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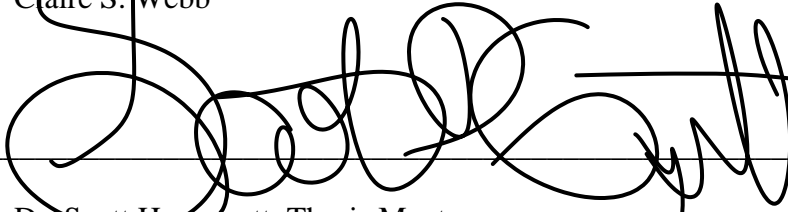
FALLING DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE:
WORLD BUILDING TECHNIQUES IN YA LITERATURE

By
Claire Webb

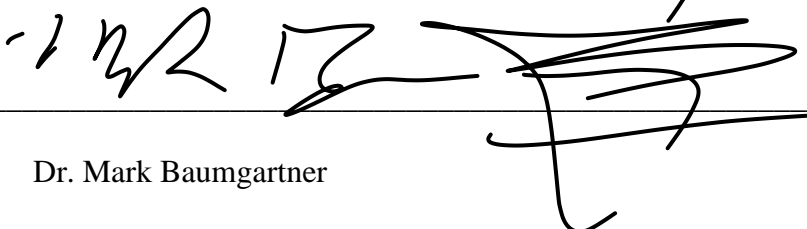
An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
University Honors Scholars Program
Honors College
and the
Fine and Performing Arts Honors Program
College of Arts and Sciences
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ABSTRACT

World building is a key component to many young adult novels, but what is world building and what are some different styles and techniques that authors use when constructing fictional universes? In this thesis, *Falling Down the Rabbit Hole: World Building Techniques in YA Literature*, I will examine *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll (1865), *The Princess Bride* by William Goldman (1973), and my own unpublished novel, *The Sun Kingdom*, to compare different techniques and styles of world building. These works will be explored through the aspect of world building, focusing specifically on the importance of the geography, language, and traditions and culture that were created for their respective worlds, how these elements were created, and what effect this has on the story.

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INTRODUCTION

“This tremendous world I have inside of me. How to free myself, and this world, without tearing myself to pieces. And rather tear myself to a thousand pieces than be buried with this world in me.”

-Franz Kafka

World building is the creation of a fictional universe. Oftentimes, this fictional place is an entirely new landscape. This technique is used to create a setting and background for a novel or film. Middle Earth, a universe created by J. R. R. Tolkien for many of his novels like *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings series* (1954-1955), may be one of the most popular and extensive fictional worlds that many are familiar with, along with the wizarding world from the *Harry Potter series* by J.K. Rowling (1997-2007). The land of Oz from *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum (1900) and the futuristic, dystopian depiction of San Francisco in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick (1968), which inspired the popular film *Blade Runner* (1982), are also classic examples. Note that many of these universes take from elements of our reality, which is common and, in many ways, unavoidable. Although the term world building often implies that this is the creation of something new and never seen before, this does not mean inspiration cannot be taken from our reality. These fictional worlds are considered alternate possibilities or futures as well. For example, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* takes place in San Francisco, an actual city that exists in the United States, but the original novel is set in 1992, more than 20 years in the future from when it was written and published, making it a possible future and not an actual place. Of course, San Francisco has not yet fulfilled the

possible future that the book had created, but it was simply a “what if” future, which is the basis for most dystopian novels.

There are many different elements to world building. However, some of the key elements that seem most pertinent to building a world are the mapping of geography, construction of language, and creation of traditions and culture. Fictional maps in books most likely started with novels that involved much travel or exploration. According to *The Writer's Map: An Atlas of Imaginary Lands* by Huw Lewis-Jones, “it’s likely that the first work of fiction to contain a map of a non-existent place was Thomas More’s 1516 satire *Utopia*” (Lewis-Jones 45). *Utopia*, similar to Joseph Conrad’s 1899 novella *Heart of Darkness*, is a story within a story. In the novel, Thomas More meets Raphael Hythloday, a world traveler who has visited the island of Utopia and shares his stories from the island. Hythloday specifically mentions the geography of Utopia, which may be the main reason why a map was drawn and included in the book. As mentioned above, the inclusion of maps for imagined lands in fiction novels most likely started with *Utopia* and other travel and exploration novels where a map would be helpful for readers to understand the context or plot of the novel.

In today’s age, it is common to see many fantasy and fiction books contain a map for readers to reference as needed. This is especially helpful if geography plays a valuable role in the plot of the story. For example, there is a map of the clan territories in the *Warrior Cats* series by Erin Hunter (2003). This is important in helping readers, especially younger readers, understand the geographical differences between clan territories. It also serves as a reminder for which clans border each other when there are skirmishes and territory disputes between clans. It is much easier to visualize this with the help of a map and locations of major cities or relevant landmarks mentioned in the story. There are many different elements to creating maps, the environment,

and the landscape. In *Fantasy Mapping Drawing Worlds* by Wesley Jones, a few of the main elements to map drawing include “Climate; Fauna & Flora; Distance; Habitat; Era; History & Future; Civilizations & Races; War; Technology & Magic; Special Conditions” (Jones 8-9). These elements should be considered when creating the geography and maps. If locations are very far apart, a common form of travel will need to be established. If it never rains, the inhabitants of the universe will need to have a reliable source of water, or perhaps the lack of water is a major issue and has been the cause of war before. The possibilities are endless, but it is important to remember every detail and choice made about the design of the landscape will impact everything else. For example, the majority of the world may be uninhabitable. This could mean more peace between civilizations but also less communication leading to a less advanced society. On the other hand, a world with fewer inhabitable areas and mostly uninhabitable space may have more conflict between inhabitants, but more progression because of the pressure put on the inhabitants to survive in an uninhabitable place. This can lead to tension and conflict in a novel. For example, in my draft novel, *The Sun Kingdom*, the inhabitants live in the middle of a desert and their kingdom is centered around a river that runs through this desert. The inhabitants must rely on outside kingdoms for many resources leading to conflict later on in the novel.

A constructed language is also crucial to bringing a fictional landscape to life. Some universes, like Middle Earth, create entire alphabets and syntactic structures for their language. This is often more common with universes that are more extensively explored in the novel. It is also common to see series or spin offs come from novels that have very intricately built worlds. This way, readers can explore the imagined landscape through more than one novel or set of characters. It is also common to see spin offs set in the future or the past, going into depth about a story that may have been only briefly touched on or referenced in the original novel or series.

Spin offs, however, are more about history than language, which will be reviewed as an essential world building element later. Other novels may have a constructed language that is less extensive but can be just as effective when done correctly. For example, H.C. Harrington, the author of the fantasy series *Daughter of Havenglade*, wrote that “a naming language is primarily used for filling out names of geographical locations and cities on a map,” which is when the names of places and sometimes people are created to sound different and unique (Harrington 68). This can be done by tweaking the spelling of a name to look visually different, for example, in English, a name like Sophia could be changed to Zofya, which could still be pronounced the same, but the spelling is entirely different, making it seem alien in comparison to the original spelling, Sophia. Another way to write a naming language is to choose a different language or to combine multiple different languages than the one that the story is written in. For example, if it is written in English, Russian may be the source of inspiration for naming locations and people. This is not as thorough as creating an entirely new language; however, those small details give readers a taste of the world. This may be better suited for novels that are based more on the plot and storytelling aspect of the novel than the mechanics of the world. It is also much more common to see in fiction because constructing a language takes a lot of time and effort that may not be worth it for the final product of the novel. Novels already take much effort to write; adding a fully constructed language may not be worth it is only going to be used once. This is why many novels less focused on world building only use unique names for towns or characters instead of creating an entire language. Either way, having unique names and words specific to the fictional land will help make it stand on its own and differentiate it from our world, making it more believable.

Traditions and culture are also a principal element because they will define the social structure of the world and may provide a point of conflict to start or run through the story. This

can include details about different races, the type of government or lack of government, social class, religion, art, type of clothing worn, and history of the society. As with language and geography, traditions and culture are connected to everything else in the world and the small ripples of change in detail can lead to waves later on. For example, in the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling, wands are necessary for wizards to control their magic. However, if wizards did not need wands to control their magic, the wizarding world and the novels would look very different. What would happen without key objects like the Elder Wand or all of the scenes with wands? It is not that small details like this should not or cannot be changed, but this example shows that even the smallest and seemingly insignificant changes can have a large impact later on in a story. In addition, many of these elaborate elements do not always make it into the story but are helpful for the author to know as it may provide ideas for character development and backstory. For example, the main character may live in a peaceful kingdom with no threat of warring neighbors, but the kingdom still has a large army in reserve. This may not be necessary to the plot and does not need to be added into the story, but it is good for the author to know these details to give their universe a more complete and fully fleshed out aesthetic.

