



Create a magical world

The bestselling author and current Children's Laureate, Cressida Cowell, explains where to start.

Use this map by Cressida Cowell for inspiration.



Lots of young people and schools email me to ask about ways to start stories. A blank piece of paper or screen can be quite daunting, I think, and sometimes you need a bit of help getting started. One of the tips that I give is to use a map as a story starter.

If you draw a map of an imaginary place, it helps you to begin building your world. Lots of authors have done this – I would be willing to bet that J.K. Rowling has a map of Hogwarts. A great example is *Treasure Island*. The author, Robert Louis Stevenson, said that when he started drawing the map, the pirates “began crawling out of the map, Long John Silver with his cutlass between his teeth”.

Both of my book series begin with maps, which help me make my world more believable. My map of Berk, which is at the beginning of the *How to Train Your Dragon* books, has helped me work out, for example, how my characters get from Hooligan Village to Wild Dragon Cliff, and I can convey an impression of the landscape with the names I call them – Unlandable Cove sounds like a pretty rocky, unfriendly place, doesn't it?

My *Wizards of Once* book series began with a map I drew about six or seven years ago. It is a map that is inspired by the writers I loved when I was a child, and also by the places I played and walked and explored when I was young.



Anyone can create their own map and new world. You'll need the following:

- Paper
- Pen, pencil or something else to draw with

Knock Three Times is book three in *The Wizards of Once* series and is out now in hardback (Hodder Children's Books, £12.99)

Instructions

1 Start your map by drawing the outline of an island. Look at an atlas of real islands if you want to get some inspiration. Think about what size and shape the island will be.

2 Think of different places on that island that would be exciting or scary or wonderful to visit in real life. The Doomfill Mountains, for example, might have dreadful dinosaurs slumbering under the rocks, which then suddenly wake up. The Scrumptious Forests could have trees that grow sweets instead of fruit, and if you eat those sweets, they might make you fly or turn you invisible. Now you know how long it takes to get from the Doomfill Mountains to the Scrumptious Forests.

3 Make up a story about the incredible people and creatures who live in your imaginary world. Go wild... this is your own imaginary world and you can make whatever you like happen there.

Got an idea? Made something cool? Share it with us at hello@theweekjunior.co.uk