



SCIENCE FICTION GENRE STUDY

The ARRT Genre Study Group studied the Science Fiction genre from 2002-2003.

Classics

Everyone read *The Time Machine* by H.G. Wells and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne.

Common elements of *The Time Machine* and *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*:

Narrator/reader explores new cultures for us to learn

New technology revealed

Both classical titles we would *recommend* to patrons

Detail oriented though some felt overwhelmed by 20 K's (Others felt the TM did not have enough detail)

Both books originally intended for students but they would have little appeal for this group today

TM and 20K were written for the common man but their main characters are elitist

A menacing horror prevails in both

Archaic language

Stories of men only

General comments TM and 20 K:

Translations of Verne's works have been poor and his scientific observations have not been accurately translated

Labor versus capital, underworld versus overworld implications in Wells

Both books could be considered the "pulp fiction" of their times

Derivations for newer science fiction

Golden age of SF is for twelve-year-olds
Could be considered classic SF and fantasy books
Their language would be a "turn off" for today's reluctant reader
Possible areas in collection for optimum circulation: science fiction, fantasy, classics, YS, general fiction?

Science Fiction versus Adventure:

Is Cussler science fiction or adventure? Is 20K an adventure? What are the differences between SF and adventure and do they overlap?

Pacing/Technology/Impact on social structure

We will try to observe differences between SF and Adventure as we read through the other units.

The Time Machine

Strengths:

Wonderful social commentary

Would recommend this book for discussion

A dark dystopia with a somewhat heavy-handed message

Made me think of 21st century

Did not spell out every detail

Felt genuine horror and suspense as time traveler descended the well

Not quite as visual as 20K

A great 50s black and white film

Time traveler did convince his listeners and skeptics by story's end

Cool ending

An amazing projection for its time

Describes groups better than individuals (condescending imperialists)

Weaknesses:

Gender roles are not clearly defined

Language is dated

All men

No great characters but rather an idea book

Readers observe rather than experience events

Disliked protagonist, i.e., his syntax, condescension

20,000 Leagues under the Sea

Strengths:

Great travelogue

A groundbreaker as some of its technology has come true

Nemo is a wonderful character with issues reader does not know
Challenges and expands the mind
Classified as SF because sailors encountered "aliens"
Nemo can be compared to Shackleton, as both men had to survive in alien worlds

Weaknesses:

No women

Like Tom Clancy...some readers wanted to skip to exciting parts

A Cussler read-alike?

How was Nemo able to catalogue everything, but could not recognize anything?

Ned Land (sailor) did not know what a pearl was

Translation problems

Episodic motif took away from smooth flow of storyline

Neither plot nor character driven but rather a vehicle for Verne's ideas

An abrupt, unsatisfying ending...what was Nemo's goal? Reader is not left with a sense of "mission accomplished"

Time Travel

Everyone read *The Doomsday Book* by Connie Willis plus one other title. A question to ponder in our reading...is this title a classic?

Discussion of *Doomsday Book* by Connie Willis

Is this historical fiction? Is this a classic in its category of time travel?

Patrons who read historical fiction might not choose *Doomsday Book* because they do not like moving back and forth in time but are more interested in resolving the issues of a particular era. Historical fiction readers like to place themselves in another time and wonder how they might deal with problems faced by the books' characters. Readers can certainly do this in Willis' book. The science fiction label is often a turnoff, but if a patron were offered this book, he/she might enjoy it. Someone observed that in a way, all historical fiction is time travel fiction.

General comments:

Lots of good detail/a real sense of time and place/author did her research.

Great premise, but too many facts, details, scenes...could be shorter.

Plot driven.

Few notable characters/most are flat, weak and one-dimensional.
Children's characters are well developed, as is the priest's.
Few good comic scenes and characters.
Hooked by the story.
Readers put off by repetition of incidents and dialogue.
Audio version may have made book's repetition more pronounced.
Like a soap or serial in that it keeps one hanging
In an epidemic people react in the same manner, that is, "The more things change, the more they remain the same." The emotional impact of a tragedy is the same in all times for all peoples.
Beautifully written/elements of the story are well integrated
Explores modern versus Middle Ages attitudes toward death.
The customs and idiom of the time are explained in the beginning of the story and this feature made the time travel more believable.