In terms of young adult fiction, world building has become a major writing tool for many YA authors. YA literature is geared towards readers between the ages of 12 and 17, however, other age groups also enjoy reading this genre as well. World building works well in the YA genre because of its natural inclination towards escapism that many young adult readers seek out. Many teenagers experience hardships in middle and high school and wish to escape their own lives for a more exciting or different one. A fictional universe provides the perfect setting for this, creating a different, new environment and possibly a more exciting one, while also still hitting on some of the universal issues of teenagers, like romance, parental relationships, and

growing up. During this age, many young teens are also faced with the question, who am I? This is a common theme that runs through YA literature. The use of world building in a story lends itself to this theme because of the explorative nature that many novels set in different universes take on. Oftentimes, when exploring this fictional landscape, it becomes a reflection of the characters and allows them to explore who they are and where they belong in their world.

In this thesis, we will examine the construction of worlds and the different techniques of world building found in the children and YA novels: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Princess Bride*. These novels are notable examples of world building, not just because they are classics, but because each one is contained to a single novel. This can be difficult to do and most of the other examples of great fictional worlds are seen in a series or multiple novels. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* takes the world as we know it and flips it on its head, creating Wonderland. This novel shows how a fictional world can and usually is built on the existing ideas of our own world. Similarly, *The Princess Bride* starts with ideas and concepts that are already understood in our reality and tweaks them to create Florin. While a fictional universe like Middle Earth may seem more impressive, Wonderland and Florin more clearly and concisely illustrate the elaborate techniques of constructing fictional landscapes through pre-established knowledge of how our world works. These novels are important stepping stones to bridge the gap between high fantasy with complex and hard to understand fictional landscapes and our own world. My own YA novel, *The Sun Kingdom*, will also be used in comparison with these classic works to understand the importance and the different styles of world building. Geography, language and traditions and culture will be the main elements that are focused on; however, it should be noted that there are many other elements not mentioned within this thesis that are an important part of world building.

CHAPTER I: THE WHIMSICAL WILDS OF WONDERLAND

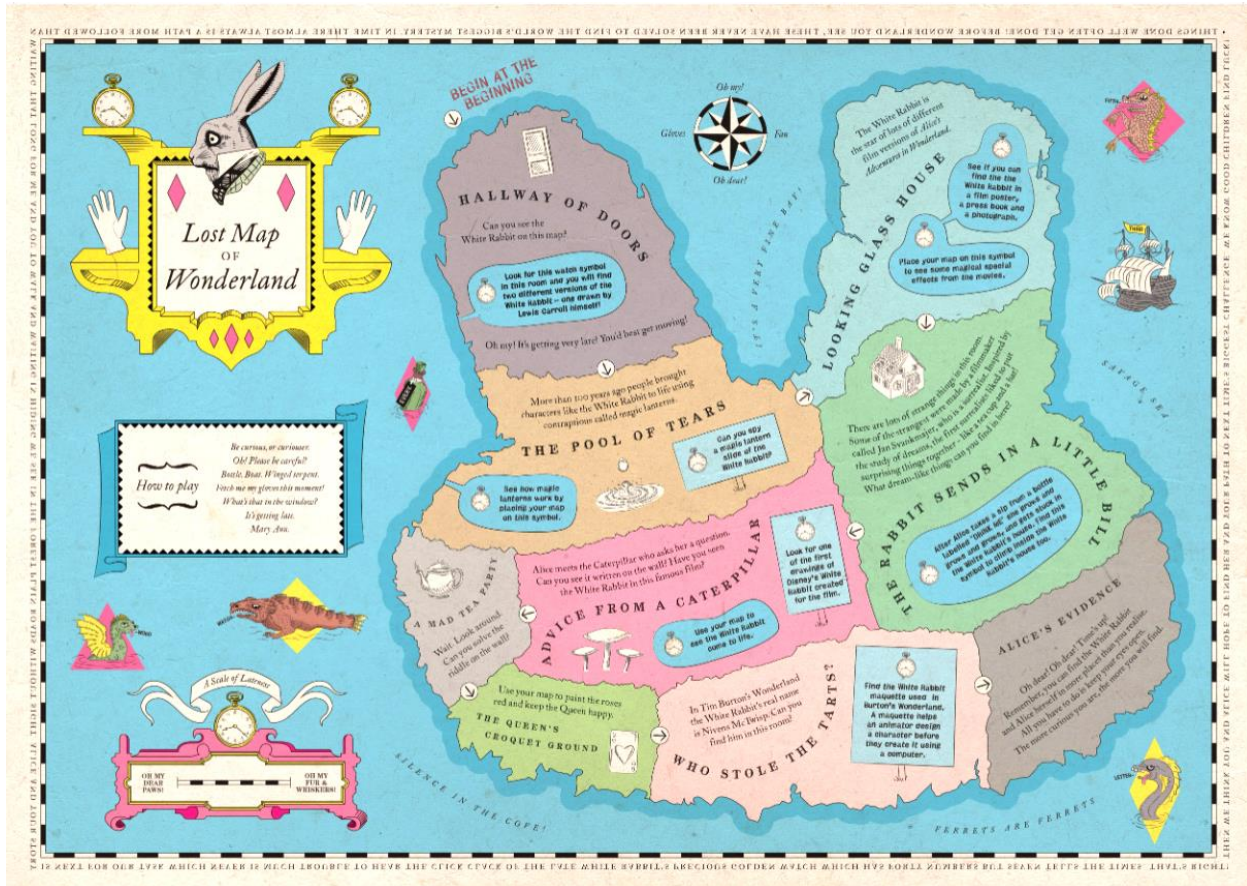


Figure 1: “The Lost Map of Wonderland” map (Nick Lewis Design)

Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is a classic in children and young adult literature. This is an earlier example of world building in children’s literature and has one of the most extensive and complex worlds in a contained novel. It is also the first novel published of the novels being discussed in this thesis and starting with it makes the most chronological sense. However, before diving into the world building of Wonderland, a critical history of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and the country of Wonderland is necessary to understand its society and the way it functions. *The Annotated Alice* states that the story of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* starts with the three Liddell sisters, Alice, Lorina, and Edith. Cannon Robinson Duckworth and Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known by his pen name

Lewis Carroll, were rowing down a small tributary of the Thames River in July of 1862 with the Liddell sisters, a common expedition for the group. Carroll was a tutor for the Liddell sisters as well as a mathematician who had published several books on mathematics before publishing *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. When they stopped by the side of the river for a break from the heat of the sun, the girls asked Carroll to tell them a story and this was how *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* began (Gardner 7). After the girls returned home, they asked Carroll to write down the story and turn it into a book which he did. Most notably, the original story that was told by the side of the river did not include some of the scenes that are in the published version. For example, the Caucus-race in chapter three was not a part of the original manuscript and the poem spoken by the mouse in chapter three was an entirely different one. Throughout the novel, the influence of the Liddell sisters is clear. In chapter seven, A Mad Tea-Party, the Dormouse tells a story about three little sisters whose names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie. As the annotations explain, “the three little sisters are the three Liddell sisters. Elsie is L.C. (Lorina Charlotte), Tillie refers to Edith’s family nickname Matilda, and Lacie is an anagram of Alice” (Gardner 91).

Many speculate that a great deal of Wonderland and its characters are in some ways a reflection of the United Kingdom and its time. Some literary experts even speculate that the Queen of Hearts is inspired by Queen Victoria. There are many other references in the novel that reflect the time period Carroll was living in; for example, *The Annotated Alice* states that “most of the poems in the two *Alice* books are parodies of poems or popular songs that were well known to Carroll's contemporary readers” (Gardner 26). In addition, there are some location and era specific words that reflect the time and place this novel was written in. For example, in the Dormouse’s story in chapter seven, he says that the three little sisters lived on treacle and

“*treacle* is British for molasses” (Gardner 91). These small details and references along with some of the wording used by Carroll show the age of the novel and provide context for the period in which it was written.

