



The Lantern English Co.
The Creative Writer

Creative Worldbuilding – Syllabus

Course Description: Create a world of your own in eight weeks! We'll explore the unique details of your fictional setting, from everyday life to scenery, and include special focuses for genre words. After discovering the details, we'll cover how to weave your worldbuilding into your plots, and how to create storylines tailor-made for your setting. *Prerequisite: Intro to Creative Writing or equivalent writing experience.*

Course Outline:

Week One: What Is Worldbuilding?

Week Two: Genre

Week Three: Landscape

Week Four: Inhabitants

Week Five: Language

Week Six: Social Structure

Week Seven: Everyday Life

Week Eight: Worldbuilding & Plots

Grading Information: All assignments will be graded using *The Creative Writer Rubric* and averaged to receive a final course grade.



Creative Worldbuilding

Lesson Three: Landscape

SAMPLE LESSON

When you visit a new place, you will most likely take in its landscape first. Whether that's the impressive skyscrapers of New York City or the tree-lined drives of the Carolina countryside, the landscape is your first physical impression of your new setting.

In this lesson, we will walk through the steps of discovering that landscape, and so we are going to try something different from our usual lesson plan. **Get out a notebook or a new document.** We would like for you to respond to the questions in this lesson as you read them. Your responses don't need to be eloquent or perfectly-written—they are just our jumping-off point for the assignment. **The first part of this lesson is all about you encountering your world. We will show you tips and tricks later on.**

Ready? Let's approach your world like it's a place we are just visiting. We get off of the train (or airplane, carriage, spaceship, caravan, etc.) and step into the midst of your new landscape . . .

WHAT DO WE SEE FIRST? –

Let's warm up with a personal look at your world. Pick a location within your world, whether that is a corner of the city or a room of the castle. Settle yourself there. Look at it from our current perspective. What do we see first? Where are we? Tell me about how this location engages your senses. What do you see, smell, hear, feel? Now, we walk forwards so that we can see the sky. How has the environment changed? Look up. What time of day is it? Is there the sun—stars—moon—constellations—city glow?

Is there anyone else here? If so, what do they look like? If we're alone, why do you think no one else is here? Give it one more searching look.

We are about to move on to the next step on the tour, so scribble down any last notes before we go.

THE HELICOPTER TRIP –

Now that your writing skills are warmed up, let's get a look at the big picture. Pick a flying craft that fits into your world and we'll board. (Are these flying crafts common, or did we need to pull some authorly strings to get here?) Now that we're in the air, look down on the landscape of your world. What is its topography? Is it hilly, forested, fielded? Is that common on this continent/planet/etc? Tell me about what it looks like from above. Think about the colors and shapes that you see. Can you liken this landscape to anything? Try to paint a vivid picture for me. (I left my glasses on the ground, so all I can get is a fuzzy blur!)

Focus on those general aspects for a moment, now squint and pay attention to the details. Can you see any rivers or creeks flowing through the landscape? Are there any oceans or lakes nearby? (If so, do you know their names?) Hm—I think I can see that.

Now, what about signs of life? Are there any civilizations here—towns or cities or castles? (If you're writing about one specific city or town, also consider any other cities/towns nearby. You'll probably need to know about those.) If so, what do they look like from above? Are they large—small—sprawling? How far apart are they? Go ahead and borrow my binoculars—see if you can get a closer look. I thought I saw something moving down there . . . what do you think? I'll take your word for it. Are there roads or paths that we can see from up here?

Take a break from looking out at the landscape—yes, I know it's such a nice view— and take a look at your map. (Artists: we would highly recommend sketching out a basic map of your world so you know where everything is!) Did we miss any major landmarks? As tourists, is there anywhere you think that we should visit?

Spend as much time as you need on this section. This overview will help you keep yourself oriented as we move into the details.

THE NATURE JOURNAL –

Now that we have landed, we are going to start thinking about the details of this environment. Tell me about the natural flora and fauna you find in this area. (If you are writing realistic fiction, research the flora and fauna natural to that area.)

