

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 ENGLISH/HANDOUT 4

READING COMPREHENSION

Use the questions below to test your reading comprehension of the first four chapters of *The Maze Runner*. Your teacher may assign questions to smaller groups. If you haven't begun reading the novel, please read Chapter 4 (attached).

Story:

1. What is the significance of the title? Do the chapters have titles – why not? What titles would you give the first two chapters?
2. Do the first four chapters foreshadow any major themes?
3. What did you think of the structure and style of the writing?
4. Which scene was the most pivotal in Chapter 1? Which scene is the most important in Chapter 2? Chapter 3? Chapter 4?
5. What scene resonated most with you personally in either a positive or negative way? Why?
6. Has anything ever happened to you similar to what happened in the first four chapters? How did you react to it differently?
7. What surprised you the most about the first four chapters?
8. Were there any notable racial, cultural, traditions, gender, sexuality or socioeconomic factors at play in the first four chapters? If so, what? How did it effect the characters? Do you think they were realistically portrayed so far?
9. Do the first four chapters reveal anything about the setting and time period to the story so far?
10. Were there any particular sentences or phrases that stood out to you? Why?

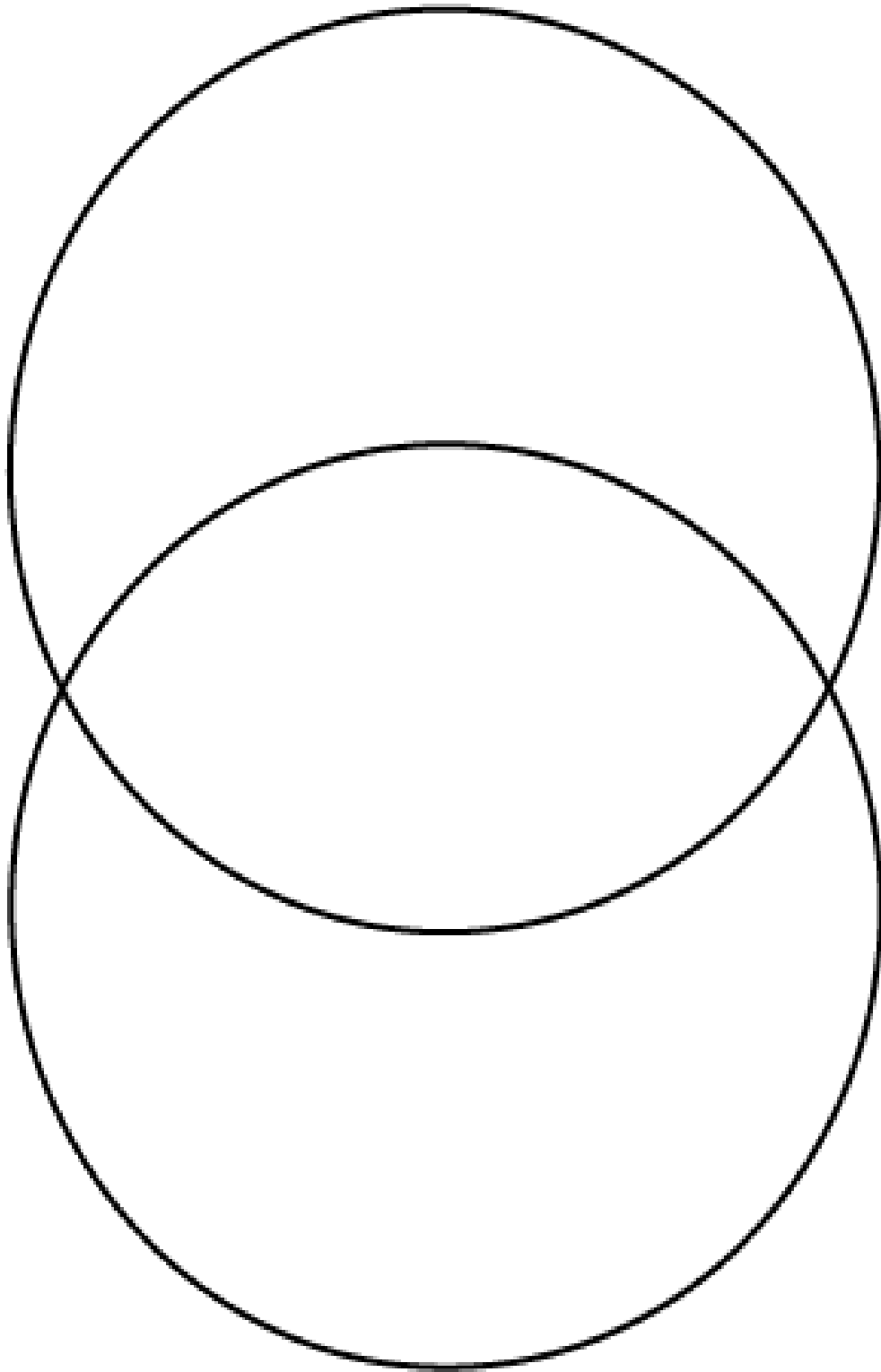
Characters:

11. Did any of the characters remind you of yourself or someone you know? How?
12. What is motivating the actions of the characters in the story? What do the sub-characters want from the main character and what does the main character want with them?
13. What were the dynamics of "power" between the characters? How did that play a factor in their interactions?
14. How does the way the characters see themselves, differ from how others see them? How do you see the various characters?
15. How did the "roles" of the various characters influence their interactions? I.e. For a woman: Mother, daughter, sister, wife, lover, professional, etc.
16. Were there any moments where you disagreed with the choices of any of the characters? What would you have done differently?
17. Are there any past influences that are shaping the actions of the characters?

The Ending:

18. Do the chapters end in an appropriate way? How would you have liked to have seen the ending go?
19. What do you think will happen next to the main characters?

Compare the main character in the first four chapters of *The Maze Runner* and the main character in the first 10 minutes of the movie adaptation.



CHAPTER 4

Thomas leaned against the tree as he waited for Chuck. He scanned the compound of the Glade, this new place of nightmares where he seemed destined to live. The shadows from the walls had lengthened considerably, already creeping up the sides of the ivy-covered stone faces on the other side.

At least this helped Thomas know directions—the wooden building crouched in the northwest corner, wedged in a darkening patch of shadow, the grove of trees in the southwest. The farm area, where a few workers were still picking their way through the fields, spread across the entire northeast quarter of the Glade. The animals were in the southeast corner, mooing and crowing and baying.

In the exact middle of the courtyard, the still-gaping hole of the Box lay open, as if inviting him to jump back in and go home. Near that, maybe twenty feet to the south, stood a squat building made of rough concrete blocks, a menacing iron door its only entrance—there were no windows. A large round handle resembling a steel steering wheel marked the only way to open the door, just like something within a submarine. Despite what he'd just seen, Thomas didn't know which he felt more strongly—curiosity to know what was inside, or dread at finding out.

Thomas had just moved his attention to the four vast openings in the middle of the main walls of the Glade when Chuck arrived, a couple of sandwiches cradled in his arms, along with apples and two metal cups of water. The sense of relief that flooded through Thomas surprised him—he

wasn't *completely* alone in this place.

"Frypan wasn't too happy about me invading his kitchen before suppertime," Chuck said, sitting down next to the tree, motioning to Thomas to do the same. He did, grabbed the sandwich, but hesitated, the writhing, monstrous image of what he'd seen in the shack popping back into his mind. Soon, though, his hunger won out and he took a huge bite. The wonderful tastes of ham and cheese and mayonnaise filled his mouth.

"Ah, man," Thomas mumbled through a mouthful. "I was starving."

"Told ya." Chuck chomped into his own sandwich.

After another couple of bites, Thomas finally asked the question that had been bothering him. "What's actually *wrong* with that Ben guy? He doesn't even look human anymore."

Chuck glanced over at the house. "Don't really know," he muttered absently. "I didn't see him."

Thomas could tell the boy was being less than honest but decided not to press him. "Well, you don't want to see him, trust me." He continued to eat, munching on the apples as he studied the huge breaks in the walls. Though it was hard to make out from where he sat, there was something odd about the stone edges of the exits to the outside corridors. He felt an uncomfortable sense of vertigo looking at the towering walls, as if he hovered above them instead of sitting at their base.

"What's out there?" he asked, finally breaking the silence. "Is this part of a huge castle or something?"

Chuck hesitated. Looked uncomfortable. "Um, I've never been outside the Glade."

Thomas paused. "You're hiding something," he finally replied, finishing off his last bite and taking a long swig of water. The frustration at getting no answers from anyone was starting to grind his nerves. It only made it

worse to think that even if he *did* get answers, he wouldn't know if he'd be getting the truth. "Why are you guys so secretive?"