The world building of Wonderland can be broken down into several essential elements starting with geography. There is no official Wonderland map or Underland as some also know it as, unlike *The Princess Bride*, which comes with a map in the book. However, figure 1 is a map created by the Australian Centre for the Moving Image. ACMI created the internationally renowned Lewis Carroll “Wonderland” exhibition that was on show in 2018 in Melbourne, Australia. Nick Lewis Design along with Sandpit, a design studio, created four interactive maps for this exhibit which used audio, visual, and interactive content to walk viewers through the world of Wonderland. All maps have the same landmarks which is why only one map is included, though they are shaped differently. Figure 1 is shaped like a rabbit’s head for the White Rabbit, while the others are shaped like a hat for the Mad Hatter, a wide grin for the Cheshire Cat, and a heart for the Queen of Hearts. All major locations from Carroll’s novel like the rabbit hole Alice falls down, the pool of tears, the croquet grounds, etc. are on the map as well as a few extra places that are from Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass*. Each location also has a short caption explaining its significance as well, which is helpful. To clarify, the world Alice travels through may not be called Wonderland, this is simply assumed by most from the novel’s title. As it is ruled by the Queen of Hearts, the kingdom may even be called Hearts, but the name of the kingdom is never specified in the novel. Maps are often helpful for readers to understand the physical space that characters move through in the story and the correlation of various places the characters travel to. While Alice does travel to many places in Wonderland, it is disorienting and illogical which makes it hard to map out. Around the time of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

publication, maps for fictional landscapes were not a popular nor common thing and creating a map may not have occurred to Lewis Carroll or John Tenniel, the illustrator of the pictures in the first publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

However, geography is not just about maps, but about the environment as well. As stated above, the layout of Wonderland is quite confusing, but the environment of Wonderland is very distinct. Alice starts her story above ground, most likely somewhere in Oxfordshire, England, which is where the Liddell sisters and Carroll sat when he first told this story. The rabbit hole is the first location Alice visits in Wonderland. It is very chaotic and disorienting due to the implausible nature of her fall. Alice picks things up off the shelves as she falls by and place them back on the shelves which is physically impossible according to the laws of physics. This is something that Carroll understood as he was a mathematician before a children's book author, and he purposely chose to add these unrealistic details. This introduction to Wonderland prefaces readers with the idea that the impossible is possible in Wonderland the illogical can be made logical. As the novel progresses, Alice visits different areas, the Rabbit and March Hare's house, the forest where she meets the caterpillar, and the palace and croquet grounds where the Queen and King of Hearts live. Despite the normality of a forest, houses, and palace, there is always something that makes these locations specific to Wonderland. In the forest, there is a talking caterpillar who smokes a hookah and gives Alice advice on how to grow to her normal size again or shrink even smaller; at the Rabbit's house, she finds a bottle that says "drink me" and makes her grow too large; at the March Hare's house, she stumbles upon a tea party with the March Hare, the Hatter, and the Dormouse, which may seem normal until readers discover that the conversation is one of the most maddening and confusing conversations of the novel; at the palace, the Queen of Hearts has cards for guards and flamingos for croquet mallets. This idea of

taking the known and unknown is crucial to world building because “the beauty and art of world-building lies in *blending* unique elements with the more mundane” (Harrington 69).

The environmental challenges that Alice faces are also reflective of Wonderland and the world building in the story. These are not normal challenges that might be seen in other novels but are specific to Wonderland and its environment. First, there is the Pool of Tears that Alice cries when she is big and when she picks up the Rabbit’s gloves and fan, the fan makes her grow small again, so small her tears become a pool that she must swim through. Then, at the Rabbit’s house, she is small enough to walk through the door with ease, however, when she drinks the bottle that is labeled drink me, she grows too large to the point that she must “put one arm out of the window, and one foot up the chimney” (Carroll 46). Although this scenario may not seem like an environmental challenge at first, it clearly is one as Alice must find a way to get out of the house as she is too large to go through the door or window anymore. The solution to this problem is very Wonderlandesque as Alice must eat a cake that makes her grow smaller and shrink enough to leave the house through the door. While the environment itself is not exactly the obstacle, the food and drinks that make Alice grow and shrink cause her to have problems with navigating her surroundings, a characteristic that defines Wonderland and distinguishes it from our world and even other fictional worlds.

In addition to geography, creating a language specific to the world can add depth and believability. In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice comes from Oxfordshire, England. This means that there is no language created specifically for Wonderland because English is the standard language that Alice speaks. However, there are special items, places, and creatures that have made-up names. For example, The Jabberwocky, a poem by Lewis Carroll that is found in *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), the sequel to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, is about a

fantastical creature. The jabberwocky is a nonsensical beast that speaks gibberish and adds to the absurdity of the novel. Within this poem, there are other words like “borogrove” assumed to mean “a ‘shabby-looking’ bird with its feathers sticking out all around, that resembles something like a live mop” and “frumious”, thought to mean “filthy and with a very bad smell” according to the Alice in Wonderland wiki fandom. There are other words that match the environment of Wonderland like “mimsy”, “gimble”, “haddocks’ eyes”, and “treacle-wells” that are unique to the setting and its whimsy characters. These world specific terms help give Wonderland an identity that is clearly different from our world which Alice hails from and help the reader form a distinction between the two.

Although Carroll did not take the opportunity to create more of a language to fit Wonderland’s world, director Tim Burton took creative liberty with this in his 2010 movie adaptation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. He added words into the adaptation that are specific to Wonderland. Some examples from the wiki fandom are: “fairfarren – intj. – May you travel far under fair skies (synonymous with English ‘farewell’, presumably.); (TB) futterwacken – 1. n. A dance of great joy 2. v. To do this dance (TB); slurvish – adj. – Selfish; self-centered (TB); upelkuchen – n. – A cake that makes one grow (TB)” with TB indicating that they are terms from Tim Burton’s films. Burton most likely chose to create these words based off of the few words already created by Carroll and the way the words sound when pronounced. When developing a new language for a world, having a phonetic inventory, “a list of sounds that are present in your conlang,” which is short for constructed language, is necessary to provide consistency. Burton most likely kept this rule in mind when creating words for the movie adaptation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. This stylistic choice helps to define the world of Wonderland and create a unique experience as well as add to the audience’s immersion into

Wonderland. However, it is clear that a fully constructed language is not necessary to Wonderland's world building because it relies more heavily on the characters and imagery than a new language specific to Wonderland to bring it to life.

All world building requires details of traditions and culture to create a unique setting that stands out as different from our reality. Many worlds are built off ideas and concepts that already exist. As previously stated, Wonderland is ruled by the Queen of Hearts who many believe was inspired by Queen Victoria. The Queen of Hearts rules over Wonderland, implying that Wonderland is a monarchy, a government system which is already in place. Things become more complicated with the logic of Wonderland's world, however. Alice drinks potions that make her grow and shrink, animals talk and flowers sing, and the Queen plays croquet with live flamingos as mallets and hedgehogs as balls. These world building elements of Wonderland affect the story and Alice's adventure and help shape the story into what it is. Yi-Fu Tuan's book, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, notes that "feeling for place is influenced by knowledge" and knowledge of the various oddities in Wonderland paint a vivid image of its world for the reader (Tuan 32). Without all of these elements, there would be no story or at least not one of any interest. Wonderland would not be Wonderland without these quirky elements.

