

who could breathe underwater and they would likely have beliefs that mirror their people. This means that for the weresharks who are vicious and believe might makes right, they would want a being that is powerful and nearly unbeatable as their deity or divine figure. What I would think of is something more unbeatable, like the Kraken, Leviathan, or maybe even a Hydra. These are all beings capable of mass destruction that the weresharks would find liberating, whereas more peaceful individuals like mermaids, they might worship a being more like Moby Dick. This is a unique whale that in some versions is white with red eyes and aggressive to sailors. However, the spin that you could put on it is that maybe the whale is only defensive and it only attacks sailors when the ship gets too close to mermaid population. That way, it's not actually just an aggressive being, it just wants to defend and it gets aggressive when it needs to defend them specifically.

00;04;22;23 - 00;07;59;04

Tom

[TOM] Step two: who are they? Driving deeper into who they worship, this is where things could get a little bit tricky. You have to ask yourself - is this a god, goddess, mystical creature, item, or landmark? Let's continue with my previous thought about the elves. I think that they would either worship a god or goddess of nature, or alternatively worship the trees, or maybe one giant tree themselves. I personally am a fan of Norse mythology, so my mind went straight to the Tree of Yggdrasil. That's why in one of my universes called Salarra, I had the elves worship the Tree of Yggdrasil, which, as you could guess, is the most important tree in Norse mythology. I even took it one step further. I had these elves live on the tree and take care of their leaves and branches. They treated the fallen leaves, branches and apples as offerings from their deity, which would help supply and protect their people. See, in my universe, elves are renowned wood carvers and were the first to lead their way in the creation of wands as conduits and instruments for magic. They would use the branches to create magic conduits, which is the exterior wood of the wand that, after adding a magical core like the single tier of an elemental, it would make witches and warlocks able to cast magic without it rebounding the spell on the caster. The elves would then tend to the tree and its largely profitable golden apples accordingly. Whereas the tree's leaves were used to create special cloaks, robes, and clothing. Step three is morality. This would help explain what the group sees as good versus evil. If I were using the basis we set up so far, then maybe since the elves in my universe worship a tree, they would be against the use of fire for fear that it would harm their deity. In this case, morality and beliefs would have them identify fire as some type of evil or sin. Another interesting way you could use this is by changing their expectations of how to meet someone for the first time. This can heavily differ depending on what most people consider normal. Meeting someone for the first time for the elves might include some type of offering that ties into the great tree that they serve. For example, something like offering arcane hydor, which is actually spelled h-y-d-o-r. And for clarification, is the Greek way to say water. Perhaps this magical water is a sacred ritual for the elves. Alternatively, you could use a saying or phrase instead of an offering. For example, something around the nature of May the Tree of Yggdrasil light fill your home with a pleasant warmth, and its bark protect you from harm's way. This could be as vague or detailed as you decide, but I think short and sweet is always the way to go in worldbuilding. After all, there is always so much left to do and so little time.

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Tom

[TOM] Well, adventurer, I guess you have the lucky feet on your side, because the Ocean County Library offers a variety of different databases that can be useful for world building on our website, theoceancountylibrary.org. One database in particular that might assist those curious about creating a novel or world is called Udemy, and this is spelled u-d-e-m-y. This database is wonderful when it comes to learning, and has great courses for writers and people who want to catch an audience's attention. It has courses like Creative Writing, How to Write a Novel: the Full Course, and Creative Writing Masterclass. Start writing your own stories. Or if you're focusing on storytelling and not specifically the writing, there is a course called the Story Course: Storytelling Masterclass, and that's just the tip of the iceberg, because there are over 7,000 various fascinating courses. Now, adventurers, grab your anvil and hammer, because it's time to return to forging your imagination. [TOM] Step four: rules. After you figure out what is considered good versus evil, as well as what their expectations are for what behaviors are considered proper and improper, you can next begin to build upon their general rules. Some of these rules can easily be created using what we learned from what they consider good versus evil. For example, I could build upon the dislike and distrust the elves have for fire and create a rule that no open flames are allowed within the presence of their ancient tree, Yggdrasil. Or perhaps another rule has been created by their distrust of other groups of people. Maybe they don't believe that the humans will honor their beliefs and properly take care of and revere the tree, so they keep them from walking upon its branches and their cities that have been built upon the tree. Using the layout of the elves and their beliefs allow us to create specific rules that could either protect or harm their people. After all, not all rules are considered a positive mechanism. History shows time and time again that we'll have to correct the mistakes and injustices of the past. So having a rule or two that should be changed or removed reveals a deeper and more humanistic, unique approach when worldbuilding.

