

Richard's Rustic, Rugged Works

Tutorial No. 1 – Fantasy Maps



Greetings, thanks for stopping by to take a look at my first tutorial, I hope it'll be of service. Before we start, there's a few points I need to get out of the way:

1. There's more to making maps in my particular style than the pencil, pen and paper cartographic elements, though I'll certainly be covering these. I tend to create props, not just images, and in practice that could result in a number of features which may be excessive for your needs, not to mention more costly. Take what you need from this tutorial, ignore what you don't.
2. As you'll soon notice, the drawing element of my maps is not as detailed or attractive as you'll find with a good many other artists and cartographers. (Though more so than I've seen in some maps from some published works. (Does that sound bitter?)) Anyway, if a high degree of detail is what you seek, this tutorial will likely only be of use to you in its 'prop-making' sections, specifically parts one and three.
3. The absolute last thing you should do is follow this guide unflinchingly. The fun in this process is developing your own style and finding new ways to weave artistry into the process. If you come up with your own ideas, give them a try.
4. Forgive me if any part of this guide elicits a 'Well, duh!' response. I have to err on the side of caution and explain some things that may seem downright obvious to most however, just so no one gets stuck.

You Will Need

1. A sheet of high quality paper
2. A sacrifice of coffee
3. Leather, artificial leather or thick cloth for the background
4. Thread and a thin sewing needle
5. Pencil, Eraser, Pens, Ruler
6. Old newspaper

You Might Find a Use For

1. Paint
2. Buttons
3. Ribbons
4. Clay
5. A picture frame
6. A fan-heater
7. Glue

STEP ONE – PREPARING THE BASE

This is a straightforward yet easily monotonous stage so be sure to have a playlist or favourite film or whatnot playing in the background. First off, take your paper and place it atop a few sheets of disused newspaper, then pour the coffee on it and spread it around with a paintbrush. Avoid using cloths as they'll simply absorb too much of the coffee. Leave that to dry (with the aid of a fan heater if you're impatient like me) and you'll soon have your aged and crinkly paper sheet. If it doesn't look the part after this, repeat the process and crumple the paper if need be.

(NOTE: Having specifically positioned 'puddles' of coffee can cause a darker tone on the paper when it dries, if you want a distinction between land and sea or any adjacent landscape features, consider using this technique.)

Place this atop your leather background and trace around the edge, then cut out a rectangle of leather/cloth/misc the same size as your paper to form the backing piece of your map, don't worry if it's not an exact fit though snip away any particularly egregious mismatches in the backing piece and/or paper.

The advantages of this cumbersome activity are A) it gives a more fantasy look and feel to your map. B) It'll make it more durable and portable.

Glue your paper to your backing piece to stop either from drifting away as you sew around the edges to properly fasten one to the other, (glue sparingly however as it can stain certain fabrics, particularly thin, lightly coloured ones.) Your

sewing can be as orderly or as rustically higgledy-piggledy as you please. You'll want to cut off a stretch of thread long enough to cover all four sides of an A4 sized sheet; far better to have more than you need than less, trust me. Painstakingly try many times over to thread the needle and tie a knot in the other end of the string/thread big enough not to follow the needle straight through the hole it makes whilst you're sewing. Be sure to leave a stretch of thread behind the knot to tie a second knot to with the remains of your thread once you've sewn the whole way round the map, thereby securing all your stitching in place. Ideally also try to keep these knots between the paper and leather so that you can bury it between the two, thereby keeping them unobtrusively out of the way. Snip away any loose dangly bits of thread and you should have something that looks like this:



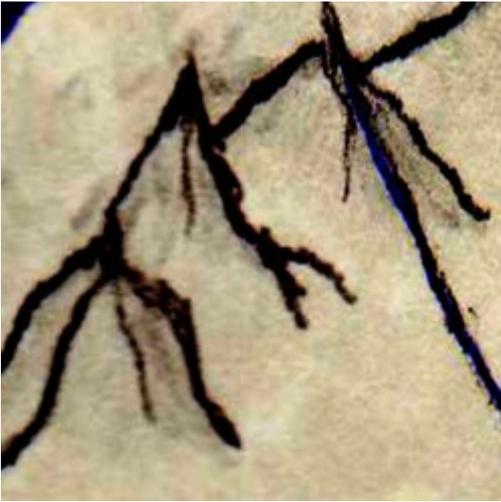
Tearing the edges is one more possible way to give the appearance of age.