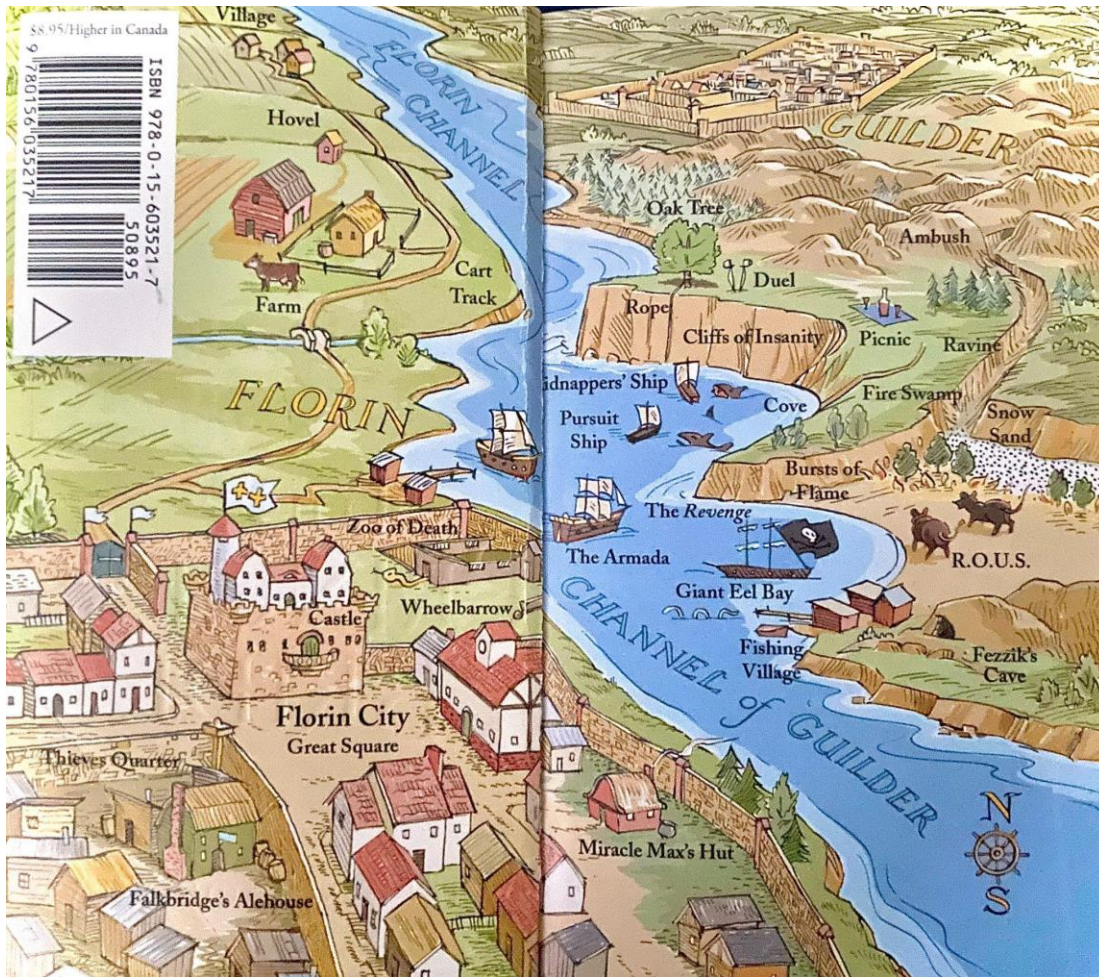
Wonderland is full of traditions and customs that bring the novel to life. The Caucus-race is the first of many traditions that Alice encounters. After Alice falls down the rabbit hole and swims out of a pool of her own tears when she shrinks after crying, she finds that her pool of tears is filled with a variety of birds and animals, "there was a Duck and a Dodo, a Lory and an Eaglet, and several other curious creatures" (Carroll 32). When Alice, along with all of the other animals make it to the bank of the pool, their first concern was getting dry and so the Caucus-race was invented. The idea comes from the Dodo because it started to mark "out a race-course,

in a sort of circle, ('the exact shape doesn't matter.' it said,) and then all the party were placed along the course, here and there. There was no 'One, two, three, and away!' but they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so that it was not easy to know when the race was over" (Carroll 36). The lack of overall organization and logic of this tradition give it that Wonderlandesque characteristic and prepares the reader for what to expect or what not to expect next. The confusing tea party is also an interesting representation of traditions and customs in the novel. Tea parties are most commonly associated with England and the British. This makes the tea party scene unsurprising as Carroll is British and was born and raised in England. However, this scene is now a staple in Alice's journey because of the whimsicality of the scene. First Alice is told there is no room for her, despite the fact there are plenty of open seats available. Then there is the mystery of the Dormouse who cannot seem to stay awake, but has interesting stories to tell. There is the Hatter of course, who is considered mad and asks riddles and makes rude remarks. The arbitrariness of the tea party and the conversation makes no sense and leaves Alice frustrated. However, it plays a major role in defining the world of Wonderland and its illogical innerworkings. All of the strange creatures and encounters Alice has in Wonderland are normalized so readers are not surprised nor do they question the surreal, dreamlike characteristics of the landscape or characters.

In addition, many of the talking animals Alice encounters find her curiosity and outspokenness rude, oftentimes because she speaks without thinking. This seems to be rooted in the cultural differences because proper manners in Wonderland do not seem to be the same as proper manners in our world which Alice is familiar with. When Alice meets the March Hare at his tea party she finds "a table set out under a tree...The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it. 'No room! No room!' they cried out when they saw

Alice coming. ‘There’s plenty of room!’ said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large armchair at the end of the table” (Carroll 83). This passage from the novel shows a clear difference in the logic and culture of Wonderland versus those of Alice’s and our world. It seems like there is plenty of room as there are lots of empty seats around the table, however, in Wonderland, perhaps there is a rule that only three can sit at the table for a tea party. Perhaps there is no logic behind it at all and there is no more room in the eyes of the March Hare and the Hatter. Either way, this example shows the importance of culture and traditions in world building. If the March Hare and Hatter had not said “no room!” and instead they had been welcoming and hospitable, the story may have taken a different and possibly less interesting turn and the unique characteristics of Wonderland would not be as strong. Alice has not encountered very warm reception from any of the talking animals she has met in Wonderland and to have her do so would change the impression readers have about the world of Wonderland. These cultural details are imperative to creating the overarching aesthetic of Wonderland and giving readers a unique association with this fictional landscape. The majority of the world building in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* lie in the quirky scenes and whimsical descriptions that emphasize the difference in Wonderland’s cultures and traditions and our own.

CHAPTER II: TRAVERSING TIME AND MAGIC IN THE PRINCESS BRIDE

Figure 2: map from *The Princess Bride*

William Goldman's *The Princess Bride* is another classic novel in YA literature, but the movie adaption brought it to fame. This well-known story and the intriguing setting of this novel, which will be discussed below, make it an interesting fictional landscape to explore. However, this land is a bit different from Wonderland. Wonderland starts in a real place, Oxfordshire England and Alice travels to Wonderland by falling down a rabbit hole. Our reality and Wonderland are tied and exist together. The world that *The Princess Bride* is a completely fictional place, however, it is supposed to be set in our world "between where Sweden and Germany would eventually settle. (This was before Europe)" (Goldman 45). There are also

several references to other real places and things; for example, the first chapter begins, “the year that Buttercup was born, the most beautiful woman in the world was a French scullery maid named Annette” (Goldman 39). In addition to Anette’s character, here are some other references to characters being from other parts of Europe: Inigo Montoya who is from Spain; Fezzik who is from Turkey; and Vizzini who is from Sicily.

The Princess Bride comes with a map at the front of the book, something that is becoming more and more common in fantasy books although “the earliest ‘literary’ maps presented a world centered on the biblical birthplace of humanity: the garden of Eden” (Lewis-Jones 42). Figure 2 is a photo of the map in *The Princess Bride*. Of the numerous and varied elements of world building, “one important consideration is a map. You’ve gone to all the effort to develop a world full of interesting races, kingdoms, and amazing geographical features...a map can go a long way towards impressing the reader and helping them become immersed in your story” (Harrington 89). Maps are especially helpful if the characters are on a journey, which is true for *The Princess Bride*. The map becomes a visual way for the reader to follow the story and places that the character travels to while also bringing to life a story by giving readers something tangible to hold on to. Maps are fun and it can be exciting and more interactive for readers to have a map to look at while reading along with a novel. This can make the story feel more real.

Looking closely at the map in *The Princess Bride*, there are landmarks of many of the major scenes from the story and “many literary maps achieve their effects not by the usual conventional cartographic signs and symbols, but by pictorial embellishments and helpful notes and rubrics” (Lewis-Jones 68). For example, the duel between Inigo Montoya and the man in black (Wesley), the picnic with Vizzini and the man in black (Wesley), and the Ravine where Wesley and Buttercup run to escape Prince Humperdinck are not places, but scenes from the

novel which literally map out the plot of the story. This gives readers a visual to help follow along with the story and what is happening. It is especially useful for scenes where the proximity of various locations matters. For example, when Prince Humperdinck is tracking down Wesley who has “kidnapped” Buttercup, the two first catch sight of the prince and his armada in the waters of Florin Channel. Taking a look at figure 2, the approximate location of the armada in comparison to Wesley and Buttercup running along the edge of the ravine can be seen and help readers see what Wesley and Buttercup see in the novel. The map also includes Miracle Max’s hut where Inigo Montoya and Fezzik get a resurrection pill to revive Wesley from the dead as well as the Wheelbarrow which was instrumental in the ploy to get into the castle to save Buttercup from marrying Prince Humperdinck. This map is specific to the plot of the story and guides readers through a visual of the various characters’ journeys and can make a novel more engaging and interesting to readers as well.

