



Science Fiction Unit
Mrs. Terry
Language Arts

HOT Question

Is today's science fiction
tomorrow's science fact?
Explain.



What is Science Fiction?

Science fiction is a genre (or form) of fiction that explores imaginary possibilities and consequences of developments in science and technology. It is an extremely broad category of genre, crossing over into other areas of fiction including horror, fantasy and historical fiction. Whereas the setting of science fiction stories may occur in the future, in an alternate galaxy or in an altered present, the thematic concerns of sci-fi tend to reflect a mixture of universal questions regarding humanity and the contemporary contexts of their composers. Put another way, science fiction plays with answers to the big scientific questions we ask of our imaginations:

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF ...?



Handout

- Please click on the link below and complete the activities on the worksheet.

[An Introduction to Science Fiction](#)

Opening Activity

- In your composition book on a page labeled “Conflict,” list as many types (_____ vs. _____) and examples of conflict as you can think of. You may use examples from literature or life.
- Internal vs. External

“All Summer in a Day”

- Why doesn't Margot fit in with the other children?
- How have the people on Venus adapted to the rainy climate?
- Every seven years when the Sun comes out the plant life on Venus changes. What happens?
- List and describe three conflicts in the story: two external and one internal
- Write at least three thematic statements for the story. Sentence stem: In this story, the author shows us that _____

This story uses many comparisons to present ideas. For example, when the children recall that Margot was left behind in the closet, the author writes, “They stood as if someone had driven them, like so many stakes, into the floor.” Two kinds of literary comparisons are similes and metaphors. A simile, such as the example above, is a comparison that uses “like” or “as.” A metaphor is a comparison that does not use “like” or “as.” List at least five examples of metaphors and/or similes from the story.

Write five of your own similes or metaphors in a description of some part of the story or one of the characters. You might describe Margot, life on Venus, Venus’s climate, or how the Sun appears to the children.

Reading Selection:

“There Will Come Soft Rains” by Ray
Bradbury

Objectives:

- TSW compare and contrast themes across works of literature (R 2.1.2).
- TSW analyze the relevance of setting to the mood and the tone of the text (R 2.1.5).
- TSW determine the meaning of figurative language, specifically *allusion* (R 1.4.4).
- TSW describe the historical and cultural aspects in literature (R 2.2.1)

Pre-Reading Activity

- Read the poems “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Sara Teasdale and “The Children’s Hour” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.
- Answer the questions below for *each* poem.
 1. What is this poem saying? Summarize it in your own words.
 2. Write a thematic statement for this poem.

Pre-Reading Activity

- Read the poem “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Sara Teasdale
- Answer the questions in your composition book:
 1. What is this poem saying? Summarize it in your own words.
 2. Write a thematic statement for this poem.

“There Will Come Soft Rains”
by Sara Teasdale (1920)

There will come soft rain and the smell of the ground,
And swallows circling with their shimmering sound;

And frogs in the pools singing at night,
And wild plum-trees in tremulous white;

Robins will wear their feathery fire
Whistling their whims on a low fence-wire;

And not one will know of the war, not one
Will care at last when it is done.

Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree
If mankind perished utterly;

And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn,
Would scarcely know that we were gone.

Literary Terms Review: Theme

- **Theme:** a general truth or message about life and/or human nature that is expressed in a work of literature.
- **Thematic Statement:** A sentence that summarizes this theme.
- Read the poem “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Sara Teasdale
- What is the theme of the poem? In other words, what message is the poet trying to tell the reader? Write this message in one sentence.

“The Children’s Hour” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
(1807-1882)

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day’s occupations,
That is known as the Children’s Hour.

I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence:
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret
O’er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses,
Their arms about me entwine,
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old mustache as I am
Is not a match for you all!

I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down into the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And moulder in dust away.

Sample Thematic Statements

“Soft Rains”

Humans are not as important as we think we are; if we went extinct, nature would continue the way it always has.

Humans should not be so self-obsessed because the world does not rely on them to keep turning.

“The Children’s Hour”

Children need emotional and intellectual stimulation from adults.

We should cherish the time that we have with our loved ones.

Grammar Mini-Lesson

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are used to punctuate titles of short works and parts of other works--*i.e.*, titles of those works that are not published separately.