STEP TWO – PARTICULARS OF MAP DESIGN

Now the base is complete, you'll be wanting to draw your map on it. Like with any piece of fiction, nothing should ever be included on a map of a fantasy world *'because it looks cool.'* Everything you include must contribute to forming a plausible world, or section of a world, even if it winds up having no relevance to the story in question. In all geographic features I'd recommend investigating real world equivalents to see what makes a proper landscape.

Mountains

Big, stone, pointy things. Maybe you have a long-reaching range of twenty or maybe one which stands alone. Either way they're a hugely prominent aspect of any landscape and should not be understated on your map. Practically they may be a source of defence of mining for certain cities or nations, or an awkward hindrance to travel and trade.



Three lines to form a triangle, shade one side, add rivers and snow at the peaks as needed

Rivers

There are a few key considerations when it comes to rivers:

- 1) Where do they originate?
- 2) Do they continue all the way to the sea or stop short of it?
- 3) How is it used by the people in your world?

Early civilizations must build settlements and societies as the landscape allows, and these settlements will likely grow and endure as decades and centuries pass. A large and wealthy city will almost certainly have access to a river for fresh water and trade purposes. That said, perhaps your map is of a dry, desert environment or polar ice fields, in which case rivers are likely to be scarce.



Blue lines of whatever thickness you require, split them as shown to form tributaries if required.

Lakes

Almost certainly attached to and fed by a river or rivers, and potentially serving similar purposes to their serpentine cousins with regards to settlements. A potential source of fish, water mammals which might be hunted for their fur, a hiding place for ancient treasures. (You never know.)



A humble example. There'll often be a typical oval-ish or rounded-rectangular shape to a lake, with a river to sustain it.

Roads

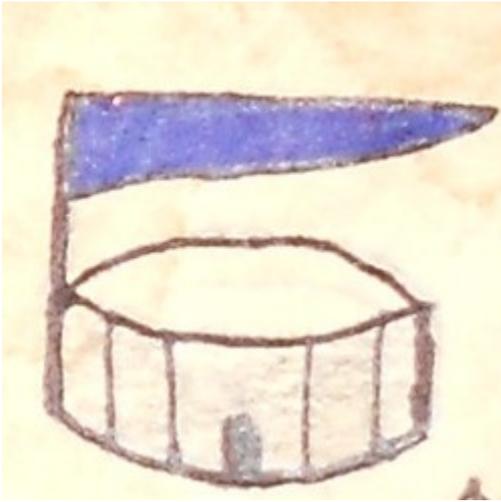
Much like in the real world, the quality of a road may depend on its importance and how often it's used. One vital for trade may be guarded and better maintained and lined with taverns; conversely one leading to a tiny fishing community in the middle of nowhere may be a weed-bedevilled, broken, muddy monstrosity, assuming the powers that be in your world ever bothered to build one in the first place. One other thing to consider is that no superfluous effort is likely to be employed in laying roads, if a mountain lies in your path it could well prove easier to go around it than across it or by tunnelling through it. It could well prove a similar story with bridges, if they're not easy to build, only one in a specific area may have been built, and that specific place will be the narrowest part of a river or canyon or whatever else where the crossing is easiest. Keep in mind too that bridges can be tolled, so whoever's collecting said tolls may not want more springing up.