"That's just the way it is. Things are really weird around here, and most of us don't know everything. *Half* of everything."

It bothered Thomas that Chuck didn't seem to care about what he'd just said. That he seemed indifferent to having his life taken away from him. What was wrong with these people? Thomas got to his feet and started walking toward the eastern opening. "Well, no one said I couldn't look around." He needed to learn something or he was going to lose his mind.

"Whoa, wait!" Chuck cried, running to catch up. "Be careful, those puppies are about to close." He already sounded out of breath.

"Close?" Thomas repeated. "What are you talking about?"

"The Doors, you shank."

"Doors? I don't see any doors." Thomas knew Chuck wasn't just making stuff up—he knew he was missing something obvious. He grew uneasy and realized he'd slowed his pace, not so eager to reach the walls anymore.

"What do you call those big openings?" Chuck pointed up at the enormously tall gaps in the walls. They were only thirty feet away now.

"I'd call them *big openings*," Thomas said, trying to counter his discomfort with sarcasm and disappointed that it wasn't working.

"Well, they're *doors*. And they close up every night."

Thomas stopped, thinking Chuck had to have said something wrong. He looked up, looked side to side, examined the massive slabs of stone as the uneasy feeling blossomed into outright dread. "What do you mean, they *close*?"

"Just see for yourself in a minute. The Runners'll be back soon; then those big walls are going to *move* until the gaps are closed."

"You're jacked in the head," Thomas muttered. He couldn't see how the

mammoth walls could possibly be mobile—felt so sure of it he relaxed, thinking Chuck was just playing a trick on him.

They reached the huge split that led outside to more stone pathways. Thomas gaped, his mind emptying of thought as he saw it all firsthand.

“This is called the East Door,” Chuck said, as if proudly revealing a piece of art he’d created.

Thomas barely heard him, shocked by how much bigger it was up close. At least twenty feet across, the break in the wall went all the way to the top, far above. The edges that bordered the vast opening were smooth, except for one odd, repeating pattern on both sides. On the left side of the East Door, deep holes several inches in diameter and spaced a foot apart were bored into the rock, beginning near the ground and continuing all the way up.

On the right side of the Door, foot-long rods jutted out from the wall edge, also several inches in diameter, in the same pattern as the holes facing them on the other side. The purpose was obvious.

“Are you kidding?” Thomas asked, the dread slamming back into his gut. “You weren’t playing with me? The walls really *move*?”

“What else would I have meant?”

Thomas had a hard time wrapping his mind around the possibility. “I don’t know. I figured there was a door that swung shut or a little mini-wall that slid out of the big one. How could these walls move? They’re huge, and they look like they’ve been standing here for a thousand years.” And the idea of those walls closing and trapping him inside this place they called the Glade was downright terrifying.

Chuck threw his arms up, clearly frustrated. “I don’t know, they just move. Makes one heck of a grinding noise. Same thing happens out in the Maze—those walls shift every night, too.”

Thomas, his attention suddenly snapped up by a new detail, turned to face the younger boy. “What did you just say?”

“Huh?”

“You just called it a maze—you said, ‘same thing happens out in the *maze*.’”

Chuck’s face reddened. “I’m done with you. I’m done.” He walked back toward the tree they’d just left.

Thomas ignored him, more interested than ever in the outside of the Glade. A *maze*? In front of him, through the East Door, he could make out passages leading to the left, to the right, and straight ahead. And the walls of the corridors were similar to those that surrounded the Glade, the ground made of the same massive stone blocks as in the courtyard. The ivy seemed even thicker out there. In the distance, more breaks in the walls led to other paths, and farther down, maybe a hundred yards or so away, the straight passage came to a dead end.

“Looks like a maze,” Thomas whispered, almost laughing to himself. As if things couldn’t have gotten any stranger. They’d wiped his memory and put him inside a gigantic maze. It was all so crazy it really did seem funny.

His heart skipped a beat when a boy unexpectedly appeared around a corner up ahead, entering the main passage from one of the offshoots to the right, running toward him and the Glade. Covered in sweat, his face red, clothes sticking to his body, the boy didn’t slow, hardly glancing at Thomas as he went past. He headed straight for the squat concrete building located near the Box.