As with *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, the environment is also important. In Mark Nelson’s *Fantasy World-Building: A Guide to Developing Mythic Worlds and Legendary Creatures*, he notes that details like “weather and seasons will affect your work” (Nelson 26). In *The Princess Bride*, there are several scenes where the environment is tied to the plot of the story. The first major example in the novel is the Cliffs of Insanity. Fezzik hauled Buttercup, Inigo Montoya, and Vizzini up the Cliffs by rope to prevent anyone from following them. However, “the man in black (Wesley) began to climb. Not quickly, of course. And not without great effort. But still there was no doubt that he was, in spite of the sheerness of the Cliffs, heading in an upward direction” (Goldman 117). The Cliffs are strategically used by Vizzini in his plan to kidnap Buttercup, but the man in black (Wesley) overcomes this obstacle to get to her. Another example is when Wesley and Buttercup must cross through the Fire Swamp. The environment is

treacherous, and the creatures are terrifying. This creates an environmental challenge that Wesley skillfully travels through and manages to get Buttercup through without any harm. It is also most notably one of the most diverse locations in the story. There are giant rodents, snow sand, and geysers of flame that burst from the ground. Interestingly enough, the Fire Swamp is one of the few locations that makes the land of Florin and the universe of *The Princess Bride* feel different from our world and it is harder to imagine that this scene takes place somewhere in Europe.

Language is another key world building element in *The Princess Bride*. While it is not a major element, the small details like the “R.O.U.S. (Rodents of Unusual Size); frog dust; holocaust mud; and resurrection pill” add to the believability of this fictional land and its originality (Goldman 213, 319, 320). These terms come from words that exist in the English, however, they are names for items that do not actually exist. As the location of Florin is in Europe, using real English words to name objects specific to the land of Florin makes the most sense. These names still fit with the aesthetic of the land of Florin while also providing a distinct, magical element to the story just as the Fire Swamp does with the environmental element of world building. These details help label the universe of *The Princess Bride* and land of Florin as fictional while still keeping it close to our world since Goldman wants readers to believe it is an actual place that exists or existed at some point in Europe.

Some may believe that an entirely new language must be constructed to have the most impact on a novel, however, not all novels need a fully developed new language to be effective. *The Princess Bride* follows many traditional ideas from the time period it was written in and is more conventional in the way. For a novel that is set in an unfamiliar setting with characters that are not human and may not be able to make the same noises that humans can, an invented language complete with a new grammar structure and writing system may be more useful. In an

interview, Jessica Sams, a linguistics professor at Stephen F. Austin State University, gives this example, “one of my students developed a language for creatures living so far underwater that sound wouldn’t carry, and so she built that into her speakers world-they spoke through a sort of touch telepathy” (Condis 155). An entirely new language is not necessary however for most novels and their universe, but in exceptional cases like the example from Condis, it can be vital to the world building aspect. If an entire language is added and not necessary, this can hinder the reader’s experience and cause confusion more than anything else. If *The Princess Bride* contained entire lines in a constructed language made by Goldman, this may throw off readers and discourage them from finishing the novel. Unless important to the plot or if the novel is more focused on world building, a fully constructed language can hurt a novel more than help it.

As with *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, traditions and culture are central elements in *The Princess Bride* that help to drive the plot and characters in the story. It is clear from the start of the novel that the land of Florin is governed by a monarchy and Prince Humperdinck is the true wielder of power in the monarchical government. Of course, Prince Humperdinck is also the villain of the story and is the driving force behind the plot. Wesley wants to free Buttercup from her engagement to Prince Humperdinck, Prince Humperdinck will do anything to prevent this and keep Buttercup. The traditions and culture are helping to shape the land of Florin, but also the plot of the novel. The monarchical governing system is also important in helping to make the land of Florin seem as if it is actually a city in Europe as most countries in Europe have monarchical governments. In addition, the weaponry in this novel is indicative of the era and time the story is supposed to be set in. There is no highly advanced technology or guns in the novel and swords are showcased as the main weapon of choice. This is clear with the one-on-one sword fighting duels between Inigo Montoya and Wesley at the Cliffs of Insanity, when

Montoya fights six-fingered Count Rugen in the castle, and several other scenes in Montoya's backstory. This tells the reader about the time period and their advancements or lack of advancements in technology. If there had been guns in this land or if they had been common, the characters would most likely use guns since they are generally more effective than swords. This may not seem like an important detail, but it tells us much about the setting and world of the story, as well as the culture. One of the most interesting devices in the novel is the Machine, which is a torture device that kills Wesley, before he is resurrected that is. The Machine seems very ancient in appearance with its "little soft rimmed cups of various sizes and a wheel, most likely, and another object that could turn out to be either a lever or a stick" (Goldman 258). However, the function of the Machine is actually quite advanced as it is so painful that it can take years off of someone's life and kill them, something that does not exist in our reality, even with today's technology. This illustrates a strange dynamic between our world and the fictional land of Florin, just as many of the other world building elements seem to do, blurring the lines between what is fiction and what is real as well.

As stated above, many of the traditions and cultures in *The Princess Bride* already exist and are modeled off of our world as it is supposed to be set in Europe. Marriage is one example, and the power of a monarchy is another, which can also be seen in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Marriage and a monarchy in the land of Florin still have the same function as they do in our world. There are older traditions as well that used to be practiced but are not as common in the twenty-first century. For example, Magic Max is a miracle man which was more common before there was much widespread knowledge about medicine or the sciences. This is an interesting tradition because Magic Max can create potions and pills that actually work to do the impossible like resurrect the dead, as he does with Wesley. This is another instance, as with

the Fire Swamp, where the believability of Florin as a real city in Europe wavers and readers question this. Resurrection pills do not exist, and people cannot be raised from the dead in our reality, however, in the universe of *The Princess Bride*, they can be. This is taken as fact and not questioned, but rather expected by the characters in the novel, marking it as a fictional place.

Another example of traditions and culture modeled off of our world is Prince Humperdinck's zoo of death. This is not a realistic concept. However, zoos are common in our world, and historically, princes inherited much power at birth. Goldman takes these existing ideas and makes them his own so that in this imagined universe, Prince Humperdinck has the power to create a zoo of death. The zoo of death is located beneath the castle in Florin and consists of five levels, the first containing the least dangerous animals and as the levels descended, the animals became more dangerous. It also contains an arena where Prince Humperdinck fought the various animals that he kept in the zoo as a form of entertainment for himself. He was able to do this because of his status as prince and because that is part of the city that Goldman has created. Logically, a zoo of death would be hard for anyone to hide, especially during this day in age, but it is not questioned by characters in the book and so it is not questioned by the reader. Similarly, the resurrection pill is not questioned by Fezzik and Inigo Montoya. Because Florin is modeled off real traditions, it is uncannily similar to our world and in some ways, it seems to be a variation of it. Goldman takes inspiration from things he knows as a part of our reality and then applies them in new ways to the universe of *The Princess Bride*. This accomplishes Goldman's goal to make it seem as if Florin is a place in Europe that actually exists while also distinguishing it in other ways that lets the reader know that it is fiction. This is also an example of how different the world building process can be, depending on what the author wants the purpose of their world to be.

CHAPTER III: DANGERS AND DESERTS OF THE SUN KINGDOM



Figure 3: map of the Sun Kingdom's continent

After a close analysis of the various world building techniques used in the classic novels, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Princess Bride*, these techniques can now be applied and understood in reference to my own fantasy YA novel, *The Sun Kingdom* (Chapter one of *The Sun Kingdom* can be found on page 35).

Starting with geography, I have digitally drawn up a map for the entire continent that the Sun Kingdom is a part of, using Krita, a free, open-source painting program that is similar to Adobe photoshop (figure 3, pg. 15). I chose to create a map of the entire continent because this is essential in helping readers understand some of the political problems caused by geographical location later on in the novel and help provide the reader with a visual. I have also created a map for the Sun Kingdom through a fantasy map generator, Watabou, (figure 4, pg. 26). The kingdom layout could be helpful for readers as the main character journeys through much of the kingdom

doing various tasks. The figure 4 map of the kingdom also has landmarks of locations that are pertinent in the story as well. Having landmarks with ties directly to the characters and the story are paramount as “feelings and ideas concerning space and place are extremely complex in the adult human being. They grow out of life’s unique and shared experiences” (Tuan 79).

