

Rocking Horse War Map

Dear Reader,

I draw maps when I'm writing, to help me visualise the journey my characters are on, to stop me making silly mistakes like mixing up left and right, east and west, and sun-wise and widdershins, and to make sure that the sunrise and the shadows are in the right place. When I'm writing about a real place, I sketch plans when I go there, and then refer to those plans when I'm writing, to be sure that I remember it, and that what I'm imagining is possible.

When I am writing about somewhere which only exists in my head (like the mountains and moors of Rocking Horse War) then I draw several maps, the first just a rough idea, then every time I write a new section, with a new hazard or a new bit of landscape, I add it in to the map or do a new map, and if I find that my map shows that I'm contradicting myself (having them walk on one side of the river, then suddenly appear on the others side without crossing etc) then I will either change the story, or change the map to make more sense. (The river can flow in another direction if it works for the story)

Once I have a complete story and a final map, then I read the whole thing (30 chapters — all in one go!) and I check every single mention of direction, distance, compass points, views, and landscape against the map — which by this time is pretty tatty and covered in rubbings out and little scribbles, but does let me make sure that the sun still rises in the east, and that if you keep turning left, you'll get back to where you started!

The strangest thing that happens with maps, is that when I draw plans of real places I always have North at the top. But when I draw maps of imaginary places, I always end up with SOUTH at the top. I don't know why. It's not deliberate or conscious, it just happens. Maybe it's my way of reminding myself that it's not the real world, and that anything can happen....

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ROCKING HORSE WAR

final version
for later drafts Jan '10.

S.W.