Consider a colour change to distinguish roads from rivers. Beyond that, a single line will suffice, or in the case of the bridge pictured here, two with some shading

Cities/Towns

Here's the big one. These may warrant a more detailed and specific map of their own such as the one shown below. With regards to larger world or country maps, the tricky part can be giving a city the prominence it warrants whilst not sacrificing credulity, such as making it bigger than a nearby mountain range. The positioning of a city would depend on, above all else, where the settlers of bygone ages could thrive; likely there'd be a freshwater river nearby, game to hand for hunting, good farmland and, with some luck, natural defences such as consuming swamps or the sea. As time went on and civilizations were formed, war and trade become considerations. City walls and castles would be built in response to the former and docks (where appropriate), roads, taverns and commercial districts would likely be formed to accommodate the latter. With this in mind, consider what your city would have to trade, such as wood from nearby forests, stone, farm produce, fish etc. That decided, what they would need that the surrounding area doesn't provide? From that answer you can get an idea of other towns and cities elsewhere which may have what the first city needs.



If you've a lot to show on your map, keep it simple and consistent to save space



If you've the space to spare however, more details can set a better scene. That said, you can ultimately make a city as detailed or as basic as suits you.



Alternatively, you can dedicate a whole map to one city. If you do this, consider districts, streets, entertainments, temples, palaces, anything and everything you're likely to find that warrants putting on a map.

Villages

Like cities, villages must be located in a place which allows its denizens to survive and, ideally, thrive; somewhere where the hunting is good, the land is suitable for farming, there are plenty of trees for firewood, there's fresh water for drinking. Defence could well be a higher consideration as a village would be easier pickings for raiders and hungry wolves. Is there an encircling wall or a guard post? Is it placed somewhere with plenty of shelter or else good visibility? Finally it's likely that villages would be in close proximity with larger cities and towns as they would likely trade with them, be in the service of the local lord or lady who resides in such a place (or possibly a nearby castle) and would rely on the soldiers of said city for protection.



Odds are you'll have a lot of villages dotted around your map, and that being the case, best to keep them simple and consistent. They can even just be dots with names if need be.

Woodlands

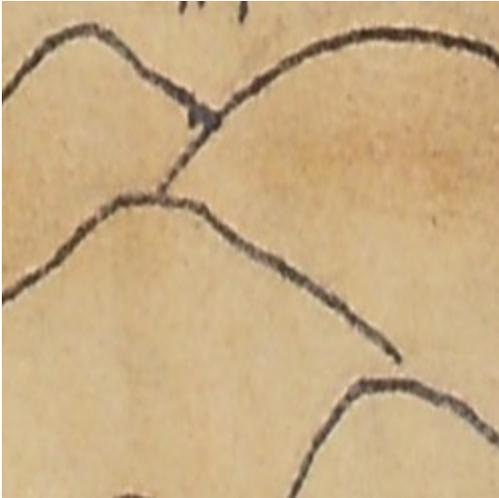
Wood is a vital resource for everything from cooking to building to defence to making paper, and as a civilization grows and advances, the worse it'll be for the trees. As such, any woods near to your towns and cities may show visible gaps where trees have been cut down year after year. Conversely, any body of trees well away from civilization will have existed unmolested by saws and axes for centuries or longer, and their size can reflect that.



It really can be that simple, just pick an outline for whatever tree or plant seems best. You'll need enough of them together to give the impression of a forest however.

Hills (barrows)

If you want rugged terrain and a wild, largely untamed country, don't skimp on the hills. Similarly consider using a few for burial mounds for important monarchs of yester-years. Roads and rivers will likely have to weave around at least a few of them, and castles may well be built atop them to allow greater visibility of the surrounding area and defence.



Semi-circular 'bumps', clumped together if you want more than one, and you're done.

Coastlines

Take a minute to ask yourself how the sea might feature into whatever story you wish to tell with your map. Is there an armada of ships coming to invade the land? Is there a sunken city? Is there a shipping lane or perilous area rife with rocks to prevent any sane people trying to sail there? Once anything pertinent is decided upon, I'd recommend referring to world maps for guidance, specifically whichever country is most like the one or ones you're drawing.



Subject to continual coastal erosion, the shape of your coast should reflect this.



Beyond that, what will you find there? Cliffs, caves, beaches, dockyards?

Typography

Harder than it looks. Your text must be big enough to clearly show the names of the key points on your map but at the same time small enough to not take up space which will be sorely needed to draw said key points. Write everything in pencil, then rub it out and write it again as many times as needed to get the balance right. Furthermore, consider using calligraphy to help set a traditional fantasy mood. Avoid using biro pens and instead use roller-ball or ballpoint pens to

go over pencil outlines and give a better impression of quill and ink on parchment, (unless you have the quill, ink and patience required to go that route.)



