

## Collective Visionary Fiction Writing Worksheet

*Visionary Fiction: Fantastical fiction that has an explicit intention for visioning beyond the current world, challenging mainstream power dynamics and ideals, and dreaming new just worlds.*

**Main Issue:** Choose this issue as a group to focus on. This is a lens you want to look through together as you build the world.

### Collective World Building

**Setting:** What is the setting that will allow your character to really address your issue? What is the foundation? What are the "rules" of this world you are created? This includes but is not limited to the physical, social, and political setting Some setting features to think about are: Time, Environment, Science and Technology, Magic/super powers, Power, Other creatures and beings, Transportation, Dystopia, Utopia, Colonized new world, Sexual Reproduction, Outer space, Earth, Other planet)

**Back Drop:** What is the background/framework for this society? What are the assumptions we can make for this society - the history, social structures, how people view life and death, etc.

**Conflict:** *This is how we pull all the pieces together. This will help place future characters in your setting, and bring the backdrop and setting to life as you address your issue. Remember that in visionary fiction, change is from the bottom up not the top down; it is decentralized, collective and focuses on building new just worlds.*

*Here are some helpful questions:*

*Who seeks change?*

*Who seeks to prevent that change?*

*Are there others in the world seeking different kinds of change?*

*What role does the natural world play?*

*What role do other humans/machines/etc play?*

*How does the need for change become clear?*

*How will the change happen?*

*Who ultimately is going to make the change happen and how do they or it know?*

## **Individual Writing**

**Your character:** *Tell us what you can about your character within this story - name, age, religion, ability, gender, human/robot/other, singular or multiple. You will be exploring the world you built in a group through the eyes of this character. Remember, visionary fiction is through the eyes of those who have been marginalized.*

**Your character in the story/conflict/resolution:** *Who is your character in relationship to the conflict? How do they become involved? What do they need to overcome? How does your character contribute to the change needed?*

## Examples

*Setting:* Katherine Burdekin's 1937 novel *Swastika Night*. The book is set 700 years after World War II, and supposes that the Nazis won, they rule supreme, Hitler is viewed as a god. The book focuses on this cult of masculinity, and the oppression of women, who are kept penned like cattle for breeding purposes. This explores the "rules" of this society around power, government structure, race, religion, gender, etc. Disclaimer: The book does engage in homophobia.

*Back Drop:* Octavia Butler's 1979 novel *Kindred*. Dana, an African American woman living in 1976 Pasadena, CA, begins involuntarily time traveling back to the antebellum South, where she interacts with her ancestor, Rufus, who is a white slave holder. The backdrop allows us to explore the social structures of slavery, ideas about race, identity, history and contrast with our own.

*Conflict:* Ursula LeGuin's 1974 novel *The Dispossessed*. The book is set on Anarres and Urras, the twin inhabited worlds of Tau Ceti. To forestall a revolution on Urras, they gave the anarchists the moon Anarres to create their society as they see fit. Anarres is in theory a society without government or coercive authoritarian institutions. Yet in pursuing research that deviates from his society's current consensus understanding, the protagonist, Shevek, begins to come up against obstacles of power and control. The conflict is between the image this anarchist society has of itself, and the reality that it is actually replicated some of the inequalities it hated and fought against.

*Main character:* Darryl A. Smith's 2000 short story "The Pretended." It is the future, and black people no longer exist. The larger white society has manufactured black robots to take their place, but even the robots are no longer wanted. All are on their way to extermination, where they can be erased from history. The story focuses on one robot Mnemosyne, who was based on a young black girl. The main character is the most marginalized, one of the robots, and therefore allows us to see this society through her eyes.