



# Science Fiction Conventions and Themes



# What is Extrapolation?

Extrapolation is when a writer takes a known scientific fact and imagines what might happen if certain events or circumstances evolve.

For example:

1. Man can build space shuttles.
2. Let's imagine, man can travel to faraway planets.



## Science Fiction VS. Fantasy

In Science Fiction, there needs to be some possibility that the events could possibly happen.

In Fantasy, the author can use far-fetched assumptions. ie; unicorns, three-legged creatures etc.

Miriam Allen de Ford explains the difference between science fiction and fantasy: "'Science fiction deals with improbable possibilities, fantasy with plausible impossibilities" (Aldiss 26).

## Major Themes in Science Fiction

- Space travel to and from other planets  
(ie: Star Wars, Star Trek)
- Time travel to the past and future  
(ie: Back to the Future)
- Psychological/biological changes to man brought about by scientific changes  
(ie: The Incredible Hulk, Spider Man)

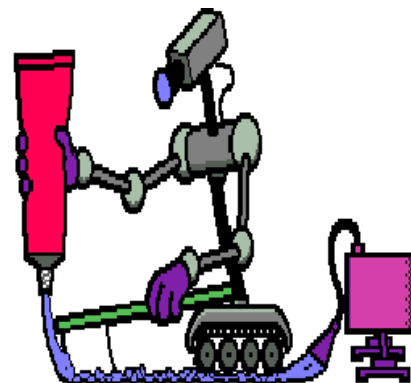
- Supernormal powers/talents  
(ie: Superman, Spiderman, Batman)
- Science applied to human relations for constructive or destructive purposes  
(ie: Weird Science, Frankenstein)
- Battle with alien life forms  
(ie: Signs, The Day the Earth Stood Still, District 9)
- Alternate Universe  
(ie: Star Wars)

## Plot Conventions of Science Fiction



Examples of Story Ideas:

- The Last Man/Woman on Earth
- The Robot
- The First Landing Story
- Time Travel
- The Alternate World
- The Lost Civilization



- The Alien Encounter
- The Colonization of a New Planet
- The End of the World
- The Long Spaceship Voyage
- The Computer
- From the point of view of an alien



- ◆ Science fiction allows us to understand and experience our past, present, and future in terms of an imagined future.

Kathryn Cramer, *The Ascent of Wonder* (1994)

# Definition of the Genre

- ◆ The science fiction genre, an exciting collection of intellectual and physical adventure, overlaps a great deal with all other genres. In general, science fiction is considered to be a genre that explores the question "what if?".
- ◆ It continually investigates moral, philosophical and technological possibilities by creating new and exciting realities. Science fiction deals with "scientific topics, space travel, aliens and recognizably Earth-variant worlds or life forms that have not been touched by magic". Time travel is also a common theme in many science fiction novels.
- ◆ Within the genre there is great variation in the topics, themes and length of science fiction works

- ◆ The following is a list of many of the themes that are covered within the genre of science fiction:
  - ◆ Ecology
  - ◆ Messianic/Religious
  - ◆ Dystopia/Utopia
  - ◆ Apocalypse
  - ◆ Alternate and Parallel Worlds
  - ◆ Immortality
  - ◆ Social Criticism

# Appeal and Characteristics of the genre

- ◆ Though there is a great deal of diversity and variety within this genre, the following discussion includes the characteristics that are common to all science fiction works. This discussion shows how these characteristics relate to the four general appeal factors for fiction.

## Storyline

- ◆ Science fiction is widely recognized as speculative fiction. Works in this genre have storylines that explore moral, social, philosophical, technical and intellectual issues and/or questions. Authors utilize a setting that establishes otherness of time and/or place, a setting outside of everyday reality, to allow for the discussion of new, challenging and sometimes controversial ideas.

## Frame

- ◆ One important part of the frame in science fiction works is the technical and scientific detail. As discussed above, one of the important traits of this genre is its focus on science and technology.
- ◆ The frame of the story, the special setting or particular atmosphere, is instrumental in setting the tone.

## Characterization

- ◆ Characters are usually secondary to the questions that are pursued through the action of the plot. Though the more literary end of the genre does focus more heavily on characters, in general the genre focuses on situations and events. Also, many of the science fiction characters are series characters, developed slowly over the course of the series.



# Pacing

- ◆ The pacing within the genre varies greatly with the particular work, but it is generally linked to the type and amount of action in the story. The action in science fiction works may be either psychological/philosophical (interior) or physical (exterior) or both.