Calligraphy is a tried and tested approach for fantasy map typography, but options are numerous and some experimentation in pencil may be best to determine what works for you.

PART THREE – PERSONAL TOUCHES

Ok so your map's drawn and ready and you may well be finished, if however you're looking to include a few more touches to give it more of a feel of the world it's representing I'll include a few suggestions below. Like with the geographical features listed above however, remember that nothing should be included 'because it looks cool', that runs especially true for last minute, arguably excessive cool stuff. (You heard me). To have your map leave the best impression it can, all things should serve a purpose and further the image/story it's intended to convey.

Seals and Sigils

If your map is an artefact from the world itself, which country or office commissioned it? Would they think it appropriate to put their seal upon their craftsmanship? If so there's a simple way to create such a seal and affix it to your map.

Take a small quantity of clay (I use milliput myself, much harder once dried and will stick to almost anything) and a circular object of roughly the size you're looking for. Stretch the clay over this to get the circular effect and cut away any excess as you'll want the seal to be reasonably flat once finished. You may need to repeat the process more than once if said clay twists and sags and is generally disobedient.

From here there are two options:

1. Affix the seal to the paper before it dries and press down thoroughly to ensure it'll stick to the surface, touch up with PVA glue where needed. That done, put masking tape around the surrounding paper and paint on your design. Once that's dry, dab with coffee or tea to age it if you wish.
2. (If you use this method, you'll want to have it done and attached to the paper before you attach the leather backing piece, that way you'll hide any knots or string that would otherwise stick out the back.) When you have the circular shape, make a series of holes wide enough for a suitably strong thread or string to go through it. Let it dry and have it painted first, then carefully sew it to your paper. One option here is to fold the thread to the back of the paper and glue it in place to ensure no tears occur when you're trying to tie the finishing knots.



Stain the seal and chip away at the edges to add to the impression of age if you wish.

Fastening Options

Is this map designed to be carried by some wayfarer as they traverse the landscape? If so you might want to consider having it be compact and easy to stash away. I'll present two easy options for doing this, but doubtless there are more. Experiment and find one for yourself if it please you, if not:

1. **BUTTONS!** – In a convenient space which won't get in the way of anything, attach a button that looks the part, nothing festive or fluorescent green, unless that's particularly relevant to the world in question. That done, you'll want to create a small strap from the same material as your backing piece is made from. Cut a small slit into it, wide enough to go over the button but not so wide as to allow it to slip away, and sew or glue it to the opposite end of the map on the side with the backing piece. Again to hide excess threads and keep it out of the way of the map-proper, you might want to have this done before you attach said backing piece to the paper.

2. **STRING!** – An easier way is to get a sufficiently thick and strong length of string or twine, tie a knot in one end and thread it through your map. Quick as you please and the task is done. To store your map, roll it up, wrap the string around it and thread the end of the string through itself to keep it secure.



Frames

Is your map designed to go on a wall instead? If so then, if it please you, buy a reasonably inexpensive frame of appropriate size, insert your map and hang it on the wall; with the right map I think it adds a touch of distinction. The backing piece becomes optional if you're taking this route of course, however the stitching around the edge can still help convey the impression of an artefact, and conceivably the map may then becomes much more of a treasure found and preserved, if that's the image you want.

A FEW FINAL TIPS AND IDEAS:

1. Don't hesitate to turn mistakes into features. Is a mountain freakishly large on your map? Well of course it is, it was enlarged by a lunatic wizard after all, or is the dormant state of your world's god of mountains or whatnot. Did you accidentally spell 'kingdom' as 'knigodm'? Well, that's just the fictional area's local spelling at work. When in Rome and all that.
2. In my experience, other people will probably like your maps for better than you will.
3. Strive to stay methodical and patient whilst working, almost every mistake I've ever made when making maps came in a moment of impatience or carelessness.
4. Do you have any questions that aren't covered here? Feel free to give me a shout at rmepaul@googlemail.com.

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