Thomas turned as he passed, his eyes riveted to the exhausted runner, unsure why this new development surprised him so much. Why *wouldn’t* people go out and search the maze? Then he realized others were entering through the remaining three Glade openings, all of them running and

looking as ragged as the guy who'd just whisked by him. There couldn't be much good about the maze if these guys came back looking so weary and worn.

He watched, curious, as they met at the big iron door of the small building; one of the boys turned the rusty wheel handle, grunting with the effort. Chuck had said something about runners earlier. What had they been doing out there?

The big door finally popped open, and with a deafening squeal of metal against metal, the boys swung it wide. They disappeared inside, pulling it shut behind them with a loud clonk. Thomas stared, his mind churning to come up with any possible explanation for what he'd just witnessed. Nothing developed, but something about that creepy old building gave him goose bumps, a disquieting chill.

Someone tugged on his sleeve, breaking him from his thoughts; Chuck had come back.

Before Thomas had a chance to think, questions were rushing out of his mouth. "Who are those guys and what were they doing? What's in that building?" He wheeled around and pointed out the East Door. "And why do you live inside a freaking maze?" He felt a rattling pressure of uncertainty, making his head splinter with pain.

"I'm not saying another word," Chuck replied, a new authority filling his voice. "I think you should get to bed early—you'll need your sleep. Ah"—he stopped, held up a finger, pricking up his right ear—"it's about to happen."

"What?" Thomas asked, thinking it kind of strange that Chuck was suddenly acting like an adult instead of the little kid desperate for a friend he'd been only moments earlier.

A loud boom exploded through the air, making Thomas jump. It was

followed by a horrible crunching, grinding sound. He stumbled backward, fell to the ground. It felt as if the whole earth shook; he looked around, panicked. The walls were closing. The walls were *really* closing—trapping him inside the Glade. An onrushing sense of claustrophobia stifled him, compressed his lungs, as if water filled their cavities.

“Calm down, Greenie,” Chuck yelled over the noise. “It’s just the walls!”

Thomas barely heard him, too fascinated, too shaken by the closing of the Doors. He scrambled to his feet and took a few trembling steps back for a better view, finding it hard to believe what his eyes were seeing.

The enormous stone wall to the right of them seemed to defy every known law of physics as it slid along the ground, throwing sparks and dust as it moved, rock against rock. The crunching sound rattled his bones. Thomas realized that only *that* wall was moving, heading for its neighbor to the left, ready to seal shut with its protruding rods slipping into the drilled holes across from it. He looked around at the other openings. It felt like his head was spinning faster than his body, and his stomach flipped over with the dizziness. On all four sides of the Glade, only the right walls were moving, toward the left, closing the gap of the Doors.

Impossible, he thought. *How can they do that?* He fought the urge to run out there, slip past the moving slabs of rock before they shut, flee the Glade. Common sense won out—the maze held even more unknowns than his situation inside.

He tried to picture in his mind how the structure of it all worked. Massive stone walls, hundreds of feet high, moving like sliding glass doors—an image from his past life that flashed through his thoughts. He tried to grasp the memory, hold on to it, complete the picture with faces, names, a place, but it faded into obscurity. A pang of sadness pricked through his other swirling emotions.

He watched as the right wall reached the end of its journey, its connecting rods finding their mark and entering without a glitch. An echoing boom rumbled across the Glade as all four Doors sealed shut for the night. Thomas felt one final moment of trepidation, a quick slice of fear through his body, and then it vanished.

A surprising sense of calm eased his nerves; he let out a long sigh of relief. “Wow,” he said, feeling dumb at such a monumental understatement.

“Ain’t nothin’, as Alby would say,” Chuck murmured. “You kind of get used to it after a while.”

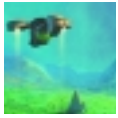
Thomas looked around one more time, the *feel* of the place completely different now that all the walls were solid with no way out. He tried to imagine the purpose of such a thing, and he didn’t know which guess was worse—that they were being sealed *in* or that they were being protected from something *out there*. The thought ended his brief moment of calm, stirring in his mind a million possibilities of what might live in the maze outside, all of them terrifying. Fear gripped him once again.

“Come *on*,” Chuck said, pulling at Thomas’s sleeve a second time. “Trust me, when nighttime strikes, you want to be in *bed*.”

Thomas knew he had no other choice. He did his best to suppress everything he was feeling and followed.

