The Rule of Cool

Linear Equation Inquiry

Main Idea

The theoretical best way to manage the rule of cool; how to balance between realism and absurdity.

As a disclaimer, a story's success should not be purely dependent on *a* and *r*.

As a disclaimer, I realize that this was not exactly an objective analysis. However, the point of the assignment is to observe linear patterns in real life, and I did so, using whatever possibly subjective standards I myself had.

Definitions

Absurdity

A) An element of a story's worldbuilding that has no scientific logical explanation and used only to enhance the main story. The story can substitute this element for something else or remove it entirely. This would not change the theme or character journeys, but instead detriment audience reception. Star Wars with guns rather than lightsabers, Alien with a generic green man instead of the insectoid xenomorph. If the setting is simply futuristic sci-fi and humans have teleportation devices, that count as an absurdity as long as the teleportation devices are not scientifically explained in a way that abides by real-world physics. If the setting is futuristic sci-fi and humans have colonized Saturn, that also counts as an absurdity if the tech to do so isn't explained.

B) Parts of the story itself that are absurd. A background character announcing their death before being crushed, 4th wall breaks, etc. Stuff like the Genie from Aladdin mentioning various modern topics in his opening song. Perhaps the Genie time travelled, but that isn't made explicit in the film so this counts as an absurdity.

Measured in:

Each scene that displays an absurdity for the first time counts as one. The first scene in Star Wars where the audience sees a lightsaber, the scene in Alien when the facehugger first emerges, the scene in C-2 Strain where Salem selects the doomsday countdown and sets it to 'third act'. If multiple absurd worldbuilding elements or absurd character interactions are showcased in one scene, each counts for one. This only counts if there is no explanation for this thing in the media itself. What counts: the film/book/whatever itself, any sequel pieces that are

confirmed as canon. What doesn't count: fandom beliefs, niche social media posts from the creator, anything that a viewer wouldn't find just by seeing the franchise.

Realism

An element of a story that brings sensibility into the narrative; an element that reminds the viewer that this is a real world they're reading about.

Measured in:

Each scene that displays realism counts as one. Characters that interact in realistic ways, scenes that show the brutality of reality, anything that reminds the character and audience that they are real.

Thought Process

- Absurdity and realism will be measured in scenes

- The equation for balance is $a = r$.

- However, you don't always want a perfect balance, so how much and to which side should you skew?

- My idea is that absurdity shouldn't have a limit. A story works as long as there is enough realism to counteract absurdity, therefore realism should be the dependent variable in the balance equation.

- Use of the final equation: count how many absurd scenes you have, and input that into the equation to receive how many realistic scenes you should have.

- This will be my hypothesis. I will now observe the amount of absurd scenes to realistic scenes in various media and find how it affects audience reception.

- There may be some inaccuracies with the specific scenes, as I do not have access to all of this media.

- Keep in mind that we are looking for general success, which includes both general audience and critic reception, as well as things such as legacy and influence.

- Subject 1: The Three Body Problem (Book)

    - Outstanding reception. The first book was groundbreaking to everyone, but the sequels rather dragged the series down as the story slowly relied more on unique ideas rather than in-

the-moment good writing and character work. However, we are only considering book one, and it passes with flying colours, winning audience favour and a multitude of rewards.

- Scene counts

- Absurdity: 98

- Realism: 140

- Final Ratio (*a* to *r*) 98:140 -> 1:1.43

Subject 2: Murder Drones (Show)

- Decent reception. The show was praised for atmosphere, design, and basically anything to do with visuals. However, its weak point is the writing, as it suffered from at least one full rewrite and near-complete lack of character arcs. This dragged down the show in many viewer's eyes.

- Scene counts

- Absurdity: 239

- Realism: 232

- Final Ratio (*a* to *r*) 239:232 -> 1:0.97

Subject 3: Tales from the Loop (Show)

- Good reception. Most people agree that it does well visually and does the original artbook justice, as well as having imaginative and well-written plotlines. However, many complain about the show's pacing, stating that it's too slow. This is likely up to personal opinion but will deduct some score regardless.

- Scene counts

- Absurdity: 96

- Realism: 135

- Final Ratio (*a* to *r*) 96:135 -> 1:1.41

- As you can see here, there is a slight trend between realism/absurdity counts and audience reception. Murder Drones, the most controversial piece of media here, has the most balanced ratio between absurdity and realism. Tales from the Loop was slightly worse received than The Three Body Problem and has a slight deviation from Three Body's 1:1.43 (Tales from the Loop's ratio was 1:1.41).

