# Setting

### Eras of Civilization

##### Nomadic and Tribal Era

1. Lifestyle and Society

* Nomadic tribes roam vast landscapes, following migratory patterns of animals.
* Small, close-knit communities with strong kinship bonds.
* Leadership based on strength, wisdom, and hunting prowess.

1. Trade and Economy

* Barter system: exchanging goods like animal hides, tools, and food.
* Trade routes established between tribes for essential resources.
* Early forms of currency: shells, beads, and other valuable items.

1. Social Structure

* Egalitarian society with shared responsibilities.
* Roles divided by gender and age: hunters, gatherers, and caretakers.
* Elders respected for their knowledge and experience.

1. Religious Beliefs

* Animism: belief in spirits inhabiting natural objects and animals.
* Shamans and spiritual leaders conduct rituals and ceremonies.
* Worship of nature deities and ancestral spirits.

##### Early Settlements and Agricultural Development

1. Lifestyle and Society

* Transition from nomadic to settled life with the advent of agriculture.
* Formation of villages and small towns near fertile lands and water sources.
* Development of farming techniques and domestication of animals.

1. Trade and Economy

* Surplus production leads to the growth of trade networks.
* Introduction of marketplaces for exchanging goods and services.
* Use of standardized weights and measures for trade.

1. Social Structure

* Emergence of social hierarchies based on land ownership and wealth.
* Specialized roles: farmers, artisans, traders, and leaders.
* Formation of councils and governing bodies for decision-making.

1. Religious Beliefs

* Construction of temples and shrines for worship.
* Organized religious practices and festivals.
* Priests and religious leaders gain influence and power.

##### Rise of Cities and Advanced Civilizations

1. Lifestyle and Society

* Growth of cities with complex infrastructure: roads, buildings, and public spaces.
* Diverse population with various ethnicities and cultures.
* Development of arts, literature, and education.

1. Trade and Economy

* Expansion of trade routes connecting distant regions.
* Introduction of coinage and banking systems.
* Establishment of trade guilds and merchant associations.

1. Social Structure

* Stratified society with distinct classes: nobility, merchants, artisans, and laborers.
* Centralized government with laws and regulations.
* Rise of powerful dynasties and ruling families.

1. Religious Beliefs

* State-sponsored religions and construction of grand temples.
* Codification of religious texts and doctrines.
* Influence of religion on politics, law, and daily life.

### Development of Religious Factions and Worship Practices

##### Tribalistic Worship Practices

1. Early Beliefs and Deities

* Tribes worship a variety of nature deities representing elements like the sun, moon, earth, and water.
* Animistic beliefs: spirits inhabit animals, plants, and natural phenomena.
* Totemism: tribes have specific totems (animals or objects) that hold spiritual significance.

1. Rituals and Ceremonies

* Shamans and spiritual leaders conduct rituals to appease deities and spirits.
* Seasonal festivals celebrate harvests, hunting successes, and natural events.
* Use of music, dance, and offerings in ceremonies to connect with the divine.

1. Sacred Spaces

* Natural sites like groves, mountains, and rivers are considered sacred.
* Construction of simple altars and shrines for worship.
* Communal gatherings at sacred sites for important rituals.

##### Evolution into Organized Religions

1. Formation of Religious Factions

* As tribes settle and form larger communities, distinct religious factions emerge.
* Each faction worships a pantheon of deities with specific roles and attributes.
* Development of mythologies and creation stories to explain the origins of the world and humanity.

1. Establishment of Temples and Priesthoods

* Construction of permanent temples and sanctuaries for worship.
* Priests and priestesses become the intermediaries between the people and the deities.
* Codification of religious practices and rituals into formal ceremonies.

1. Religious Texts and Doctrines

* Oral traditions are transcribed into written texts, preserving religious teachings and myths.
* Development of doctrines and moral codes to guide followers' behavior.
* Religious leaders interpret and enforce these teachings within the community.

##### Medieval Religious Organizations

1. Centralization of Religious Authority

* Formation of centralized religious institutions with hierarchical structures.
* High priests, bishops, and other religious officials hold significant power and influence.
* Establishment of religious councils and synods to govern religious affairs.

1. Expansion and Conversion

* Organized religions actively seek to convert new followers through missions and proselytism.
* Construction of grand cathedrals, churches, and monasteries as centers of worship and learning.
* Religious orders and monastic communities dedicate themselves to spiritual pursuits and service.

1. Interfaith Relations and Conflicts

* Coexistence and competition between different religious factions and sects.
* Religious debates and theological disputes shape the development of doctrines.
* Periods of religious tolerance and persecution, leading to conflicts and crusades.

