

Frankenstein and the Birth of Science Fiction

An introduction to Sci-Fi

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1. Read

We all know the story of Frankenstein, right? You know, the big ugly green monster brought to life by his creator. The one who is treated like a monster by the people all around him but who perhaps has a bigger heart and a bigger conscience than most of those people. Anyway, I won't tell you too much about the story because you can go and read the book yourselves. Did you know though that the author of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley, is very important for two reasons: one, she was a successful female author (not easy in the early 19th century) and two, a lot of people consider her book *Frankenstein*, published in 1818, to be the first ever science fiction book.

What exactly is science fiction though? It's a genre of story (book or film) which is totally based on imaginary events; events that could never really happen but which are made possible thanks to advanced science and technology which are not available in the real world. This is why lots of sci-fi stories involve aliens, spaceships, time machines and dead people coming back to life, for example.

While *Frankenstein* is one of the most famous stories, there are lots of others too. Another British author, HG Wells, wrote *The War of the Worlds* in 1897 about an alien invasion which terrified the British people; the French author Jules Verne wrote *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* in 1870 about an underwater world and the American author Orson Scott Card wrote *Ender's Game* more recently in 1985. The theme in this book is again about the planet earth under attack from aliens and shows that this genre remains very popular today. Never read a science fiction story? Then start now and prepare to be truly fascinated!

2. Circle the six Sci-Fi words & phrases

- a. aliens
- b. spaceship
- c. castle
- d. time machine
- e. intergalactic war
- f. avatars
- g. parallel universes

3. Match each noun to the correct sentence.

Match each word (a-f) to the best phrase (1-6) to make a complete sentence.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| a. Aliens | 1. travel around the galaxy. |
| b. Spaceships | 2. invade the planet earth. |
| c. The time machine | 3. go on a dangerous mission. |
| d. An intergalactic war | 4. exist. |
| e. Avatars | 5. explodes in the laboratory. |
| f. Parallel universes | 6. starts between the inhabitants of the planets. |

4. Put these comic strip pictures in the right order to make a story.



We've discovered a new planet called Earth. We can conquer it!

We can use our fire-breathing dragons to surprise the enemy.



Let's go in our spaceships and attack those aliens! Now!

These avatars are our super soldiers!



Those aliens on planet Earth don't even know we exist! Ha ha ha!

5. Use some of the words and phrases from exercise 3 to help you summarise the comic strip story.

For example: Aliens invade planet Earth. There is an intergalactic war.

6. Draw and write your own comic strip about a time machine that explodes in a laboratory.

Teacher's Notes

1. Before reading ask the students what they know about sci-fi, if they like it and if they can name any famous authors.
2. Circle all the words apart from 'c' CASTLE.
3. Before doing exercise 3 try and elicit some sci-fi story ideas from your class. What elements are often present in these stories? Aliens that INVADE planets. Spaceships that TRAVEL around the galaxy, for example.

a. 2 b. 1 c. 5 d. 6 e. 3 f. 4

4. Read the comic strip together. Students should try to put the pictures in an order that makes sense. Suggested answer:

1st a 2nd c 3^d b or d 4th b or d 5th e

As long as **a** is first and **c** is second, the rest of the pictures can be in any order.

Ask the students what is unusual about the story. Answer: that the aliens call humans 'aliens.' We always see the 'other' as the alien group; this, of course, has social implications here on Earth too.

5. Put the students into groups so that they can write their summaries of the events seen in the comic strip together. Sample answer: Aliens invade planet Earth. There is an intergalactic war. The aliens send spaceships, fire-breathing dragons and avatars to stop the humans. The humans don't even know the aliens exist.
6. Students could work on their comic strips in groups if you have enough class time available, or they could do it as homework.

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