Landmarks that are tied to experiences that the characters have are more meaningful than parts of the city the characters never visit.

It is also important to note the names on the map in figure 3 as “naming consistency can really help a map take shape. For example, a map with town names like Stronghold, Nine Towers, and Ravenfort conveys a certain feeling. By adding a name like Dazerinnollis, this consistency is suddenly off balance. However, Dazerinnollis could still work, if it is used to name a different civilization, thereby establishing another layer of naming consistency” (Jones 10). In the map in figure 3, all of the different regions, although relatively consistent in naming style, are different types of countries. For example, there is the Sun Kingdom, then the Katuan Empire, the Sazoan Coast, Torm Republic, Ilara, and Galu with varying types of governing systems implied by their names.

A constructed language is also vital for this novel as it is not set or connected in any way to our world like the other two novels, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *The Princess Bride*. *The Sun Kingdom* is set in its own universe, totally separate from our world and so giving the Sun Kingdom a partially constructed language helps to distinguish this idea and differentiate the kingdom as distinctively its own. The language I have constructed for the Sun Kingdom is Sunski. This does not mean that the kingdom is not inspired by existing ideas for example, the government system that is in place in the Sun Kingdom is a monarchy and much of the

architecture and culture are inspired by the ancient Romans while the constructed language is based on Basque, a language spoken in a northern region of Spain called Basque.

In *The Sun Kingdom*, an extensive list of words has been constructed to give the kingdom a unique feel. Most likely, a vocabulary list will be provided at the back of the novel if ever published for readers to reference. There are words from the vocab list used in the novel, on average, every couple of pages. The list is still growing, but below is a sample of what that list would look like:

- Aljina: long pleated dress
- Eztrao: the black market area of the kingdom
- Gamise: men's nightwear
- Gamusk: large rideable lizards
- Gamurra: smaller lizard the size of a dog used as pets, usually for wealthier noblezes
- Gineko: women's nightgown
- Gozka buns: sweet rolls that the Sun Kingdom is known for
- Inkoa: God
- Kalaria: gladiator
- Kotasun: a deadly flower whose pollen can kill you, named for its toxicity
- Koena: a term of endearment like darling
- Lapura: scarf to protect neck and face from sand
- Mozkea: sword
- Mozkurra: knife
- Noblez/Nobleza: male and female nobles' titles

- Horae: sand
- Horakaitz: sandstorm
- Orie: toga
- Sugederra: a highly intelligent snake people race
- Zindari: the royal guard

Taking a closer look at the words in this list, a couple patterns can be seen. For example, the use of ‘z’ next to letters like ‘t’ and ‘k’ create a visual pattern that ties the words together, along with the double ‘r’. There are also several similar words like “mozkea” which means sword and “mozkurra” which means knife. They are similar because they might more roughly translate as long blade and short blade from Sunski. Another set of similar words is “horae” which means sand and “horakaitz,” which means sandstorm. The first part of the word, hora- is from horae, sand, and the second part, -kaitz, means storm. Put together they make sandstorm. All of these small details help to construct a cohesive and consistent language. This is key in creating a believable world and even if writers do not want to construct a new language, it is the same concept for naming towns and cities from the same region. However, it takes time to do this so it is necessary for a writer to weigh the benefits of a more complete language against the time investment. For example, this vocabulary was created as I wrote the novel, which has taken several years and is still incomplete, but it is a key part of what makes *The Sun Kingdom* unique.

It is clear that traditions and culture play an important role in the plot of the story. Interestingly enough, both Wonderland and the land of Florin are set in lands governed by monarchies and the Sun Kingdom is also governed by a monarchy. In *The Sun Kingdom*, the monarchy, similar to *The Princess Bride*, is the main source of conflict in the story and propels much of the rising action of the plot. To provide some context, *The Sun Kingdom* is about an

orphan thief named Ghost who works for the Iluntze Itzal, the most feared and dangerous merchant in the black markets of the Sun Kingdom which has been at peace for centuries due to the fact that it is located in the middle of the desert. However, when Ghost witnesses a suspicious meeting between the Queen of the Sun Kingdom and one of the most notorious black market foreign trade dealers, she becomes roped into the political warfare of the Sun Kingdom court and finds that not all is as peaceful as it seems. Ghost is recruited by both the Queen and the Iluntze Itzal to come to the royal court as a spy. The Queen wants to know who her enemies are, although there is more to it that she is not telling. The Iluntze Itzal wants revenge on the royal family. The power dynamic of the royal family and the black market come to a head in this novel as Ghost must work for both sides and figure out who she can trust and more importantly, decide what she really wants. It is clear that *The Sun Kingdom's* plot is driven by the environment and the world building that is created to bring the story to life. In addition, traditions and culture play a major role in the novel as Ghost has lived on the street most of her life, she must learn the rules and manners of the royal court lest someone see her for who she truly is, a thief and an orphan who does not belong in the palace.

Clothing is also very important to the culture of the Sun Kingdom. Clothing marks one's social and economic status because the rich can afford to spend more on clothes while the poor do not have that luxury. Sandal straps are a big indicator of wealth. All citizens wear sandals, but the longer the straps of the sandals are and the more times the straps are wrapped around the ankles and calves, the wealthier that person is. The nobles and royals also wear jewelry and colorfully dyed clothing, while the poor wear plain clothes and cannot afford jewelry. This is a visual way of showing the difference in hierarchy between people living in the Sun Kingdom. It

is also a great way to provide details and information about characters without stating it, showing instead of telling.

However, much of the world building that is done often does not make it into the novel. This doesn't mean that the unseen effort that an author puts into the creation of their fictional universe should be done sloppily or not at all though, because it is crucial for the writer to know to make the world and its characters realistic and believable. If the author does not know what kind of clothes most people wear or what food is popular for breakfast, it is hard to envision the scenes, or the environment and their writing will not be as vivid or alive.

CONCLUSION

In world building, there is no one size fits all. Every novel is different and has different needs. For example, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is much different and also much older than *The Princess Bride* or *The Sun Kingdom*. In contrast, *The Sun Kingdom* is far more modern than *The Princess Bride* or *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The different aesthetics and characteristics of each book demonstrates how varied their individual needs and focuses are. Each novel contains similarities in the basic elements, geography, language, and traditions and culture that contribute to their constructed fictional universe, however many similarities end there.

In terms of the geographical element, not all novels benefit from having a constructed language or a map. For example, in *The Sun Kingdom*, the map I created is on a wide scale to show the different kingdoms and their proximity and size as well as natural resources e.g., mountains, sea, rivers. This works well for my story because there is much political strife that is the cause of many of the problems and tension in the novel. However, *The Princess Bride* has a map of the kingdom that the story is set in with landmarks of the various places that the characters travel through. The map is more detailed and smaller scale which fits the purpose of the story better. Wonderland on the other hand, has no map at all although there are illustrations. There may be a couple reasons why this is. One, maps in books were not as common when *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was written. Wonderland is also a very chaotic, confusing world that is hard to make sense of physically. While researching maps of Wonderland, vastly different fan versions appeared and while many had similar landmarks, these landmarks were rarely in the similar places on the map. It may have been too difficult to draw out a concise map

that incorporated everything in Wonderland and doing so might have worked against the story and dispelled the whimsical feel of Wonderland.

In addition, the level of detail of a map or a language may vary depending on its usefulness. With constructed languages, the same is true. Some authors only go as far as giving a city or river a made-up name while “others take a more ambitious route...these invented languages are more than lists of made up words. They require structure and grammar and the development of new writing systems” (Condis 151). These are only extremes, and a novel can fall anywhere on the scale. *The Sun Kingdom*, for example, falls somewhere in the middle. There are made up words for certain objects, creatures, sayings, names, and places, however, it could not be considered a fully constructed language. There is no grammar structure and no way to translate a full sentence to Sunski. *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* barely have any invented words with the exception of The Jabberwocky poem and the creative liberty taken on by Tim Burton in the movie adaptation. *The Princess Bride* similarly has very few instances of invented words, however, there are places and items that are specific to the land and that have their own unique name. Novels like these do not need an entire language constructed for their world and those that do are often larger works with multiple novels in a series. They also tend to be more focused on building the imagined landscape and interacting with and exploring the world. In this way, a constructed language becomes more essential to the construction of a fictional universe because there is more focus and emphasis on it in the story.