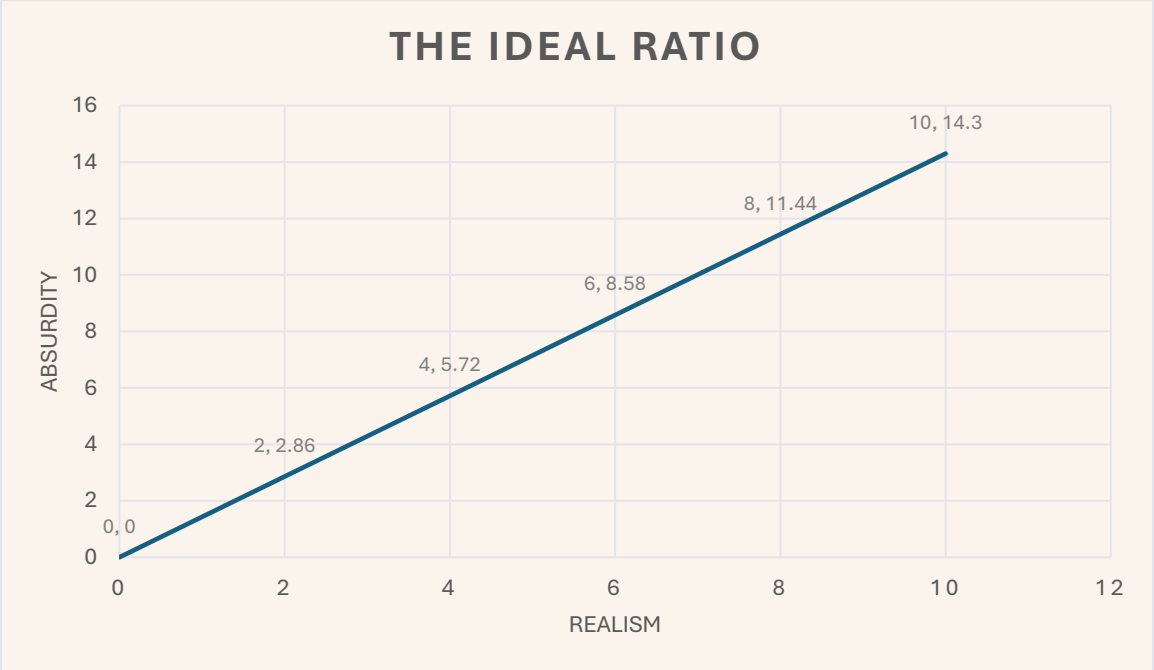
- In conclusion, perfect balance of *a* and *r* is not ideal for audience reception. Going lower than 1:1.43 results in a decrease in audience favour, and there's a possibility that the ideal ratio is higher than 1:1.43. However, I've run out of time so I may as well leave it here. Three Body was extremely well received regardless, so 1:1.43 should be a safe ratio.

