

Worldbuilding

Last Odyssey does not come with a prewritten setting in the sense that the political and natural geography of the world that the players are navigating will vary from group to group. What it does have is an implicit setting, which is a set of assumptions that hold true for all possible games. The Combat and Exploration rules contain details that fit best with a campaign setting that occupies the *hybrid fantasy* genre. The *fantasy* part of Last Odyssey is its blend of magic and postclassical historical inspiration. Characters cast spells, wield weapons that rely on physical prowess such as swords and daggers, and travel across a world that is not subject to the collapse of distance that our contemporary world has undergone. The *hybrid* part of Last Odyssey is what's left to interpretation. Clockwork robots, mutants, cyborgs, and immortal, godlike aliens can all be expressed by Last Odyssey's mechanics without any additional work, so long as the overall framework in which they rest adheres to the postclassical assumptions of the Exploration Rules. This section provides a guide to constructing the more ephemeral parts of the world in which a Last Odyssey campaign will take place, as well as a guide to making exploration rewarding and fun for players and GMs.

Setting and System

Last Odyssey's rules present mysteries that they do not immediately answer. The first, and most important of these, is Anima. Mechanically, the purpose of Anima is to make Antagonists feel stronger than normal enemies and to constrain the situations in which players fail and die. Eidolons are not invincible, but summoning one can turn the tide of battle at a critical moment. What Anima is, where it comes from, and why it can summon Eidolons are left ambiguous in the rules, but the group should give some thought to how it manifests in their game world. Are Eidolons the spirits of the dead, guardian angels, deities that are worshipped by people in the setting, or are they something more abstract? Is their presence acknowledged by others? Does Anima manifest in the world in ways other than through the Heroes and Antagonists of the story, or is it purely abstract as well?

Mana is a representation of a character's endurance during combat. In settings where it has meaning outside of this, Mana is also a form of energy that powers magic and feats of great strength. How literal is this? Can Mana be captured and stored, or is it unquantifiable? Settings where technology is prevalent could include Mana-powered devices such as engines, turbines, and mecha. In more low-tech or high fantasy settings, Mana could instead be interpreted as the strength of a person's soul, the breath of life granted to mortals by the gods, or something more abstract. Still, the group should remember that magic is not the same thing as science. The precise reason why a wizard can shoot fire out of their hands is a far less relevant consideration than their attitude towards magic, their motivation for using it, and what impact their use of magic has on the people around them and on society more broadly.

In settings where magic is more common, the group may wish to give some thought to the impact of magic on the setting's more mundane elements. Healing spells can aid in medical treatment and damaging elemental spells can also be tools of warfare. How is magic acquired? Is it taught, is it a gift from a higher power, is it inborn, or is it some combination of these, or something else entirely? These questions also extend to class abilities. What is a Knight? Are they a member of an actual knightly order, or are they just a person who uses Mana in a particular way? Regardless of what the group decides, the details they should focus on the most are those that serve to enhance the feeling of the world as a living, breathing entity. Questions about the mechanics can also be a source of Lore for the characters to discover.

Factions

The political landscape of a world is enriched by the presence of *factions*, which are organizations, formal or informal, made up of people who share a common goal and are united in pursuing. Any group of people that shares power and resources among themselves is a potential faction. Factions will often have underlying ideologies that guide their behavior, but just as often factions simply exist to grant their members greater autonomy than they would have alone. Trade guilds, religions, cults of personality, paramilitary organizations, and clans are all examples of possible factions that could exist in the gameworld. There are no mechanics in Last Odyssey that govern the behavior of factions. Instead, GMs should feel free to put them into the world wherever and whenever they feel is appropriate. When creating a new faction for their Last Odyssey campaign, GMs should answer the following questions:

1. What are its overall goals? Does the faction want to change the world, or keep things the same, and in what regard? For whose benefit do they ultimately act, and why?
2. What are the criteria for membership? Is there an initiation process? This can be mundane, or extremely strange. Medieval guilds were open to all of those trained in a particular profession and who agreed to abide by the prices set by leadership. In contract, the only thing a cult requires of its members is absolute obedience.
3. What is the size of the faction, and how powerful is it? These things sometimes correlate, but not necessarily. A conspiracy of nine might rule the world from the shadows, while a religion of millions might be impotent in the face of real crisis.
4. In what ways does the faction physically exist in the world? That is, how will the players know it is present in a particular settlement? Does it have a headquarters? Are there special buildings where members conduct meetings? Temples, safehouses, secluded towers, and universities are all places where factions might gather.
5. Are there any defining characteristics that mark a member of this faction? GMs should especially consider how players will be able to tell when someone is a member. Followers of a revolutionary movement might proudly walk the streets in uniform, while criminals or cultists might identify themselves only through coded speech and special symbols.
6. Many factions, especially those with a great deal of history or that wish to promote rapid change, will have an aesthetic language that they deploy that distinguishes them from others. Does this one? If so, what is it? Are their temples gothic and expressive, or ramshackle and humble? This language might also vary from place to

place, but will serve to make a faction memorable and to express its particular relationship to the world at large.

NPCs

A non-player character, or NPC for short, is any character in the game not controlled by a player. Players will encounter tons of NPCs throughout the course of the campaign, most of whom will either be enemies for them to fight or will be other people who exist to serve the narrative and worldbuilding, and oftentimes they will be both. Whether an NPC is important or not and whether they are being created in planning or on the fly, there are a few aspects of character that the GM should keep in mind when creating them. First, NPCs are people with desires. What they want and how they are able to get it will dictate a great deal of their behavior. This doesn't have to be complex. A knight might be motivated by the acquisition of honor and glory, while a peasant may just want to keep their head down and stay out of trouble. Second, NPCs will have defining character attributes that make them distinct from other people. The amount of backstory and motivation an NPC gets should be proportional to how much time the player characters will spend interacting with them. An Antagonist or other major character in the story could have pages and pages of backstory, while an extra in a casino might just be an eyepatch and a yen for losing money in increasingly bizarre ways.

Some NPCs have the capacity to engage in combat, and some do not. If players attempt to fight a group of NPCs, the GM should either give them prepared statistics that they created themselves or that are from the Monster Manual, or, if the NPCs are unable to face the NPCs in a standup fight, it could instead be handled narratively. Keep in mind that most people are not that dangerous, and will value their lives enough to run away or surrender if the players threaten them with violence. Players should also not earn XP for killing living beings that don't have assigned enemy statistics. There is no reward for wanton violence apart from a tarnished reputation and the danger of revenge.

Making Things Interesting

When building a campaign world, it can be easy to be bogged down by the details. However, the world of a Last Odyssey campaign exists primarily to serve the narrative. An important aspect of good worldbuilding, and especially worldbuilding in RPGs, is that it is *dynamic*. The real world isn't static, but is a product of history, including the history of decisions made by human beings, and this should feel just as true for a fictional world. A harsh desert region is interesting, but a desert region that used to be a massive inland sea is better, and a desert region that used to be a sea that was drained as punishment by the gods for the transgressions of its inhabitants even moreso. The motion of a setting should also exist in the present. Continent- or even world-spanning empires are a common trope in speculative fiction. An empire is interesting to include in your setting, but is it rising, or falling? Is it on the brink of crisis, such as a civil war or a revolution? If the empire is prosperous, who or what is paying the cost of that prosperity, and what about the world is changing as a result? The more internal faultlines a world has, the more interesting and dynamic it will be, and the more chances the players and their enemies will have to set events in motion.

Another aspect of a good Last Odyssey campaign world is that it is *thematic*. There should be at least a few underlying concepts that define the world as a whole. These concepts can be structural, aesthetic, or metaphorical in nature. A world defined by decay and rebirth could be experiencing a crisis in which the souls of the dead refuse to pass on from the realm of the living, while a world defined by the clash between the past and the present could sit atop the body of a slumbering robot, whose bowels are infested with strange and deadly machines. The dramatic concept of a Last Odyssey world can and should also be dynamic. Perhaps the crisis in the souls of the dead is getting worse, or perhaps the robot, thought dead, is beginning wake up. Whatever the GM or the group chooses, it should be fantastical and strange, and should include plenty of opportunities for Lore and discovery.