### Religious Factions and Civil Rights Metaphor

##### Faction Overview

1. The Harmonious Circle

* **Beliefs**: The Harmonious Circle follows a pantheon of deities representing balance, unity, and interconnectedness. They emphasize harmony with nature and each other.
* **Practices**: Their rituals involve communal dances, where participants form a circle, symbolizing equality and cooperation. They celebrate solstices and equinoxes, honoring the cyclical nature of life.
* **Civil Rights Metaphor**: The Harmonious Circle advocates for equal rights for all, regardless of social status, gender, or ethnicity. They fight against discrimination and promote inclusivity.

1. The Order of the Stone

* **Beliefs**: The Order reveres ancient stone idols, believing they hold the wisdom of the ages. They emphasize tradition, hierarchy, and stability.
* **Practices**: Elaborate ceremonies take place in stone temples. Priests wear heavy robes, symbolizing the weight of tradition. They decipher cryptic inscriptions on ancient stones.
* **Civil Rights Metaphor**: The Order of the Stone represents conservative values. They resist change, fearing it will destabilize society. Their struggle mirrors those who cling to outdated norms, resisting progress.

1. The Luminal Seekers

* **Beliefs**: The Luminal Seekers worship celestial bodies—stars, moons, and comets. They believe in enlightenment through cosmic alignment.
* **Practices**: Nighttime rituals involve stargazing, meditation, and seeking visions. They build observatories and study celestial patterns.
* **Civil Rights Metaphor**: The Luminal Seekers advocate for intellectual freedom and scientific progress. They challenge dogma and fight against censorship of knowledge.

1. The Veiled Veil

* **Beliefs**: The Veiled Veil practices secretive rites, veiling their faces during ceremonies. They believe in hidden truths and the power of mystery.
* **Practices**: Rituals occur in dimly lit chambers. Participants wear veils, symbolizing the unseen. They decipher cryptic texts and explore forbidden knowledge.
* **Civil Rights Metaphor**: The Veiled Veil represents marginalized groups fighting for recognition. They challenge oppressive systems and demand transparency.

1. The Emberforged

* **Beliefs**: The Emberforged revere fire as a purifying force. They believe in inner strength, resilience, and transformation.
* **Practices**: Fire temples host intense purification rituals. Initiates walk through flames, emerging stronger. They forge metal artifacts as symbols of resilience.
* **Civil Rights Metaphor**: The Emberforged symbolize oppressed communities rising from adversity. They fight for justice, turning pain into strength.

1. The Whispered Cult

* **Beliefs**: The Whispered Cult communicates with spirits through whispered prayers. They believe in prophecy, fate, and hidden messages.
* **Practices**: Whispered ceremonies occur in secluded caves. Participants listen for spirit voices. They interpret cryptic dreams and signs.
* **Civil Rights Metaphor**: The Whispered Cult represents those whose voices are suppressed. They fight for the right to be heard, even when society dismisses them.

##### Interfaith Relations and Conflict

1. **Tensions** arise between factions due to differing beliefs and practices.
2. **Civil rights activists** emerge, advocating for tolerance, understanding, and acceptance.
3. **Religious councils** convene to address conflicts, echoing real-world struggles for equality and justice.

# Legends

### The Legend of Beltan the Bear

##### Introduction

In the time before written history, when the world was wild and untamed, tribes and nomadic wanderers roamed the vast landscapes. It was a harsh existence, where survival depended on strength, skill, and the favor of the gods. In this ancient era, stories of legendary heroes were passed down through generations around flickering campfires, and among these tales, none was more revered than that of Beltan the Bear.

Beltan was a giant among men, standing eight feet tall with a frame of unparalleled strength. His presence alone could silence the fiercest of storms and still the hearts of the bravest warriors. Born to a small tribe that made its home near the Great Forest, Beltan was a beacon of hope in a time of darkness. From an early age, he displayed a strength that was both awe-inspiring and fearsome. It was said that he could uproot trees with his bare hands and wrestle bears into submission.

Despite his formidable power, Beltan's heart was kind and just. He used his strength not for conquest or domination, but to protect the weak and innocent. He wandered the lands, guided by a sense of duty to those who could not defend themselves. His reputation spread far and wide, and people from distant tribes would seek his aid when threatened by marauding bands or wild beasts.

##### The Empire of Curzal the Cruel

In the annals of ancient history, where the deeds of heroes and villains were etched into the fabric of the world, there existed a figure whose name struck fear into the hearts of all who heard it: Curzal the Cruel. Unlike Beltan the Bear, whose strength was tempered with compassion, Curzal wielded his power with ruthless ambition and an insatiable thirst for conquest.