ADDITIONAL READING

Resource from European Space Agency adapted for Olympiads School
<http://www.esa.int/esapub/br/br176/br176.pdf>



David
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ESA

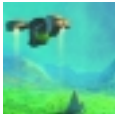
The idea that perhaps science-fiction (SF) literature contained innovative technological ideas that could possibly be brought to the point of development with either today's technology or technology that is just around the corner was the driving force behind a recent European Space Agency (ESA) study entitled "Innovative Technologies from Science Fiction" (ITSF).

The main objectives of the study were to review the past and present science-fiction literature, artwork and films in order to identify and assess innovative technologies and concepts described therein which could possibly be developed further for space applications. In addition, it was hoped to garner imaginative ideas, potentially viable

for long-term development by the European space sector, which could help in predicting the course of future space technologies and their impact.

Those involved in the study (scientists, engineers, SF writers, laymen) reviewed and brain-stormed on the technologies in SF literature and came up with a list of technologies which an expert team is assessing to see whether they might be worthy of greater in-depth evaluation. Some technologies might be judged unfeasible, some might have already been tried before and found not to work. However, new tools and techniques are being developed all the time and what was not possible several years ago might be possible today. Indeed, the study has already suggested a couple of promising areas for further investigation. Many of the concepts, technologies and devices thrown up by the study are contained in this brochure, together with artists' conceptions of these ideas.

Science-fiction literature, artwork and films are full of descriptions of space technologies and systems – often just pure imagination, sometimes based on some semblance of fact. Early science-fiction authors, artists, and illustrators described space concepts and spacecraft based on the limited scientific knowledge available at the time, whereas more modern writers generally portray the same basic systems as used in real-life space flight in their literature and art, even though artistic licence is often employed. It still gives them the opportunity, however, to promote their ideas, which may not otherwise be possible through more formal scientific evaluation processes.



Novel ideas clearly play an important role in science and technology, even when they do not have an immediately testable aspect, and writers predicted satellites and spaceflight well before they were actually possible. For instance, man has dreamed, and explored ways, of going to the Moon for centuries (take Cyrano de Bergerac in the 1650s), but it is only in very recent times that the technologies and infrastructure were in place to actually make it possible. It should thus be feasible to identify some new ideas in SF capable of convincing engineers to work seriously from such imagination. One has only to look at the past, where concepts described by Jules Verne, for instance, or Arthur C. Clarke and many others, have subsequently been developed or rediscovered.

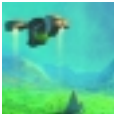
Although early writings were often wildly inaccurate in many areas, some of the predictions made did come to pass and some of the systems and technologies described were subsequently successfully developed. Examples include ultra-high-velocity projectile launchers (1865); retro-rockets (1869); planetary landers (1928); rocket fins for aerodynamic stability (1929); vertical assembly buildings (1929); clustered rocket boosters (1929); EVA, pressure suits, life-support tethers (1929); construction of orbital space stations complete with living quarters using material ferried up and regular service visits (1945); satellite communication, with the satellites in geostationary orbit (1945); solar- and light-sails (1920, 1951, 1963); multiple-propellant storage tanks (1954); streamlined crew modules for atmospheric entry (1954), and so on.

Another example of a technology mentioned in the SF literature is that of the space elevator. This concept was first mooted in 1895 by a Russian scientist, looked at again some 60 years later by another Soviet scientist, studied further by an American physicist in 1970, and became the subject of an SF book by Arthur C. Clarke in 1979. NASA has recently completed a detailed study of the concept of space elevators and concluded that in possibly 50 years or so, this method of cheap transportation to geostationary orbit could become a reality. In fact, both NASA and ESA are looking at quite a few concepts in the advanced-propulsion area, some of which have been described to a greater or lesser extent in the SF literature.

In any discussion about the future of technology, it is difficult to determine exactly when a technology might be taken up and become ubiquitous. There are plenty of technologies that have taken (and still do take) many years to be accepted and deployed. Equally today there are many technologies in existence that could never have been conceived of one hundred years ago or even fifty. This phenomenon allows writers to put ideas or dreams down on paper that are not immediately dismissed as irrelevant either by the layman, engineer or scientist and which may perhaps ultimately bring the seemingly fantastic inventions into reality.

Science fiction can thus be used to stimulate thoughts and ideas that could perhaps be turned into a more realistic scenario with the eventual development of new innovative technologies not as conservative as those currently used in the space field. In fact, Hugo Gernsback, founder of "Amazing Stories" magazine in 1926, noted that science fiction was socially useful precisely because it inspired research and inventions.