The element of creating traditions and culture in world building is necessary in all worlds. Whether the traditions and culture are very different or directly based on real traditions and culture that already exist, they are integral to building because “codes, beliefs, and values form a culture’s inner spirit” (Nelson 81). It is interesting to note that all three novels examined

in this thesis, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Princess Bride*, and *The Sun Kingdom*, have taken inspiration from real traditions and cultures and applied them to their own respective fictional landscapes in different ways. With *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the Queen of Hearts, as a queen, has soldiers and guards, but to fit the world of Wonderland, these soldiers and guards are literal playing cards, spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs. In *The Princess Bride*, the differences between our reality and the fictional world are less easily seen. This is because Goldman wants the setting to seem as if it could be a real country in Europe. Despite this fact, *The Princess Bride* is still a fictional place and its semi realistic nature acts as a characteristic that helps define the imagined landscape of Florin. However, unlike *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, this characteristic is meant to liken Florin to our world rather than distinguish it. This shows how the process of creating a fictional world can be for different authors and worlds depending on what the author is trying to accomplish.

World building is comprised of many different elements and techniques, but all are interconnected with one another. For example, the naming of geographical places bleeds into the language element of constructed universes while language can be tied to traditions and culture through distinct greetings or world specific sayings. Many traditions and cultures are tied to the geography and landscape, the environment shaping the food, culture, and lifestyle of the world. Each element builds off the other and is invariably interwoven together like our own society that we live in. When taking a step back to look at the whole picture, the connections between these elements can be seen and taking an even further step back, a cohesive and believable universe is revealed.

However, it should be noted that not every technique or application of a world building element is the same in every novel. In the three novels, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The*

Princess Bride, and *The Sun Kingdom*, geography, language, and traditions and culture play roles of varying importance in each novel. While all novels contain some component of all of these elements, for each novel some elements may hold more importance than others. In *The Sun Kingdom*, language is one of the more important elements of the world and its construction; in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, traditions and culture are the key element of the fictional landscape that define the universe of Wonderland the most; in *The Princess Bride*, a map at the beginning of the novel makes geography one of the more prevalent elements in the creation of its fictional land. By now, it is clear that there is much unseen work and effort that goes into constructing a fictional universe and that there are many elements and sub elements to building a fictional world. In the end, it depends on what the author wants to create and the goals and purpose behind their fictional landscape that determine what world building elements may prove to be the most fundamental.

CHAPTER I: THE SUN KINGDOM



Figure 4: map of the Sun Kingdom

by Claire Webb

The wind blew violently, stirring up sand and dust, and I pulled my lapura, a long scarf, more tightly over my face. The thin cloth tightened around my neck, but at this point, I didn't care. The narrow streets were empty, everyone already taking shelter inside. The low-roof buildings, all that same gray-yellow color as the rest of the desert, did little to protect against the storm coming in. My aljina, a pleated dress, only protected my torso, but my arms and legs were pelted by little grains of sand.

Off to the east, a plume of sand illuminated by the rising sun grew closer and closer, its dark form building with every moment that passed. I pulled myself up to the flat roof of a store building, exposing myself to the full force of the wind, but then I darted through the second story window of an abandoned warehouse, the tallest building in the area, and was inside. Out of danger, I remembered to check my pocket for the ruby bracelet I'd snatched off a rather wealthy looking nobleza's wrist earlier at the East Market. My heart stuttered as I realized it was gone. It must've fallen out on my run back home, but it was too late to go back for it now. The storm was settling in, sand pelting loudly against the glass, obscuring the window's view.

I pulled off my satchel and unlaced my ratty sandals, kicking them from my feet to walk barefoot on the cool stone floor. Unwrapping my lapura from my face and neck, I used it to wipe the sweat from my skin before taking a sip from my flask. I wanted to drink the whole thing right then and there, but I refrained. This old warehouse used to have running water, but it got cut off a long time ago. The only water access I had was the community well in Eztrao, which wasn't that great to begin with. Besides, it was too dangerous to go out now.

I was eating my last piece of bread when I heard a noise from the first floor. It was this shuffling sort of sound, and I thought it must be a rat, but I got up to check it out anyways. I never went down to the first floor. It was dark because the windows were boarded up and even darker because although the sun had surely risen by now, the storm was so thick, barely any light came through. I walked down the stairs slowly, careful not to dislodge a loose stone. When I made it to the bottom, I didn't see anything at first. My eyes adjusted just in time to see a figure lurch at me, I jumped back pulling my knife out of the sheath on my thigh, the blade glinting in the half-light. They stopped short, putting their hands up.

“Ghost, it’s me. Suzkoba.” Her voice echoed in the empty warehouse and I let myself relax, resheathing my knife. I’d met Suzki right after I’d started living on the streets and we’d made a pact long ago to always be there for one another.

“Suzki, what in Inkoa’s name are you doing? I was about to stab you.” I headed back up to the second floor and Suzki followed. I knew she was grinning even though my back was turned to her.

“I knew you were camping out here for a while and that storm rolled in so suddenly, this was the closest place I could get to. Hey, you got any food?” She bound up the last few steps to catch up to me and I sighed. I pulled the last bit of cheese out of my satchel and handed it to her.

“Here. Eat it...” I started, but she shoved it in her mouth in one bite, “...slowly.”

“Thanks Ghost, I owe you.” She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. I rolled my eyes in mock irritation, but I knew her word was good and she’d repay me however she could. She sat down on the pile of rags that served as my bed. “Come here and sit with me. The storm won’t be passing any time soon.”

“How would you know?” I asked, glancing out at the window. Nothing seemed to have changed and there was no indication of it worsening or lightening up. Suzki shrugged as I sat down beside her.

“What do you think they’ll do about the coronation?” She asked, turning to look at me. Up close, I could see that her cheeks were sunken in and her skin was taut and pale, not the healthy, rich caramel color I was used to. Even her thick, dark hair was beginning to thin.

“I don’t know. It’s not like they can control the weather.”

“You know some say they can.”

“I think that’s a load of gamusk dung.” I scoffed.

“I don’t know.” Suzki sounded wistful as she said this and for a moment, I wanted to believe her, but I couldn’t. They say humans used to have magic, but they ended up using it selfishly, so Inkoa took it away from us. If King Zaron and the royal family did have magic, they surely wouldn’t let all of these people in Eztrao and lower Telfair starve. Suzki curled up against my side and fell asleep quickly, reminding me of the little dog my family used to have. I felt a pang of worry gnaw at me when I realized I could see her ribs poking through her tattered aljina. I should’ve been keeping up with her more. I fell asleep to the sound of the sand raining down on us.

It was dark and raining. I stood at the threshold of the door, staring back at Mother who looked like a goddess. Her back was lit by the candles in the hall, casting her shadow out onto the sand outside. I shouldn’t have been able to see her features clearly, but I saw her eyes, that strong hazel-green color I’d always wished I’d inherited. They seemed to glow as Mother gripped my shoulders, her fingers digging almost painfully into my arms.

“Ghost, sweetheart, go quickly before it’s too late.” Mother whispered. She pulled me close, “I love you. Never forget that.” Then she pushed me out of the only home I’d ever known. I ran as Mother told me to do, but I couldn’t help but look back. Father stood between the bandits and Mother. I could hear him try to talk his way out, his voice low and clear, but they didn’t listen. I was forced to turn back around when I tripped and fell. Wet sand splattered across my face, grit finding it’s way into my mouth and that’s when I heard it, two shots, one after the other. There was a moment of silence, then... men’s voices, gruff and deep.

“Find the girl, we can’t let her escape!” I laid behind the small sand dunes behind our house, quiet. It was dark, but I didn’t dare to stand up. I crawled the rest of the way to the

stables. I stood up when I'd made it to Moon and mounted her quickly, the gamusk's scaly tail flicking impatiently. She bolted out of the stables, sensing my fear, moving in that strange side to side motion only lizards seem to do. The men heard us and started to shoot. My heart beat erratically and my head spun and-

I woke up with a jerk, sweating and panting. Suzki was asleep beside me, but my nightmare didn't seem to wake her. I took a deep breath. The details of my dream were already fading and though it seemed as if there was something important about it, I couldn't place my finger on what it was. It was just a nightmare, that's all. I shook my head as if to clear it and looked outside. It was night now. We must have slept through the whole day. I could hardly see anything outside, but I knew the storm was still going because I could hear the sand beating rhythmically against the windows.

Suzki shifted in her sleep, mumbling something about gozka buns. The thought of the sweet, sticky pastry made my mouth water. I lifted my flask to my mouth, hoping the water would stave off some of my hunger, but it was empty. I checked Suzki's flask and found it empty too. Suzki must've drunk the last of it while I was asleep. I wanted to be mad at her, she knew better than to drink the last of the water in the middle of a storm, but I couldn't find it in me.