1. Chapter titles are enclosed in quotation marks (but not chapter numbers).
2. The titles of short stories are enclosed in quotation marks.
3. The titles of short poems are enclosed in quotation marks.
4. The titles of newspaper and magazine articles are enclosed in quotation marks.
5. The titles of essays are enclosed in quotation marks. of poems

Italics/Underlining

Italics are used primarily to punctuate the titles of full-length works that are published separately.

The titles of book-length works that are published separately are italicized. This includes books, full-length plays, if published separately, and long poems, if published separately:

Novel: *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Play: *Death of a Salesman*

Long Poem: *Paradise Lost*

2. The titles of newspapers, magazines, movies and TV shows are italicized.
3. Names of ships, trains, planes and spaceships are also italicized.

Literary Terms Review: Setting

- **Setting**: The time and place in which a story takes place.
- Details in the setting affect the **mood** (atmosphere) and **tone** (attitude) of the text.

During-Reading Activity

As you read, create and fill out the following table:

Time of Day	What Seems Ordinary?	What Seems Unusual?

Post-Reading Activity: **Setting**

- In a one to two paragraph response, analyze how the details in the setting establish the mood and the tone of the text, and analyze how the theme is conveyed through the setting.

Literary Elements: Allusion

- An **allusion** in literature is when an author makes a reference to one of the following:
 - A historical event
 - A famous person
 - Another work of literature (usually one that is well known)
 - Mythology, religion, folk tales, legends, etc.

Other forms of the word *allusion* (n) include *allude*, *alluded* (v) and *allusive* (adj).

Allusions in “There Will Come Soft Rains”

- Bradbury **alludes** to two poems: “The Children’s Hour” by Walt Whitman (after he describes the children’s room), and “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Sara Teasdale, which is the inspiration for the story.
- Bradbury makes a Biblical **allusion** when he describes the house as “an altar with ten thousand attendants.”

Literary Terms: Personification

Personification is a figure of speech in which an object or animal is spoken as if it had human qualities.

Examples: "angry mice" "the clock sang" "the house screamed Fire!" "the fire was clever"

1. Find three more examples of personification.
2. What kind of "personality" does the house have? Describe and Explain.
3. What steps does the house take to save itself from the fire?

Types of Irony

- **Verbal**- sarcasm, saying one thing and meaning another (“Good one slick!”)
- **Situational**- something unusually unexpected (a fire at the fire station)
- **Dramatic**- reader knows something the character does not (the killer is in the house!)

Post Reading Questions for “There Will Come Soft Rains”

1. Review the story by listing, in **chronological order**, the main events that took place in the house on August 4, 2026. Now, look at the little digital clocks that indicate the hours. How long did it take for the house to be destroyed?
2. What is **ironic** about the ending of the story? What type of irony is this?
3. This story was written in 1950. How does this **historical context** affect the story?

Twilight Zone

- **Setting:** Describe the setting of the scene. What is the mood of the scene? How does the writer/producer create this mood?
- **Infer:** What do you think is going to happen? What makes you think so?
- **Irony:** Find an example of irony in the story. Explain. What type of irony is it? (dramatic, verbal, situational).

Opening Activity for “The Naming of Names” by Ray Bradbury

- Answer the following questions in your composition book:
- Do you believe that there is intelligent life on other planets/in other galaxies? Why or why not?
- Should humans continue to invest time and money in space exploration? Why or why not?



Objectives

- TSW will analyze the effect of setting to the mood and the tone of the text (R 2.1.5)
- TSW examine the historical and cultural elements of literature (R 2.2.1)

Background

- “The Naming of Names” by Ray Bradbury appeared in 1958, a time when many scientists believed that some form of life existed on Mars. Those beliefs were shattered in 1965, when *Mariner 4*, the first spacecraft to visit the planet, sent back closeup photographs revealing a seemingly lifeless surface on Mars. However, recent evidence suggests that there may have been some form of life on Mars billions of years ago.

American “Names”

- Henry Ford: founder of the Ford Motor Co.
- Cornelius Vanderbilt: shipping and railroad entrepreneur
- John D. Rockefeller: oil, petroleum, philanthropist
- George A. Hormel: Hormel foods (Spam)
- Theodore Roosevelt: US President
- Many places also kept their Native American names

Post-Reading Writing Activity: Once Upon a Planet..

