



Space Science Fiction Writing

1. GENERAL

This class will familiarize the Mission Team with science fiction and expose the group to concepts of how science fiction can be a tool to further ideas of science and broaden people's views of what the world can be – a purpose shared with the Federation of Galaxy Explorers.

2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

SUBJECT AREA: Science Fiction

TASK: You will understand a selection of science fiction genres, as well as the goals of many science fiction writers which is to show how many ways the world can be different than it is today, often because of science, technology, and space.

CONDITIONS. (Put here what you are giving the student to perform the Task (e.g. handouts, book).

STANDARD.

3. PRESENTATION GUIDE

a. Introduction (5 minutes)

Good morning/afternoon, I am _____ and I will be your teacher for the lesson on science fiction. Today you will learn a little bit about why science fiction matters to those who are interested in science, astronomy, and space exploration. People who see a future of humanity in space and space exploration usually have a vision for a better world. They often get ideas and shape their vision based on works of fiction, sometimes written by ordinary people with interesting ideas, but sometimes written by visionaries who literally were able to shape the future. That's right, sometimes science fiction writers can predict the future, but many times they go beyond prediction and actually *shape* the future. This is very important for us because there is one thing about the future we must remember – we all have to live in it and should want to make it a better place.

We also have to remember that like science fiction writers, we will also have the ability to shape our future, and that's one of the things this organization is all about.

b. Development (____ minutes) MAIN LECTURE

What is Science Fiction

I could give you a precise definition of what is science fiction but instead I'd like to develop an understanding of it with you. Who can give me an example of science fiction. What is your favorite?

(Put examples up on a white/black board. If the class does not contribute these, make sure you put up Star Wars movies and Star Trek series or movies).

So we have all these examples. Can anyone tell me how they are all alike? (Take two minutes).

What we see is that science fiction gives us a chance to think about the world in ways that would be impossible to have in real life. How does it do this? Science fiction gives us a chance to talk about the world in different ways through the introduction of science, technology, or the introduction of a new culture that has new science or technology.

Examples and Effects of Science Fiction

(Point to examples. Pick out Star Wars/Phantom Menace/Attack of the Clones). How many of you have seen these movies? Show me hands. What kind of world are we talking about in the Star Wars movies? How does that world differ from our own? (Take answers for one minute). That world has space ships, laser guns, Jedi Knights, and good and evil people. Good and evil people we have in real life but we don't have a lot of the other stuff. Most of the science and technology in that movie do not exist for us. Science fiction in Star Wars allows us to create an entire new universe with technology that we do not have in our world, and base a story around it. Why would we do this? Anyone have any ideas? (Take answers).

Well one reason might be very simple – it's cool. Rocket ships, light sabers, and lasers are all really cool. They're exciting. They capture the imagination. They inspire people. Who here wants their own rocket, or light saber? (not to hurt anyone, of course, but just to have, right?) Show me hands.

But the funny thing is that with all the rockets and lasers and technology, the people in Star Wars are not really very different than we are, are they? (Big aliens with scales and short little Yodas do not count, here). Despite all the differences in their world from our world, who here wouldn't want to be Luke Skywalker? Too young for Luke Skywalker? Who here would not want to be Anakin Skywalker, or Princess (Senator) Amadala? Anyone? (Show hands). Couldn't we be like them, in the way they talk, the way they think, and live their lives? They live in a different world but they are not very different from us, and they are heroes. We all might want to be them, and so we can see ourselves in their world and wonder what that would be like.

They might make us want to make our world somewhat like theirs.

(Point out Star Trek-any of the series or movies will do). Star Trek is a better example. How many of you have seen Star Trek on TV? (Show hands). How about the movies? What is Star Trek about – can anyone guess? (Take hands). Now Star Trek is a little different than Star Wars. One of the things Star Trek is about, whether it's the movies or the TV, is exploring. The characters on Star Trek explore the universe, and by exploring the universe, they learn a lot about themselves. In each movie they face a challenge they need to overcome. In each TV show there is a problem they need to face. They might live in a world with funny looking people who act differently, but they all try to get along and hopefully they face their problems and challenges in ways that we could, and they act like heroes.

And that inspires us. That makes us want to be like them. And in inspiring us, we start to feel compelled to make our world a better place – a world more like theirs.

Science Fiction makes us want to shape our world.

Science Fiction and Our World Today

But can we do this? Nahhhhh, we can't do that.

Or can we?

Jules Verne back in the year 1865 – almost 140 years ago wrote a book called *From the Earth to the Moon*. This is an easy question – who can tell me what the book was about? Right, it was about landing a man on the moon. Verne wrote this book in 1865. Now the United States landed a man on the moon in 1969. Anyone know who was the first man on the moon? (Take hands) Right, Neil Armstrong. So we know we can do it. But back when Jules Verne wrote about it, *nobody* thought it was possible. Rockets to outer space did not exist! It was an impossible dream. Fantasy. Fiction. Or *science fiction*.

In 1870, Jules Verne wrote the book *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* which is a book about a submarine powered by atomic energy. What happened in the 1960's almost 100 years later? The United States built the world's first atomic energy powered submarine.

So what is the point here? Did Jules Verne predict the future where we would be able to put submarines under the oceans and people into outer space and land them on the moon? Maybe Verne was just smart and predicted all these things. However, it's also possible that Jules Verne described a world that inspired people so much that they were inspired to make these things reality. Because of Jules Verne, maybe people were inspired to think of a world where we could put explorers into space and on the ocean floor. Then we could face new challenges, overcome new problems, and find out how good we can be, how smart we can be, how kind we can be and how honorable we can be. In short, to learn if we can be heroes.

Science fiction holds out the possibility of what the world could become, and what we could be in the world or do in the world. Sometimes science fiction shows us a world we want to avoid, and other times it points us in a direction we want to head. Jules Verne inspired generations of scientists in the field of rocketry. Star Trek inspired generations to become astronauts because they wanted to explore outer space like the characters in Star Trek.

So we should care about science fiction. We should read it and be inspired. Each and every one of you should be reading and finding ideas you think are good, and ideas you think are bad. That's the first step. The second step is harder. How do you shape the world and make the world a better place?

The history of science fiction tells each and every one of us that it is possible. How did people make Verne's world a reality where we could put an astronaut on the moon? By studying to be scientists and engineers with a dream.

How could you do this? Learn about science and astronomy. Read science fiction and try to learn about the world. Then start to figure out how things should be. Maybe things are fine and you don't need to worry, but maybe we could do better. Maybe we should be putting another space telescope in orbit to learn about the universe. Maybe we should land an astronaut on Mars and learn what is there. Find an idea, any idea, and think about it.

4. ACTIVITY

Mission Team members will design a science fiction story and characters. To do this, Mission Team members will be divided into groups of 3-5 each. Each group will talk about and decide on a story line for a book. The teams will discuss and write down the basic theme, story, and characters. Each group should then identify the scenes for the entire story. These scenes will be recorded on 4X6 index cards. This process is called **story boarding**. After the storyboard is created, Mission Team members will create the characters for the story. Write down the following characteristics: gender, age, height, weight, complexion, education, background, family, dress, attitude, etc.

Each story should be presented to the entire Mission Team. Members can continue this process after the mission and write a science fiction story.

5. TRAINING AIDS

White paper or stationary for each student and at least one envelope per student.

Also, a black or white board and chalk or markers.