Curzal was a man of extraordinary cunning and strength, commanding a vast army of fierce warriors who followed him out of fear and admiration. His homeland, a barren and desolate region, was transformed into a formidable fortress under his rule. From this stronghold, Curzal launched a series of brutal campaigns, expanding his domain through terror and bloodshed. His ultimate goal was to rule all the lands, subjugating every tribe and village under his iron fist.

It was during one such campaign that Curzal's path crossed with that of Beltan the Bear. Curzal's army descended upon the peaceful lands that Beltan called home, leaving destruction in their wake. Villages were burned, and their people enslaved or slain. The once tranquil forests and fields were stained with blood and littered with the remnants of the invaders' cruelty.

##### The Heroes of Legend

News of Curzal's invasion reached Beltan as he traveled the distant frontiers, aiding those in need. With a heart full of sorrow and rage, he gathered his companions—warriors of great renown who had pledged their loyalty to Beltan and his cause. Among them were Kaelen, the swift and deadly archer; Eira, the wise and skilled healer; and Torin, the indomitable shield-bearer whose courage was unmatched.

Together, this mighty band set forth to confront Curzal and end his reign of terror. Their journey took them through perilous terrain, where they faced numerous challenges and ambushes orchestrated by Curzal's spies. Yet, their determination never wavered. Beltan's leadership and the unity of his companions fueled their resolve, and they pressed on, their spirits bolstered by the knowledge that their cause was just.

As they neared Curzal's stronghold, they encountered villages devastated by his cruelty. The sight of the suffering and despair only steeled their determination. Beltan, with his mighty strength, helped rebuild what he could along the way, restoring hope to those who had lost everything. Kaelen's arrows brought swift justice to marauding bands, while Eira's healing touch mended both bodies and spirits. Torin's unyielding defense protected the group from numerous threats.

The final confrontation took place at the gates of Curzal's fortress, a massive and imposing structure that loomed over the desolate landscape. Beltan and his companions stood before the gates, ready to face the full might of Curzal's army. The air was thick with tension as the two forces prepared for battle.

Curzal emerged, his eyes burning with malice and arrogance. He had heard tales of Beltan and his companions, but he dismissed them as mere fables. With a sneer, he challenged Beltan to single combat, confident that his own prowess would ensure victory. Beltan accepted, knowing that the fate of many rested upon the outcome.

The duel was fierce and brutal, a clash of titans that shook the very ground beneath them. Curzal's strength was formidable, but Beltan's resolve and the support of his companions gave him an edge. Kaelen's arrows struck with deadly precision, keeping Curzal's forces at bay, while Eira's healing sustained Beltan through the grueling fight. Torin's shield deflected every blow aimed at his comrades, allowing them to focus on the battle at hand.

In the end, it was Beltan's unyielding spirit and his bond with his companions that turned the tide. With a mighty roar, he delivered a final, crushing blow that brought Curzal to his knees. The cruel warlord's reign of terror was ended, and his army, witnessing their leader's defeat, scattered in disarray.

##### The Pages of History

With Curzal vanquished, peace returned to the lands. The people, once oppressed and fearful, were free to rebuild their lives. Beltan and his companions were hailed as heroes, their deeds celebrated in song and story. Though Beltan continued his wanderings, ever vigilant and ready to defend the innocent, the memory of his victory over Curzal the Cruel remained a testament to the power of justice, unity, and unwavering courage.

And so, the legend of Beltan the Bear and his mighty companions lived on, inspiring future generations to stand against tyranny and fight for what is right, no matter the cost.

### The Myth of Beltan and Curzal

A thousand years had passed since the time of Beltan the Bear and Curzal the Cruel, and civilization had evolved from nomadic tribes to small settlements and budding religions. The tale of these two titans had been modernized and mythologized, taking on a new form in the stories and scriptures of the era.

In the modern version of the tale, Beltan was no longer just a mighty hero but had ascended to the status of a demigod, a divine protector sent by the gods to safeguard humanity. His great strength and compassionate heart were seen as gifts from the heavens, bestowed upon him to lead and protect the weak. The people worshiped Beltan as the embodiment of justice and strength, a guardian who watched over them from the celestial realms.

Curzal, on the other hand, had become a symbol of pure evil and chaos. In the retelling, he was depicted as a dark sorcerer who had made a pact with malevolent spirits to gain his formidable power. His desire for conquest and bloodshed was driven by his corrupted soul, and he sought to plunge the world into eternal darkness. Curzal's stronghold was transformed into a hellish fortress, a place of torment and despair.