- Create an imaginary planet and describe it as the setting for a fantasy. Consider:
 - Name, inhabitants (if any)
 - Climate, atmosphere, colors, physical features
- Write an opening paragraph for your fantasy that describes this setting using imagery and figurative language.

Post-Reading Questions for “The Naming of Names”

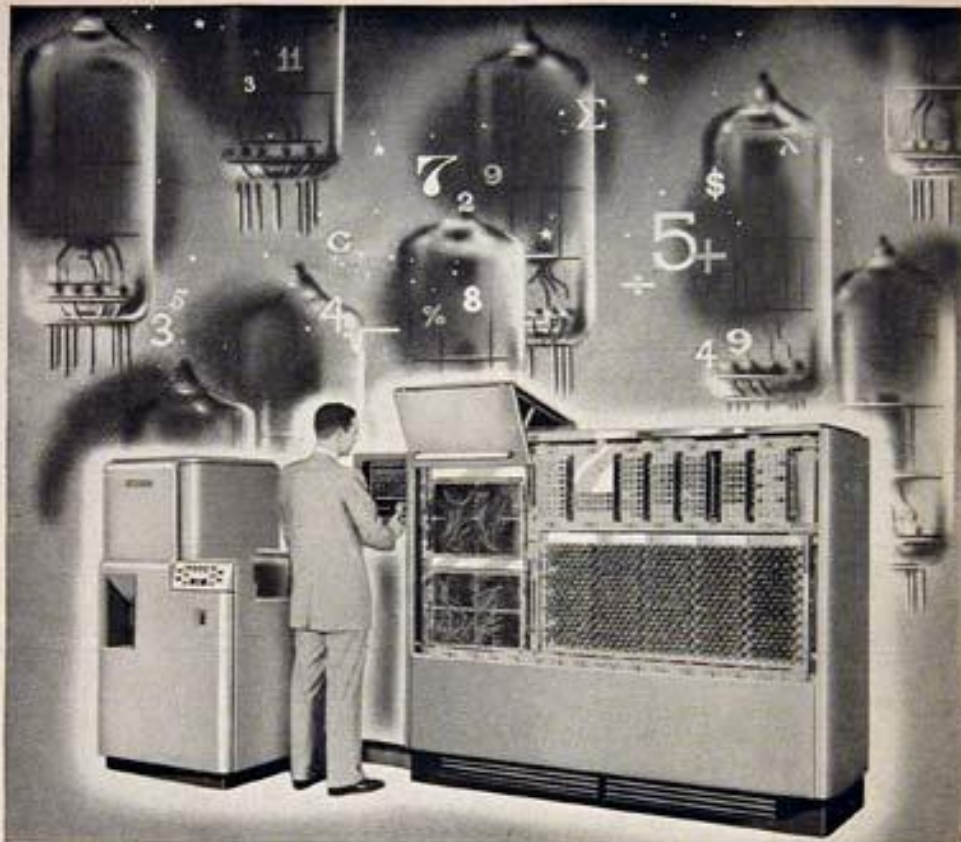
1. **Setting:** Re-read the section of text that starts on page 158 and ends on 159. List some examples of **imagery** and details that describe the **setting**. What is the effect of this description? What **mood** does Bradbury create through his description of Mars? What is his **tone**?
2. **Characterization:** Why do you think Harry Bittering resists change so fiercely? Do you think Bradbury wants us to admire Harry’s resistance or to think it’s foolish?
3. **Conflict:** What two main **conflicts** does Harry face? What types of conflicts are these?

Opening Activity for “The Machine That Won the War” by Isaac Asimov

- Please copy the following information into your composition book:
 1. Lamar Swift: The Executive Director of the Solar Federation, the oldest, looks “the most tired”
 2. John Henderson: in charge of supplying the data for Multivac
 3. Max Jablonsky: Chief Interpreter of the science’s oracle

Multivac

- **Multivac** is the name of a fictional supercomputer in many stories by Isaac Asimov from 1955 to 1979. According to his autobiography *In Memory Yet Green*, Asimov coined the name in imitation of UNIVAC, the early mainframe computer. While he initially intended the name to stand for "Multiple vacuum tubes", his later story "The Last Question" expands the AC suffix to be "analog computer".