Points to ponder with our individual titles:

What are the differences and similarities between your book and
Doomsday Book?

What is the appeal of time travel? Most is earth-based and the starting point is humanity. Often time travel is a plot technique and not something that can actually happen

Time travel leads to new realities, new systems. How do these make life work?

Can you take out all of the science technology and still have a good story?

Romantic time travel and science fiction time travel are not the same.

Is this book good science or speculation?

Does the science make good sense?

Are the details logical and the scientific technique explained in a convincing manner?

Is there personal growth, that is, positive or negative among the characters?

Individual Titles:

Eon by Greg Bear

Can't we all just get along? I think that is Bear's point but he takes us far afield to make it, and then he does not clearly convey his point of view.

Bear is writing in 1985. Think Cold War, nuclear disarmament, politics, military vs. scientific point of view, and consumer crusader Ralph Nader.

Too many issues to be tackled in any case, but in Bear's hands the issues are muddled and muddied.

*In the Garden on Iden: A Novel of the Company*_by Kage Baker

People from the future go back to the past and recruit orphans whose head sizes are certain diameters. They are recreated into cyborgs (which renders them immortal) and forced to work for the company. There is a young woman who needs to be rescued from the Spanish Inquisition. This young woman falls in love and experiences feelings she has never felt before. Her lover is burned at the stake so the ending is an unhappy one, but she is forever changed by love.

Appeal: Funnier than Willis and not quite as grim/For those who like experimental, literary fiction with clever humor/Characters are somewhat jaded.

Marooned in Real Time by Vernor Vinge

This story is more mystery than science fiction with some political overtones. It is a travelogue set fifty million years in the future with some elements of high and low technology. The characters are trapped indefinitely in "bobbles" or time traps.

Appeal: An easy read/no humor/adventure/more for mystery than science fiction fans.

Pillars of the Sky by Will Henry

The time traveler is Joseph Schwartz who is struck on the head while walking in Chicago. He is catapulted into the future, but we do not know how his mind is able to experience different time periods. There is no movement between different time periods though the main character never returns to his past. The world in which he finds himself appears to have experienced a nuclear holocaust. Earthlings are the barbarians trying to destroy the universe.

Appeal: Plot driven adventure/only science is constant expansion of time within the traveler's mind.

Timescape by Gregory Benford

The story takes place in the years 1963 and 1998. Instead of individuals moving back and forward in time, messages are sent between the two years by tachyons. 1990's earth is plagued with pollution problems so two Cambridge researchers send messages back to earth (1963) to warn physicists to pay attention to earth's environment. A 1960s' Jewish

researcher hears the sound frequencies, and though his co-workers think he is a bit crazed, he is eventually able to protect his society. The message here is that we can change the future by sending messages to the past.

Appeal: Interesting story and personalities/lots of science and physics/political elements/money and funding for projects/apocalyptic.

The Boy Who Reversed Himself by William Sleator

Laura finds her homework's handwriting reversed and discovers that her strange "friend" Omar is responsible. When she learns that he is able to travel to the fourth dimension, she persuades him to take her to this new world...The only problem is that she does not know how to return to earth.

Appeal: Realistic writing/fast paced/likeable and realistic characters/suitable for Young Adults. Intriguing story, great worldbuilding, doesn't seem dated.

An Alien Heat by Michael Moorcock

People are able to change themselves in an instant to be anything they wish. The theme here is that if you want for nothing, what need is there for authority? In contrast to this futurist world, the author introduces us to a woman of the Victorian Era. Moorcock pits a restrained society against an immoral, decadent one.

Appeal: Romance and fantasy elements/not much science/ideological, theoretical piece of fiction with intellectual humor/book could work without technology but not time travel.

No Enemy But Time by Michael Bishop

The story's time period is 1982-2002. Joshua Kampa experiences many changes throughout the book. He is torn between the world of his dreams (Early Africa) and twentieth century America. His worlds cross when the government sends him back in time to Africa where as a protohuman he finds life is far more challenging than he is ever imagined.