On the other hand, we also have it in ourselves to develop technologies for their own sake, as well as for some ultimately useful purpose, including exploration. Inventors often invent things or come up with concepts that have no immediate or obvious application or a use outside a narrow specific domain and it requires a leap of imagination



by someone else to turn that invention into a useful product elsewhere. This is where spin-off from space technologies comes into its own, and why it can take so long for some ideas or technologies to reach the marketplace.

A pioneer or dreamer will still have his dream regardless of whether the technology is actually available to make it a reality (take Dick Tracy and his two-way wristwatch radio for instance in the 1940s - that has only become a reality today, 60 years later with miniaturisation); and equally an engineer or inventor will still create a machine regardless of whether there is a defined use for it or not (take some of the developments in the robotics field, for instance). The application and selling of that idea often comes much later. On the other hand, innovative engineers can certainly take a dream or an imaginative idea and bring it to reality.



DAVID HARDY

The study on innovative technologies for space applications emanating from science-fiction literature, art and films is something that is new and original for ESA and it could have important consequences for the use of existing and the development of new technologies. It is an in-depth look beyond the actual borders of science and techniques, and it deals with exciting concepts that might be worthy of eventual consideration for ESA's long-term space programmes and be explored in the decades to come. Quite apart from the potential contribution to future technological progress in space activities, the study and its description, categorisation and evaluation of technologies should offer a stimulating perspective to the science-fiction community at large, and provide science-fiction authors with fresh ideas and trends.

There have always been explorers and pioneers – it is a basic, not only human instinct – from animals in search of new pastures, from prehistoric man who crossed continental divides in pursuit of food and to find new places to live, and to people in our own times who have sailed the oceans and traversed the land in search of adventure. Where would we be today without the great explorers of the past?

So we have an in-built need to explore new places – especially the tiny pinpricks of stars in the night sky – simply because they are there and we are curious. For the purposes of such exploration, we have a need for new or improved technologies. Given that we have this built-in desire to explore, we will eventually develop the technologies to do this, when the real need is there and when other enabling technologies and materials become cheap enough or feasible enough to do so. This may take years or even centuries to achieve – but looking at the ideas and concepts of the past, which may have been forgotten or overlooked because they were not in mainstream science and technology, is certainly a worthwhile exercise and they may just give us a kick-start.



*Jean-Claude
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from the
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A Touch of Science in Your Fiction...

Without wanting to give a precise definition of "science fiction" (please God let me refrain from this temptation!) we can, however, underline that a science-fiction story is supposed to contain at least one scientific component – idea, theory, invention, paradox – which is intimately interwoven into the tale. In fact, the adherents of classical science fiction even claim that a science-fiction story can only be told through a link with this scientific component, which should generate the story, provide its originality and contribute to its resolution.

When I use the word "science", I embrace all sciences: nuclear physics as well as linguistics or anthropology, the cognitive sciences and the human sciences, the mathematical sciences or the aesthetic theories. The important aspect is that there should be a reasoning and a corpus of rules or axioms, a way to justify or to comprehend the world.

I want to return to this notion of science intimately mixed with fiction. We can use fiction as a scenery, as an image generator, as a catalyst of situations. Where does the limit lie between science fiction and the rest? It is sometimes difficult to be precise. Romeo and Juliette simply relocated to another planet is not really science fiction. Romeo and Juliette transcended – or twisted – by the fact that Romeo is an android or that Juliette is an extra-terrestrial entity trapped within a virtual Verone is not necessarily science fiction either – unless and except if the incorporation of the scientific component compels us to understand the story differently.

We can normally recognise science fiction if the underlying scientific idea generates a metamorphosis or a renewal of the story. The movie "Outland" (with Sean Connery) is a Western which takes place in a space station – an OK Corral in Space, if you prefer. The faint science-fiction aspect (here the space station) helps to add some striking images and to renew the scenery. It has no other purpose whatsoever and the same movie could have been filmed in a different epoch and in a different locality. Other Westerns exist that support this point. "Blade Runner", on the contrary, is indisputably science fiction, because the scientific idea of the "replicant" (or artificial human) compels us to comprehend differently the very notion of humanity.

In a science-fiction work, the science is not only there for embellishing things. It is the magic wand that can transcend the story!



HUBERT DE LARTIGUE