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Directions:

- **Examine the elements of "The Machine That Won the War" that are real and those that are fantasy. For each category in the following chart, list examples from the story that are science fact and science fiction. The first one has been started for you.**

Post-Reading Activity for “The Machine That Won the War”

- In science fiction, a writer creates settings, characters, and situations that are not found in reality. These changes rely on real scientific knowledge and on predictions based on that knowledge. Science fiction frequently is set in the future and/or on other planets. Writers consider the effects of scientific possibilities on human beings. Unlike fantasy, science fiction depends on situations that are true to life or possible in the real world, even though the setting is made up.

Category	Science Fact	Science Fiction
Characters	real people, with thoughts and feelings we recognize (guilt, relief, etc.)	
Setting		
Plot		

Check Your Understanding

1. What background information do we get about the setting
2. How is Lamar Swift characterized?
3. What kind of character is John Henderson?
4. How does Henderson view the situation? What Jablonsky's opinion?
5. What does Henderson think of the computer's importance in the victory?
6. How is his perspective different from that of Jablonsky and Swift?
7. What was the reason why important data was unreliable?
8. How had Henderson altered the Data?
9. What secret did Jablonsky have to reveal?
10. What was the reason for this situation?
11. What secret did Swift reveal? Why didn't he pay attention to Multivac?
12. How, in fact, had Swift made his crucial decisions?
13. What then was the machine that won the war?
14. What is the theme of this story?

“Fire and Ice” by Robert Frost

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.

From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.

But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

“All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace” by Richard Brautigan

I like to think (and
the sooner the better!)
of a cybernetic meadow
where mammals and computers
live together in mutually
programming harmony
like pure water
touching clear sky.

I like to think
(right now, please!)
of a cybernetic forest
filled with pines and electronics

where deer stroll peacefully
past computers
as if they were flowers
with spinning blossoms.

I like to think
(it has to be!)
of a cybernetic ecology
where we are free of our labors
and joined back to nature,
returned to our mammal
brothers and sisters,
and all watched over
by machines of loving grace.

“Space Oddity” by David Bowie



Ground control to major Tom
Ground control to major Tom
Take your protein pills and put your helmet on
(Ten) Ground control (Nine) to major Tom
(Eight)
(Seven, six) Commencing countdown (Five),
engines on (Four)
(Three, two) Check ignition (One) and may gods
(Blastoff) love be with you

This is ground control to major Tom, you've
really made the grade
And the papers want to know whose shirts you
wear
Now it's time to leave the capsule if you dare

This is major Tom to ground control, I'm stepping
through the door
And I'm floating in a most peculiar way
And the stars look very different today
Here am I floatin' 'round my tin can far above the
world

Planet Earth is blue and there's nothing I can do

Though I'm past one hundred thousand miles, I'm
feeling very still

And I think my spaceship knows which way to go
Tell my wife I love her very much, she knows

Ground control to major Tom, your circuits dead,
there's something wrong

Can you hear me, major Tom?

Can you hear me, major Tom?

Can you hear me, major Tom?

Can you...

Here am I sitting in my tin can far above the Moon
Planet Earth is blue and there's nothing I can do



“Major Tom (Coming Home)” by Peter Schilling

Standing there alone
the ship is waiting
all systems are go
are you sure?
control is not convinced
but the computer
has the evidence
"no need to abort"
the countdown starts

watching in a trance
the crew is certain
nothing left to chance
all is working
trying to relax
up in the capsule
"send me up a drink"
jokes Major Tom
the count goes on

4 3 2 1

Earth below us
drifting falling
floating weightless
calling ,calling home...

second stage is cut
we're now in orbit
stabilizers up
running perfect
starting to collect
requested data
what will it effect
when all is done
thinks Major Tom

back at ground control
there is a problem
go to rockets full
not responding
"hello Major Tom
are you receiving
turn the thrusters on
we're standing by"
there's no reply

4 3 2 1

Earth below us
drifting falling
floating weightless
calling ,calling home...

across the stratosphere
a final message
"give my wife my love"
then nothing more

far beneath the ship
the world is mourning
they don't realize
he's alive
no one understands
but Major Tom sees
now the life commands
this is my home
I'm coming home

Earth below us
drifting falling
floating weightless
coming home...



