SCIENCE FICTION

"Science fiction is something that could happen – but usually you wouldn't want it to. Fantasy is something that couldn't happen – though often you only wish that it could."

Arthur C. Clarke (1917 - 2008), British science fiction writer

1. Science Fiction Discussion

1. What is science fiction? Do you like science fiction? Why or why not?
2. What are some of your favourite sci-fi books, TV shows or films?
3. Is it important that these works of science fiction are true to science? Is that even possible?
4. Which sci-fi stories have successfully predicted the future?
5. What predictions have you seen in sci-fi movies that you think will never happen?
6. What technology from sci-fi films would you like to have?
7. What is the difference between science fiction and fantasy? Is Star Wars science fiction or fantasy?
8. Would you like to go to a sci-fi convention? Why or why not? Which character from science fiction would you dress up as?

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2. Science Fiction Vocabulary

- **futuristic** (adjective) – *extremely modern; something that relates to, or appears to be from, the future.*
- **far-fetched** (adjective) – *describes something that is not believable or unlikely.*
- **the realm of science fiction** (noun) – *things that appear to be from science fiction; often used to dismiss something as far-fetched.*
- **geek** (noun) – *someone who is not socially popular; someone with a particular interest in technology; someone who is extremely interested in, or has an expertise in, a hobby.*
- **warp speed** (noun) – *a hypothetical speed that is faster than the speed of light; used figuratively to refer to something done extremely quickly.*
- **cautionary tale** (noun) – *a story designed as a warning.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun):

1. Carrying a minicomputer in your pocket everywhere you go was in _____ only a couple of decades ago, but today everyone has one in their smartphone.
2. President Trump launched Operation _____ in order to rapidly produce a vaccine for Covid-19.
3. The idea of colonising Mars in the next 20 years seems a little _____ if you ask me.
4. The Terminator was a _____ about the dangers of artificial intelligence.
5. Tokyo is so _____. It's like walking around the set of a sci-fi movie.
6. You don't need to be a computer _____ to learn how to write HTML code.

Science Fiction vocabulary comprehension questions

1. Which are the most futuristic cities in the world?
2. What modern ambitions would you describe as far-fetched?
3. In what ways are we already living in the realm of science fiction today?
4. Is sci-fi only for geeks? Are you a sci-fi geek?
5. Will spaceships ever be able to travel at warp speed?
6. What are some cautionary tales from science fiction?

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3. Video: How Sci-Fi Can Predict The Future

You are going to watch a TED Ed video called "How science fiction can help predict the future."

Watch the video here: https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-science-fiction/

While you watch the video, answer the following questions:

Multiple choice

1. Who do governments and businesses hire to predict the future?
   a) fortune tellers *b) prophets* *c) futurists*

2. Which of the following was not predicted by the RAND Corporation?
   a) synthetic organs *b) the male contraceptive pill* *c) search engines*

3. Predictions of the future can be made by analysing trends in what?
   a) businesses *b) people* *c) sci-fi novels*

4. A 19th century physicist would have no knowledge of what?
   a) electricity *b) gravity* *c) nuclear energy*

Sentence completion

5. Arthur C Clarke said that people would not be able to tell the difference between sufficiently advanced technology and _____.
6. Modern technology and advanced data analysis techniques allow us to predict the future with much more _____.
7. Since the industrial revolution, a new form of _____ emerged called science fiction.
8. Science fiction writers from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries have shared their _____ of the future.

Short answer

9. What did Aldous Huxley predict in *Brave New World*?
10. What did Ray Bradbury predict in *Fahrenheit 451*?
11. Science fiction serves as a useful too for thinking where?
12. The iKnow Project proposed a scenario that included the discovery of what?

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4. Science Fiction Conversation Questions

1. Does science fiction tend to be optimistic or pessimistic about the future? Why do you think that is?
2. Which world from science fiction would you most like to live in? Why?
3. What can sci-fi teach us about humanity and human nature?
4. Why did Arthur C Clarke say, "Two possibilities exist: either we are alone in the Universe, or we are not. Both are equally terrifying."
5. Larry Niven said, "The dinosaurs became extinct because they didn't have a space program. And if we become extinct because we don't have a space program, it'll serve us right!" Do you agree with him?
6. Ray Bradbury said, "We are an impossibility in an impossible universe." What do you think he meant?
7. Do you think reality could be a computer simulation? Could we all be trapped in the Matrix?
8. If you were going to write a science fiction story, what theme would you choose and why?

5. Science Fiction Writing Task

Write about your opinion of science fiction. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this lesson. In your answer, you could include some of the following topics:

- How important the genre is.
- How it can make, and has made, predictions.
- What it can warn us about.

Alternative exam practice question:

While many people simply view science fiction as a form of entertainment, others argue that it has a much greater role in society. What are the roles that science fiction has in society? How can science fiction lead to a greater understanding of society?

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