Appeal: Absorbing character development/adoption issues/different cultures/touches on anthropology/speculative fiction/good writing.

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court by Mark Twain

This time travel book reveals how the eighteenth century viewed King Arthur's court. The Yankee feels that his society is far superior to the 1800s and fails in his attempts to improve it. There is little science and the characters are wooden. This is a satire with Twain criticizing the Church, the monarchy and the institution of slavery.

Appeal: Funny, clever political satire/some silly situations/unsatisfying ending.

The Light of Other Days by Stephen Baxter and Arthur

In this thought-provoking tale, the invention of the WormCam enables people to see and visualize across all times. With this new discovery our most fixed histories and theologies need to be redefined. The authors create a scary world in which private and public lives are intertwined and nothing is really sacred.

Appeal: Interesting characters/ theological issues/science fiction with some speculation/Human relationships somewhat predictable and contrived.

World Out of Time by Larry Niven

It is 1970, and a man with terminal cancer freezes his body and wakes up two centuries later with another body in another world. He has little contact with anyone and is trained to be a spaceship driver in a world where privacy is not allowed. Upon his return to earth centuries later, the hero is again faced with an alien culture he does not understand.

Appeal: No high technology as in Star Wars/good story for Young Adults/asexual beings/minimal science.

On Recommending Science Fiction to Patrons:

Determine the readers' interests

Suggest the tape format to newcomers

Hard Science Fiction

Everyone read Ringworld by Larry Niven

Is this a good example of hard science fiction?

A benchmark title, the book is overlaid with science.

Most authors in this genre consider their works hard science and regard themselves as scientists primarily.

Not as "hard science" as other titles.

Cover helped to visualize the Ringworld/ It was noted that SF lives or dies by cover art, as does romance.

Multiple messages involved manipulation, power, control of people, i.e., everyone wants to be God/ Really disturbing thing is to "play" God badly.

Be careful of what you wish for...

No God, miracles or transcendence/manipulation of probability
Light humor/some seriousness/speaker was like Chewbacca
Very seventies in its male sexist attitude toward women/feature dates book,
but an author can write as he/she wishes.
Niven pokes fun at being macho.
Plot flows.
Too much detail.
Just enough detailed technology.
Difficult scientific concepts.
Not too much science/liked his vocabulary.
Able to skim when the science became too involved/easy to get pulled back
into the plot.
Inventive names were humorous.
Lots of surprises.
Everyone looked human/relationships among characters were
believable/learned about the characters as they related to one other.
Cliched characters.
Believable aliens.
Descriptions of the aliens made them seem like dinosaurs.
A possible "buddy movie."
Book is dated/can envision Buck Rogers, polyester space suits,"Come up
to my pad."
(How did people of the seventies react to this book?) Austin Powers now!
Today's Star Trek fans.

Point of view is very important/ story would not be the same if aliens
narrated it/reader needs to relate to someone...

Structure is linear: a voyage, mission, adventure. A mystery, i.e., what
happened to the Ringworld?A man's fantasy. Debatable as to whether or
not the dialogue moved the action along.

Individual Titles:

Starfarers by Poul Anderson

Could imagine the ship/Characters seemed human and strong, and I could
relate to them. Each had his/her story to tell. The time travel elements were
too confusing to track in a logical manner. The transitions were not smooth.

Caves of Steel by Isaac Asimov

This is New York of the future and murder has been committed. Strange creatures that eat weird materials (yeast) live in this space town. Scientists have created humanoid robots that illustrate how computers operated in the fifties.

Appeal: Social commentary via science fiction genre/Deals with prejudice/Mystery

The Light of Other Days by Arthur C. Clarke and Stephen Baxter

Winner of the 2000 Nebula. Three events move the story: the discovery of preserved bodies in an Alpine cave from the Neanderthal Age, the discovery of a mysterious virus affecting pregnant women (leads to miscarriage) and the cover-up of a mass grave in Russia.

Appeal: Scientific aspects are interesting and at times confusing/Plot does reveal impact of science on our personal lives/Authors play with truth and this is theologically disturbing/Very dark outlook.

