Create a World Bible

Keeping all the information you need to run the west marches in one place.

*Whether you’re making your own RPG sourcebook, writing short stories, or even working up a wealth of source material for a string of novels, world bibles are a great way to help you organize information about large groups of characters, plots, and monsters into a manageable reference guide. While some us might be lucky enough to see our work on the big screen, for the day-to-day work of generating a great world filled with detail, intrigue, and adventure, a world bible is an important tool for game designers and writers alike.*

Scott Hungerford - How to write a world bible.

Creating a world bible is maybe the most important part of running the West Marches, having a resource that can tell you at a glance how and where a party 5 weeks prior died and what they have on their corpses makes all the difference in creating the illusion of a living (or in this case dead) world. There are many ways to create and maintain a world bible but however you do it, make sure you keep it up to date and keep it simple. Brevity is you best friend here, short and concise paragraphs that detail the major points of your sessions will make GMing a whole boat load easier.

# Creating a world Bible.

Tip: The first time a name (Proper noun) appears Bold it so that you can find it at a glance.

## Section One: The World

**Start with a Short title**. Something along the lines of *Grimdark: The West Marches* or *The West Marches: Aussie Edition*.

**Next Write an Introduction** to the setting (World), a one page summary is more than enough most of the time. This should give you the room to make WM your own while maintaining what you think the core is. Make sure you summarize not just the world, but the major characters and civilization in it too. You may want to leave some room for the adding of player generated faction as WM has a tendency to lean towards players creating their own homelands.

**One page on Races and Cultures**: Make life easy on yourself and don't lump these two into the same entity. It’s much easier to say that two players who have completely different personalities but the same race and/or class, are from different backgrounds or cultures. If all humans, dwarves or elves are of the same culture your world will be boring. Remember as well that within each culture there are usually a variety of religious or political groups so even within one culture there can be massive diversity. The main things to include information on being languages (both spoken and written) and how factors such as illiteracy, customs, taboos, and religion ties in with day to day adventuring. The same as the previous paragraph you might want to leave some room for player creations.

**Magic and Technology**: In this section try to keep the information as close to the player's grasp as possible. While it may be interesting to create a whole new breed of science in the game, no player will ever be able to interact with it so it’s ultimately a waste of time. Try sticking to the ways that the magic and science in your world differ from that of our own and that of the Dungeons and Dragons core books.

## Section Two: The Cast

**The Key Players**: Writing out the names and short backstories of the inhabitants of the town that the players will interact with will pay off almost immediately. Being able to find out at a glance that the bartender’s wife went missing in the woods two months ago and he has not been the same since will lend itself to making the players feel like this world exists outside of just their play sessions. Remember to update this section as and when things change.

**Monsters and Miscreants**: Creating your own bestiary is a daunting task, but if you break it down into chunks and remember you only need as much as they can kill or be killed by in the current session, it becomes a lot easier. Remember steal Stat blocks not whole creatures. Take the current stat blocks from creatures you and your players already know and twist them, make them strange. A wolf that vomits tar is not something your player will be expecting and you can use this surprise to cover the fact that on paper the creature isn't that different from a normal wolf. We would suggest one page per type, for instance, wolves have their own page as do goblins and orcs. You don't have to fill these pages, but its worth leaving room for the odd variations you will come up with as well as when deeper knowledge becomes available to you and your players.

## Section Three: Appendices

**Players**: This section in any other setting would be filled with timelines of events and historical holidays of the world. WM, however is far more focused on the players and their actions in game, so this section should remain mostly blank until after you have played a couple of sessions. As the game progresses and the players have messed with ancient ruins and found great old awakened trees, write down how those things came to be. Initially, just include the big events, then be prepared to insert, remove, and update entries as you and the players find more detail in the world.

**Cartography**: As the map is much more important to the WM than in other games it is a good idea to include a list of locations in the World Bible as well as on the map itself. Keep the bulk of the information in the world bible and only the basic information on the map. A list of the major areas of the world and key location within them will make it easier to create everything from encounters to quests on the fly.

**Glossary**: Make sure that any names (Proper nouns) that you have created yourself have an entry in this section. Being able to recall all of the meanings of the weird and wonderful names that you could come up with is not something most people can do. Any unusual names should also have a place in this section, there is no need to write down what an orc is but any variation on that might be worth writing up an entry for. Try to format this section as you would a dictionary, with the name in bold and then a description followed by an example of its use in a sentence (if applicable).