“The Universe” by May Swenson

What
is it about,
the universe
the universe about us stretching out?
We within our brains
within it,
think
we must unspin the laws that spin it.
We think why
because we think
because.

Because we think
we think
the universe about us.
But does it think,
the universe?
Then what about ... about us?
If not,
must there be cause in the universe?
Must it have laws?
And what if the universe is not about us?
Then what?
What is it about?
and what about us?

“A Dream” by Edgar Allan Poe

In visions of the dark night
I have dreamed of joy departed-
But a waking dream of life and light
Hath left me broken-hearted.

Ah! what is not a dream by day
To him whose eyes are cast
On things around him with a ray
Turned back upon the past?

That holy dream- that holy dream,
While all the world were chiding,
Hath cheered me as a lovely beam
A lonely spirit guiding.

What though that light,
thro' storm and night,
So trembled from afar-
What could there be more purely bright
In Truth's day-star?

“Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

- Day Two: Opening Question (Please answer this question on the back of your Harrison Bergeron packet).

Is the type of “radical equality” that is portrayed in “Harrison Bergeron” feasible (possible) in the real world? Why or why not, and to what degree? Consider the work of the Handicapper General in your response.

Working with the Standards

- Table 1: Matthew, Blake, Emily, Addison
- Table 2: Jake, Rachel, Ryan, Alli
- Table 3: Sean, Samantha, Cassie, Brittany
- Table 4: Seth, Ryan, Alec
- Table 5: Maddie, Jack, Bella
- Table 6: Lauren, Jadyn, Travis
- Table 7: Brianna, Adam, John, Maggie
- Table 8: Nick, Spencer, Lisa

Working with the Standards

- Table 1: Maddie, Evan, Kayla, Lauren
- Table 2: Anthony, Andrew P., Will
- Table 3: Alissa, Stephanie, Angelina
- Table 4: Cooper, Delaney, Brandon
- Table 5: Tori, Sam, Kaitlyn
- Table 7: Meghan, Matthew, Rachel
- Table 8: Ashley, Nick, Karlie

Table 1:

- Look up “egalitarianism”. Discuss that word in light of Harrison Bergeron.
- Some liberals insist that Vonnegut was not condemning radical egalitarianism, but instead was siding with Handicapper General. If so, was this short story a utopian or dystopian tale? Do you agree with this understanding of the work? Does the fact that elsewhere and always Vonnegut was an unrelenting leftist matter to your consideration?

Table 2:

- Find a passage from the book that describes the setting and be prepared to read it to the class. Then answer the following questions.
- What is the setting of this story?
- Describe their society and governmental system. How is it similar to ours? Different?
- What type of mood does this setting create?
- What is the author's tone throughout the story? In other words, what is his attitude toward the concept of equality?

Table 3:

- Find a passage or passages in the text that describe Harrison Bergeron and be prepared to read it to the class. Then answer the following questions.
- How old is Harrison? How has he been “handicapped”?
- Does someone like Harrison represent a danger to, or the salvation of, society?

Table 4:

- Find a passage or passages in the text that describe George and Hazel Bergeron and be prepared to read it to the class. Then answer the following questions.
- How are George and Hazel Bergeron described? What sort of life do they lead?
- Why does Hazel think that she would make a good Handicapper General? Why does George think that she would be as good at it as anyone?



Table 5:

Summarize the main events of the story in the form of a flow map. Include at least five boxes. Include the page numbers for each event on your map.

- Next to or below each box, explain why this event is significant to the plot of the story.

Table 6:

- Why are people warned in the news bulletin against trying to reason with Harrison Bergeron?
- Why does Harrison only take off his handicaps once he is on television? Why doesn't he worry that if he appears on television, he will be captured?
- Why does Harrison select an Empress as soon as he is free of his handicaps? Why does he choose the first woman who dares to rise?

Table 7:

- Figurative Language scavenger hunt:
Find examples of the following types of figurative language in the story:
 - Imagery
 - Simile (find at least 3)
 - Metaphor
 - Hyperbole

Table 8:

- Symbolism: What is symbolic in the story? Find examples of symbolism in the story.
- Irony: What is ironic about the story? Find examples of irony in the text.
- Parody: Look up the definition of *parody*. Do you believe that this story fits the definition? Why or why not?