- The resulting equation: $r = 1.43a$

Graphs, Tables, and Equations

- Set A: The ideal ratio

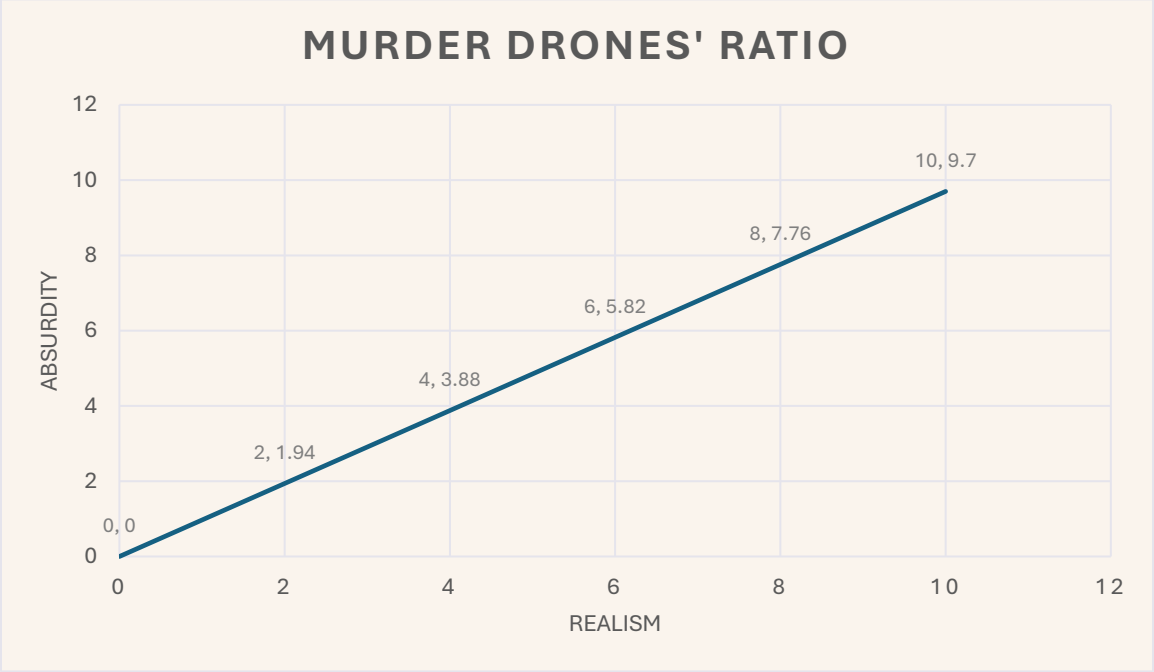
  $r = 1.43a$



R	*A*
0	0
2	2.86
4	5.72
6	8.58
8	11.44
10	14.3

- Set B: Murder Drones' Ratio

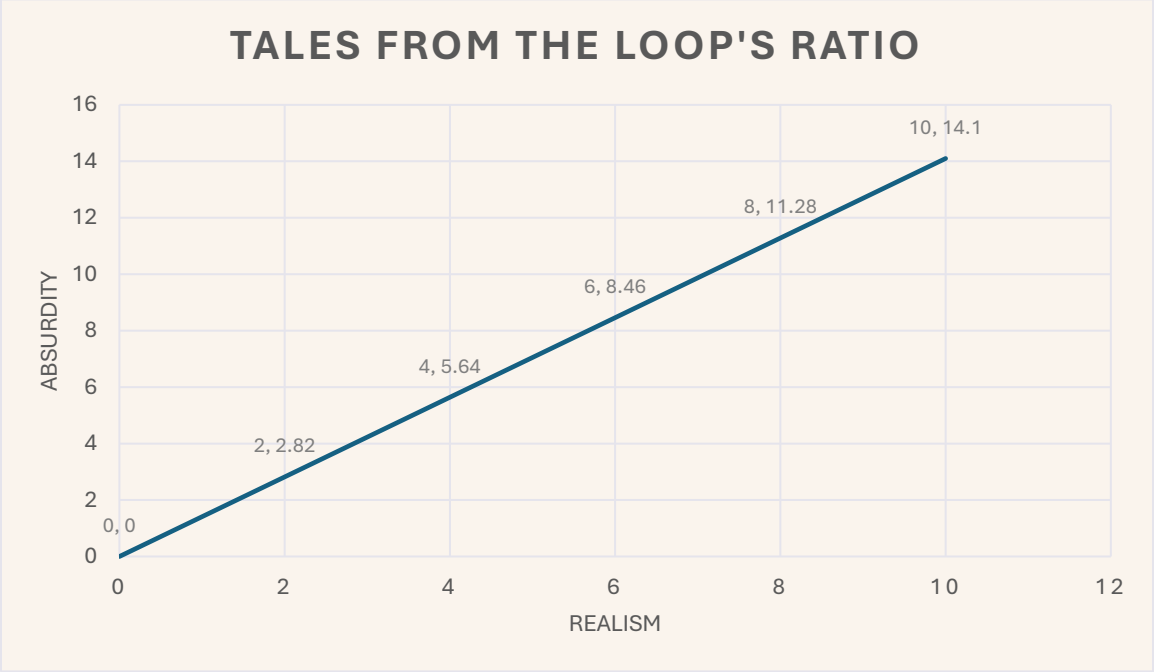
  $r = 0.97a$



R	a
0	0
2	1.94
4	3.88
6	5.82
8	7.76
10	9.7

- Set A: Tales from the Loop's ratio

  $r = 1.41a$



r	a
0	0
2	2.82
4	5.64
6	8.46
8	11.28
10	14.1

Function Explanations

A function is an equation that takes an input and produces an output. Results from these inputs and outputs, when plotted on a graph and connected, produce lines of various shapes. Linear functions will produce straight lines, because their progression between outputs and inputs is consistent – linear. Nonlinear functions will produce curved lines, as the progression between outputs and inputs is inconsistent – nonlinear.

The slope is the value used to express the steepness of the line. In linear functions, the slope can be found by employing *rise* over *run*. Draw a right triangle between two consecutive coordinates outputted by the function, using one point as the head and the other as one of the sides of the base. The height of this triangle is the *rise* and the width of its base is the *run*. By putting *rise* over *run* in a fraction, we obtain the slope.

A standard linear equation comes in the form of $y = mx + b$, in which y and x and the y and x of the outputted coordinates, m is the slope, and b is the y-intercept. The y-intercept is the point at which the line passes $x = 0$.

Both slope and y-intercept can be used to easily graph the line of a linear function. Simply place a point on the y-axis at the y-value b and use the slope to go up/down from there using the triangle method I explained earlier. Done correctly, this will produce a straight line on the coordinate grid.