I got up off the floor and put my sandals back on, wrapping them once around my ankles. I put on my lapura next, careful to wrap it tightly, so it won't blow away. I loaded my satchel with both of our flasks and walked silently to the first floor, finding the place where Suzki squeezed inside. All the doors and windows were boarded up on the first floor, but there was a small opening in the wall, just big enough for Suzki, who's much smaller than me, to slip through. I considered going out the window upstairs, but the wind was too strong. It whistled and

howled through the thin gap like a hungry beast, raising the hairs on my arms. I'd be blown away before I took two steps.

I shoved my shoulders between the rough stone and pulled the rest of my body through. I came out between the warehouse and shop building, sheltered for the most part by three walls, sand and dirt whipping at the mouth of the alley. Bracing myself, I stepped out into the storm, trying to ignore the sting of sand against my skin. The sky was a dark brown, almost red color, probably from the red sand that covers the desert in the east. Although it was really too dark to see, I knew the streets of Telfair and Eztrao well and could navigate them, light or no light.

I made my way to the nearest tunnel entrance, a gated entryway to steps that led down to the old catacombs beneath the kingdom. I picked the lock as quickly as I could, pulling open the gate and descending into darkness. I could get to the well to fill our flasks and be back before morning. Maybe the storm would lift a little and I could grab some food as well.

I counted the steps as I went and knew I was at the bottom when I reached the hundredth step. I ran my hand along the wall until I felt cold metal, a bracket that held the torch I'd left from last time I'd been down here. I dug through my satchel by touch until I found some steel that I'd traded for a rather valuable bear fur lapura, at the bottom. I picked up the torch and held it close to the wall, scraping the steel next to it to create a spark. It lit easily, revealing the sandy colored limestone that the Sun Kingdom was known for. I ran my hands along the rough stone as I continued further into the tunnels, following the little waves I'd etched into the limestone.

The ceiling in this part of the catacombs was low and the floor was sandy. Further in however, I started to see bones in the walls and on the floors. There was a femur here and skull there. A few finger bones littered the floor, gradually accumulating the farther I went. It was cold

down here too and I wish I'd grabbed my cloak, but Suzki had been sleeping on it and I hadn't wanted to wake her.

The walk was long, my sandals shuffling against the stone, occasionally crunching on a bone or two. I was only halfway there, evident by the fact that the walls were now packed with bones, when I heard voices echoing down a passage to my right. Although most were creeped out by the skeletons, I wasn't the only one who picked the lock to use these tunnels, especially during storms and so I almost walked on. Then, I heard one of the voices say, "Your majesty." After a moment of hesitation, I snuffed out my torch and moved towards the voices, careful to walk quietly, stepping in the spots on the floor that were free of bones so as not to alert them of my presence.

At the next intersecting tunnel, I peered around the corner and saw two people in hooded cloaks, their torch casting long shadows. They were talking in low voices, but the high ceilings amplified their conversation.

"No, I'm not going to do that." One of them, a woman, said calmly. Her companion on the other hand was furious.

"You made a deal with me!" The man growled dangerously. I recognized his voice immediately. An unpleasant man named Zugari that I'd worked with a few times to get some information.

"Lower your voice. I will not be talked to this way." The woman said with a hiss, her calm demeanor cracking just a bit. The man huffed, but lowered his voice.

"Out here the rules are different, you're not in your palace-"

“Quiet fool. What if there’s someone down here with us?” The woman interrupted him and I frowned. Palace? “I just need my order within the week. Two days from now, our new spot. Same time.”

“Fine, but my boss is counting on me and he needs his payment before I can provide your order.” Zugari said, and I heard the woman scoff.

“Your boss is the least of my concern. I will pay once my order has been delivered to me.”

“Well, my apologies, but your request is impossible. Someone found out where the order was being delivered and sabotaged a large majority of the goods.”

“Then deliver my order as soon as it comes in, don’t bother bringing it to your special warehouse. Until then, no payment.”

“I’ll tell my boss, but he won’t be happy.” Zugari warned.

“Tell him what you want. That’s none of my concern. I just need my order. I’m running out of time. I can’t stall this forever.” The woman stalked away, right past the tunnel I was watching them from. Heart racing, I pressed my back against the wall, bones poking into my back as I held my breath, hiding in a shallow alcove. Thank Inkoa the woman walked right on by.

When she passed, the torch illuminated her face, and I recognized her as the queen. I had to cover my mouth to keep from gasping. Her features were sharp and elegant, but her green eyes, a rare phenomenon in this region, gave her away. She looked beautiful, but this close, I could also see the worry lines on her face that marked her forehead and set her frown. I stored away what I’d heard for later use. Perhaps the Iluntze Itzal would be interested in hearing it, for a price of course.

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Martin Gardner was a writer of popular science and mathematics. He was also particularly interested in Lewis Carroll, L. Frank Baum, and G. K. Chesterton and their works and has written several books on Carroll's works. Gardner annotates *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* and compiles images and drawings from both novels. The annotations are particularly useful for the analysis of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and providing context and history for the novel.

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H.C. Harrington is the author of the fantasy series *Daughter of Havenglade* as well as the fantasy murder-myster *The Inquisitor*. Harrington explores the multiple facets

of world building in his handbook, bringing together the extensive research he has done on world building into one book. The chapters contain a wide range of information from broad themes like how to create a world, maps, infrastructure, language, and magic to more specific topics like food, clothing, armor, weapons, and fantastic beasts. Harrington provides writing tips throughout each chapter and many examples to demonstrate the concepts and ideas important for world building. This is a good book for general world building and learning about various techniques and important facets to world building.

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Wesley Jones is a professional cartographer with over a decade of mapping experience. He is also an artist, writer, and illustrator of children's books including *Taden Chesterfield* which was a Benjamin Franklin Digital Gold Honoree winner. Jones provides information on how maps and mapping fit into world building, fundamentals of geography and how the earth works, components of maps and how to compose a map, and more stylistic choices such as lettering, coloring, etc. This book is intended to help beginning map makers create and draw their own maps with detailed information on map components and composition as well as many examples to demonstrate his points.

Lewis-Jones, Huw. *The Writer's Map: An Atlas of Imaginary Lands*. University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Huw Lewis-Jones is an environmental historian, editor, broadcaster, and art director. He is the Senior Lecturer at Falmouth University, where he teaches his students about culture, history, conservation, and creativity. Lewis-Jones incorporates many different maps of various types like fantasy, sci-fi, adventure, literary classics, and comics, exploring the creation, inspiration, and impact of these maps. The book includes

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Megan Condis is an assistant professor of game studies at Texas Tech University with a PhD in English from the University of Illinois. She published a book, *Gaming Masculinity: Trolls, Fake Geeks, and the Gendered Battle for Online Culture*, in 2018 by the University of Iowa Press. In this article, Condis conducts an interview with Dr. Jessica Sams who teaches an advanced undergraduate course at Stephen F. Austin State University called “Invented Languages.” In the interview, Sams discusses the process of inventing a language, how it contributes to world building, and external impacts on the development of a language. This interview provides information on how to begin inventing a language, factors to take into consideration, and its importance.

Nelson, Mark A. *Fantasy World-Building: A Guide to Developing Mythic Worlds and Legendary Creatures*. Dover Publications, Inc., 2019.

Mark A. Nelson has taught art at Northern Illinois University, Madison Area Technical College and Savannah Art and Design and received his MFA from the University of Michigan. He was employed in the fantasy field with TRS, Wizards of the Coast, and World of Warcraft. He was art director and lead concept artist for video games at Pi Studios and senior concept artist at Raven Software. In his book, Nelson focuses on drawing for fantasy worlds. Many concepts of the book are focused around specific

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Yi-Fu Tuan was a professor of geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He was also named the Lauréat d'Honneur 2000 of the International Geographical Union. Tuan considers the relationship between people and space, how they think and feel about it and how attachments to home and place are formed. Tuan goes into depth about how feelings and ideas about space stem from experiences and how place is influenced by knowledge. He also emphasizes the relevance of objects and experiences and how they define space and place, reinforcing the idea that objects and environment are tied to feelings and experiences. Much of the book is philosophical and introspective, questioning human consciousness and awareness of space. There are many helpful pieces of information that can contribute to the ideas of world building, especially when creating places and locations.