, to concentrate on just one or two elements each of Physical and Cultural.*

## Physical

*The physical aspects of the world are those that are natural. Human (or sentient life) may have changed these, but they are not* created *by the beings in your world. There are lots of different elements below. To choose which element you concentrate on, think about your novel and those that lend themselves to the plot and character arcs.*

### Climate

*What is the weather like? Are there any defining seasons? Does is differ in the locations your characters find themselves? Why are the climates the way they are? Is the climate changing?*

### Continent and countries

*This can have a huge impact on the way the world functions. If you have lots of island continents, then seafaring might play a huge part in your characters’ lives. Decide on how big you want your character’s world to be. Only go into detail of the places you actually visit in your novel (this may only be one country, or even a region of a country!)*

#### Country 1

Go into more specific detail of this place

#### Country 2

#### Country 3

### Settlements

*These are the cities, towns villages, farms that your characters find themselves in. You might want to include a map, if that’s you kind fo thing. I only go into detail below for the places my characters find themselves in for a considerable period of time, or that have a real bearing on the novel.*

#### Settlement 1

#### Settlement 2

#### Settlement 3

#### Settlement 4

#### Settlement 5

### Flora

*Are there any plants that are unique to your world, or have bearing on the plot (a poison, perhaps)? Describe them here.*

#### Flora type A

#### Flora type B

### Fauna

*Are there any animal life that inhabit your world that either pay a huge part in the characters lives (cattle rearing, for example) or play a big part in the plot. Describe them here.*

#### Fauna type A

#### Fauna type B

### Magic

*If you’re writing fantasy, you may have a magical system. It’s important to develop certain rules around the system, that limit power. Also think how the magic system affects other areas of life, when you move into the Cultural section of worldbuilding.*

### Science

*Are there different scientific rules that govern the world, like gravity?*

## Cultural

*This section is for all things ‘man’-made. These tend to be social constructs, or advancements made by sentient beings and can have wide-reaching effects over other Cultural elements, and Physical elements. Although it’s good to think about the elements mentioned below, try to not go into such detail on every part, otherwise you can get lost on details that don’t have any bearing on your novel or plot.*

### Government

*Is your world a feudal one or a democratic one? How are leaders chosen? Is there a dominating government, or are there lots of different, smaller states or clans?*

### Economics

*How do your characters pay for things and how do they earn money? What is the gap like between poor and rich? Is the economy strong or is going under change? Does your characters’ world depend on one type of export or import?*

### Religion and beliefs

*What do people think about life and death? Do they have a deities and how do they worship these? Are beliefs widespread, are their any religions that are more dominant? What does your common person think about religious people? How have the stories come about?*

### Rituals and festivals

*This links back to religions and beliefs, as these will often have a bearing on when festivals take place, and the types of things people will do to get what they want in life. Think how these have been affected by religion and belief, and also if anything else in your world would effect when people hold celebrations. Also think how people celebrate and mourn, and what they celebrate and mourn.*

### Military

*What is the military presence like, are there any tensions or on-going wars. How do people fight one another, and what are weapons like? Who does the fighting in your world?*

### Technology

*What technology exists in your world, and who can use it? How do people travel, heat their homes? How do they cook, how do they communicate? It can be useful to look at time periods from our own world to inform.*

### Fashion

*What do people wear and what does it symbolise? Are there any colours or styles that are taboo? What are clothes made out for and who makes them? Who wears what, what are the difference between young and old, poor and rich?*

### Language

*If there is a language other than English in your world, it’s useful to note down any key words or grammatically rules.*

#### Nouns

*Names of people, objects, places, animals, plant life etc.*

#### Adjectives

*Describe nouns. Think about where these appear in the sentence order (e.g. before or after the noun)*

#### Verbs

*‘Doing words’. In most languages, these change depending on who is doing the action (e.g. I, you, we, he, she or they) so think aout how your language’s verbs change*

#### Other grammar rules

*Depending on how much your language appears in your novel, you might like to do more research into languages and record any specific words and rules here.*

# FLAT PLAN

*The flat plan is more of a traditional outline, and one that I use to plot out my drafts. As a pantser, in the first draft this section remains fairly empty, and I fill it in as I write. If you are more of a plotter, you might want to fill these sections in before you start.*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Chapter** | ***Characters/ POV*** | ***Side Characters*** | ***Scenes*** | ***Progress*** |
| 1 | What POV is the chapter in, which MCs are in the chapter | Which side characters appear | * Bullet point * Each scene in * The chapter | How has the chapter and it’s scene moved the plot along. This is a great way to ensure to test the validity of the scene/chapter and it’s place in the novel. |
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