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Tom

[TOM] Step five would be hierarchy. It's always possible that a belief system has multiple steps towards moving up in its churches or orders. This part is always a little bit more difficult if you want to make it more realistic, because usually this means that not only are the titles required, but also descriptions of what the titles entail. For example, there maybe are steps to advancing your faith. The first step might be a devoted follower, then a priest, then a Templar, and then maybe at the top, a minister or a champion chosen by the tree itself. The cool thing is that you could really decide whatever you want the ranking and titles to be. It doesn't have to correlate to reality and their descriptions if you don't want it to. Your ranks could be something that correlates to the person or object of worship. For example, if I wanted the tree's ranks, maybe I'd make it the life cycle of the tree itself so I could start off the title as a seed and then move to seedling, then sprout, then sapling, then tree, and the final honored rank could be something mystical, something special like ancient ent. There could also be ways to speak to higher up members by using honorifics or specific phrases like saying, "by Yggdrasil's roots" to bless them before or after a conversation. This will help it seem more realistic and draw parallels from our own experiences in the real world.

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Tom

[TOM] Step six: special events. Building upon a fictional belief system can be a difficult thing to manage. I personally like to insert worldbuilding with casual elements that make the audience aware of their

culture and its beliefs, without forcing it. A good way of doing something like this is with a fun special event or holiday. For example, in my universe, Salarra, we know that the elves worship the tree of Yggdrasil. So naturally, I worked on a holiday for their people that I have named The Twilight of Fallen Petals. This national holiday celebrates the harvest of the fallen leaves and branches of Yggdrasil. The elves count it as their object of worship, Yggdrasil itself, providing wealth and prosperity to the elves and the magical community, because they use that wood to craft wands and the leaves of the tree to fashion it into cloaks. This holiday is often seen more of an elven run tradition by the elves that live on Yggdrasil. However, many other groups of people come in to appreciate the beauty of the holiday and the fluctuation of new goods on the market. See, the elves began to make it more of a huge festival where they would woodcarve wands, staff canes in front of a crowd of interested onlookers. This way, they could take popular on demand orders and tailor the experience to fit the general magical population. Side note to keep in mind when it comes to creating special events, I would urge you to include a date. It's always good to add a date or relative time for events so that you could spread them out over the year. For example, the event The Twilight of Fallen Petals I created is typically a week long event that takes place during the second week of October. This way, it doesn't conflict with other holidays I've created and spread out, which take place in January, April, June, August, and November.

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Tom

[TOM] The seventh and last step that I have is current beliefs. This is where you could add information about the current leader's beliefs. Maybe the current leader of the elves had something that happened in their past where someone stole something important to them. This would have made the elves have a stronger than normal distrust and dislike towards any people who were labeled as thieves. Maybe this is why a strict rule about thievery appeared. And now people who thief and steal are treated at the same level of actual criminals. Or perhaps the leader of this order is new. Using this element, you could remove unjust rules or overrule decisions that the previous leader had put into effect. The current beliefs of the people are allowed to shift with the times and so can their leaders. And this is what makes it more realistic. Although that's all I have for today, but I would be ecstatic if you could join me in the next episode, which will cover how to create an administration.

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Voiceover

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