

WORLDBUILDING SIMPLIFIED

Creating Cultures and Nations

Read more at Enter the Arcverse: www.enterthearcverse.com/worldbuilding.

Learn how to design compelling societies — traditions, beliefs, governments, conflicts — built with depth and personality.

Introduction: Why Build Cultures?

A world without cultures is just empty space.

Cultures give meaning to your world. They explain how people live, what they believe, what they fight for, and what they fear.

Whether you're creating a vast empire, an isolated tribe, or a secret underground society, a well-built culture will make your world feel **alive, layered, and unique.**

This guide isn't about writing a 10-page essay.

It's about finding the **core ideas** that give a culture personality — ideas you can build on as you play, write, or explore.

In just 5 simple steps, you'll create a culture or nation ready for your adventures. Let's begin.

Step 1: The Core Identity

 Ask:

“What defines this culture at its heart?”

Every culture values something above all else. This shapes their laws, heroes, stories, and conflicts.

Possible core values:

- Freedom
- Honor
- Survival
- Faith
- Knowledge
- Profit

- Unity
- Beauty

✔ Choose **one or two strong values** that influence everything.

Example:

The Skyborn Clans believe **freedom** is sacred. To them, even the gods cannot cage a person's will.

Step 2: One Big Tradition

👉 Ask:

“What’s a unique ritual, festival, or practice that defines them?”

Traditions tell us what a culture remembers, celebrates, or fears.

Examples:

- A night each year when no fires are allowed, honoring the long night of an old myth
- A ritual tattoo given at adulthood
- A harvest dance performed on rooftops
- Duel by storytelling instead of combat
- Naming newborns after celestial events

✔ This tradition **gives your culture texture and memorable flavor.**

Example:

The Riverfolk celebrate the “Turning of the Water” — an annual festival where families release paper boats carrying secrets they wish to forget.

Step 3: Source of Power

👉 Ask:

“Who holds real power here — and why?”

Power doesn't always sit on a throne. It could be held by priests, merchants, elders, or knowledge-keepers.

Options:

- Monarch
- Council
- Priesthood
- Merchant Guild
- Elders
- Secret Society
- Military Warlord
- Sorcerer's Circle

✔ This answer reveals **who makes decisions and how conflict might rise.**

Example:

In the Gilded Cities, the **Merchants' Consortium** holds power — trade routes are worth more than armies.

Step 4: A Deep Conflict

👉 Ask:

“What’s threatening this culture from within or beyond?”

Every society faces pressure: war, corruption, rebellion, decay, disaster.

Potential conflicts:

- A dying resource
- A political coup brewing
- An unsolvable prophecy
- An ancient rival returning
- A forbidden cult growing in secret
- Class tensions rising

✅ This conflict **generates story hooks and adventure fuel.**

Example:

The Starless Kingdom fears a prophecy: *“When the stars vanish, the blood of kings will drown the throne.”* Now, the stars are fading.

Step 5: Something Only They Know

👉 Ask:

“What secret knowledge or mystery does this culture hold?”

Secrets drive stories. They create intrigue, alliances, betrayal.

Examples:

- A hidden map
- A lost heir
- Forbidden magic
- The true history of a war
- A god’s resting place
- A machine no outsider understands

✅ This secret could protect them, doom them, or invite outside forces.

Example:

The Mooncallers hold a secret: the moon’s light is not natural — it’s powered by an ancient machine buried deep below the mountains.

✅ **You’ve Created a Culture!**

In just 5 steps, you now have:

- 🎯 A core identity
- 🎯 A defining tradition
- 🎯 A source of power
- 🎯 A deep conflict
- 🎯 A hidden secret

👉 These are **seeds for NPCs, politics, plots, alliances, betrayals, and adventures.**

Every culture adds depth to your world.

Create boldly. Tell better stories. Enter the Arcverse.

Explore more tools at www.enterthearcverse.com/worldbuilding