Here's a list that you can use to work through your "nature journal":

What is the general climate?	Are there plants or animals that are beneficial to health?	What is the earth like? Is it sandy soil, typically grassy ground, etc?	How does the flora/fauna in this environment change in different weather? Do they behave differently before the rain, during the rain, etc?
Are there any non-native plants or animals?	What kinds of insects are there?	Are there rare or endangered animals/plants?	
What plants & animals are most common?	Describe an average stream, creek, or river.	Describe what a walk in the park or a walk in the woods is like.	
Are there poisonous plants or dangerous animals?	Describe a normal sunset.		

Take as much time as you need to finish up that section. I want you to at least be able to tell me about the most common plants and animals in your environment. (If you are in a city or a town, think about what’s planted in the parks and what animals roam the streets! There could be stray animals, birds, squirrels, etc.)

THE STREET VIEW –

Let’s move into civilization. Where is the main populated place in your world? (In what civilized location will your characters be most, that is? If your world is a city, town, school, etc., use that place for this first run-through.)

Tell me a little bit about it as a whole. What is this place known for, and does that show up in its general landscape? (For example, “The Lilac Capital of the North” probably has a lot of lilac bushes.) What are the buildings usually made out of? Are they old, or recently constructed, or a mix of both? How many people live here, and what effect does that have on the place (e.g. traffic noise, lots of chatting and laughing, littering, etc.)?

Imagine that you’re walking down an average street (or hallway in a one-building setting)—tell me what you see. Focus on interesting little details; those are what makes a scene feel “real” to your reader. Here are several examples: Does a piece of paper flit across the road? Are the doors painted brilliant colors? Is there a lady jogging down the road with a twin stroller?

Tell me a little about the transportation. How do people usually get around here? Are there taxis everywhere, footpaths meandering through the buildings, subways rumbling underground?

Think about one main aspect that makes this place different from your average location. Is there an amazingly large market that trades in exotic goods? Do canals run through the city? Did a skilled civilian open an amazing bakery on the corner?

Let's step back for a moment. Is there anything that you missed? If so, now's the time to take any last notes. We're going to the hub next.

THE HUB –

This is the place that your readers will see most frequently. It's where your main character lives, works, relaxes, etc. (Now, if you're creating this world from scratch, it's okay to not have a set "hub" yet! Just pick a place that interests you. It shouldn't be larger than one building, but it could be anything—a quiet tree beside a stream, a Victorian house on the east side, a dorm on the third floor.)

As we did with the world as a whole, start off with a big-picture view. Tell me how large this place is, and where it's situated in the world. Describe its general features to me. Now, move in closer. Focus on the details. Imagine that you're in the middle of it, looking around you. What do you see, hear, smell, feel? What kind of emotions does this place give you—comfort? Fear? Joy? Name at least one thing that makes this place unique.

TIPS AND TRICKS –

You can stop taking notes now.

How is your worldbuilding coming? Now that you have had some experience creating your landscape, I'm going to give you some advice to take it to the next level.

- **Review your notes.** Make sure that you like the way you have created your landscape, and that you've remained accurate. Expand any descriptions or analogies that you think need more detail.
- **Research is important.** If you are creating a realistic fiction world, make sure to remain realistic to your chosen area. (There aren't kangaroos hopping around in New England . . . unfortunately.) On the more-fun side, find things that inspire you! Flip through photo books, magazines, or

websites to find images that remind you of your world. Practice describing them and pluck out phrases that you can use for your worldbuilding.

- **Add relatable elements.** Think back to a time when you were in a place similar to your world. What unique things did you see there? What details did you pick up on? (e.g. a scent of mint, a scurrying squirrel with a stripe on its tail, a girl doing handsprings) Include elements like that to make your world's landscape feel more realistic.

Assignment 3: When in Rome

PART ONE. Gather your notes from the lesson. Type them out if you need to and review them as recommended. You must submit your typed notes. However, Your notes will NOT be graded for grammar, punctuation, etc. Just make sure that they are readable. The only feedback you will receive on them is how to make them more detailed, more engaging, or more realistic to your setting (if that is necessary).

PART TWO. Now, pick two locations and write descriptive scenes about them. We would recommend that one be inside and one be outside. Consider the questions we asked you in the lesson, and try to be detailed. These scenes will be graded based on content and writing mechanics, as if they are scenes of a novel.

(Word count: at least 300 words total)