The mythologized tale told of a time when Curzal's dark forces threatened to engulf the world. Villages burned, and despair spread like a plague. The people, desperate for salvation, prayed to the gods for a savior. In answer to their pleas, Beltan descended from the heavens, accompanied by his divine companions, each representing a different virtue: Kaelen, the Archer of Precision; Eira, the Healer of Mercy; and Torin, the Shield of Courage.

The final battle between Beltan and Curzal was depicted as a cosmic struggle between light and darkness, good and evil. The heavens trembled, and the earth quaked as the two forces clashed. Beltan's companions played crucial roles, their divine gifts aiding in the fight against Curzal's dark magic and monstrous minions. Kaelen's arrows of light pierced the shadows, Eira's healing touch restored hope, and Torin's unbreakable shield deflected the forces of evil.

In this modern version, Beltan's victory over Curzal was not just a physical triumph but a spiritual one. With his final, divine strike, he banished Curzal and his dark magic to the netherworld, sealing away the evil for eternity. The world was bathed in light, and peace was restored. Beltan and his companions ascended back to the heavens, their mission complete.

The story ended with a prophecy: should darkness ever rise again, Beltan the Bear and his companions would return to protect the world. Temples were built in Beltan's honor, and his tale was recited in rituals and ceremonies. His legend became a cornerstone of early religion, teaching values of strength, compassion, and unity. The modernized myth of Beltan and Curzal served as both a moral guide and a beacon of hope, ensuring that the legacy of the great hero would endure through the ages.

### Beltan and Curzal: The Movie

In the age of the early Industrial Revolution, a time when smoke-belching factories and clanking machines symbolized both progress and peril, the ancient tale of Beltan and Curzal found new life in the hands of contemporary authors and artists. As society grappled with the unprecedented changes and the rise of men driven by greed and the lust for power, this timeless story was reimagined to reflect the struggles of the modern world.

In this new version, Beltan was recast not as a demigod from ancient myth but as a visionary leader, a man of great integrity and strength who saw the potential for both good and evil in the burgeoning industrial age. His towering presence and unyielding spirit were unchanged, but his mission was now to protect the innocent from the ravages of unchecked industrialization and the exploitation that came with it.

Curzal, in this retelling, was an industrial magnate, a ruthless tycoon whose factories belched poison into the skies and whose machines of war were built to subjugate and control. His insatiable ambition and cruel methods were depicted as the embodiment of the worst excesses of industrialization. His vast empire stretched across cities, with dark smokestacks looming like ominous towers over the oppressed workers and common folk.

The modernized tale centered on Beltan's efforts to unite the people against Curzal's tyranny. He gathered a group of exceptional individuals, each representing different facets of the human spirit and the era's innovations. These companions included:

- **Kaelen, the Engineer:** A brilliant inventor and sharpshooter, Kaelen created advanced technologies to counter Curzal's war machines. His ingenuity was a beacon of hope, showing that progress could be harnessed for the good of all.

- **Eira, the Doctor:** A compassionate healer who used her medical knowledge to aid those injured by the harsh conditions of Curzal's factories. Her work reminded people of the importance of caring for one another amid rapid change.

- **Torin, the Labor Leader:** A stalwart defender of workers' rights, Torin organized strikes and protests to challenge Curzal's exploitation. His courage and resilience inspired many to stand up against oppression.

The story's climax took place in the heart of Curzal's industrial empire, a sprawling metropolis choked with smoke and corruption. Beltan and his companions led a daring rebellion, infiltrating the city and rallying the oppressed masses. The final showdown between Beltan and Curzal was depicted as an epic battle of wits and wills, with Beltan using both his physical prowess and his strategic mind to outmaneuver Curzal's forces.

In a dramatic conclusion, Beltan and his allies managed to disable Curzal's most powerful war machines and expose his atrocities to the world. The people, inspired by Beltan's leadership and the bravery of his companions, rose up and overthrew Curzal's regime. The tyrant's empire crumbled, and the dawn of a new era began—a time when industry was tempered by humanity, and progress was balanced with compassion.

This reimagined tale of Beltan and Curzal became a powerful metaphor for the contemporary struggles of the early Industrial Revolution. It was serialized in newspapers, performed in theaters, and illustrated in popular pamphlets, capturing the imagination of a society in flux. The story reinforced the enduring message that true strength lies not in domination but in the protection of the vulnerable and the pursuit of justice.

As the smoke of the industrial age began to clear, the legend of Beltan and his companions stood as a testament to the timeless battle between good and evil, reminding all who heard it that even in the face of overwhelming odds, the spirit of justice and the power of unity could prevail.