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick

It is 2021, and planet earth has been devastated by nuclear disaster. The effects of acid rain are everywhere. Two groups of people remain on the earth. Those who remain on earth desire real food, real sheep and anything natural. People who emigrate to Mars receive androids, artificial humans, who have the potential to destroy earth. Rick Deckard is a bounty hunter trying to kill them.

Appeal: Reveals the destructive side of science/What does it mean to be human?/Bleak, despairing tale/Some philosophical elements.

Rendezvous with Rama by Arthur C. Clarke

It is 3000 years into the future and a huge extra terrestrial object or cylinder has appeared on earth. It is the Rama. Who has created this "creature" and why?

Appeal: Great action/For Crichton fans/Mystery and adventure/Lots of gadgetry which would draw YAS/Fast, easy read/No sociological commentary/Little science and minimal dialogue.

Heart of the Comet by Gregory Benford

After their society has been destroyed, a small group of men and women find themselves on a ball of ice careening in space toward an unknown, hopefully, better world.

Appeal: This is military fiction with scientific details. Can be compared to pioneer stories with characters discovering and conquering new worlds.

Beggars in Spain by Nancy Kress

Each book has its own date and chapter heading. This is future science realized where people are genetically modified for sleeplessness, even children. It is believed that this alteration makes people perfect and able to accomplish much within a lifetime. The sleepless are discriminated against and forced to create a utopian society for protection. Each person's individuality can thrive in this world.

Appeal: Characters seem believable and develop their own ideas/Sociological impact of science on society revealed/ Speculative fiction/Examination of society/For the older teen with its "coming of age" elements/No overwhelming technology.

Infinity Beach by Jack McDevitt

When Kimberly Brandywine, a public relations manager for the Seabright Institute, receives a phone call from an old school teacher concerning her sister's death, her life at the Institute suddenly takes on a new path. Until this news, Kimberly had been involved in an attempt to make contact with aliens. Her sister Emily disappeared twenty years ago on an exploratory voyage. Were aliens discovered on Emily's journey? Could someone on the ship have murdered her? With the help of friends, Kimberly decides to seek the truth about her sister's death.

Appeal: Mystery/Fascinating story/Lots of good dialogue/Adventure/Science involves the movement of the alien spaceship/Similar to Clive Cussler but not quite as "slap dash."

Gateway by Frederik Pohl

The gateway is an abandoned space station containing (faster than the speed of light) starships built by alien Heechee thousands of years ago. No one knows how or why the Heechee race vanished, but now their ships are employed by Gateway Prospectors to explore space and return with riches for the benefit of the Corporation.

Appeal: Hard science trips are preprogrammed/What drives humans/Social commentary on corporate abuse of employees/Well integrated plot and entertaining story.

Holy Fire by Bruce Sterling

The future time is 2090, and people are not dying. If you live a "safe" life,

the government will reward you with medical insurance. A ninety-five year-old woman is given the body of a twenty-five year-old woman, but she soon discovers that there is a difference between "existing" and "living." Which is more important...safety or creativity?

Appeal: Poor characterizations/Very thematic/Hard speculative science/Contemporary.

Fire Upon the Deep by Vernor Vinge

Vinge has created a galaxy in which the laws of physics play a role in the intelligence of sentient species. The Blight has been accidentally released by a group of scientists and this error triggers the annihilation of thousands of worlds. A ship containing a family of scientists and their two teenage children manage to escape to the Planet Slowness where the Tines kill the parents. Tines are four-legged creatures akin to dogs or rats and they display amazing capabilities when functioning as a unit.

Appeal: Hard science/Good writing/Fast paced.

Procreation by Gene Wolfe

This is a short story written in 1983. Its format is that of a journal/diary.

Musings on Hard Science:

Would you read a particular title for its scientific aspects only?

Hard SF authors are able to use current technology in their stories.

Fifties SF authors may have been more creative than today's writers because the new technology was nonexistent. It is an old, evolving genre. For hard science fiction stories, the science cannot be removed from the story and its rules must be strictly followed.

Soft science is more mystical, magical, romantic. The wizard versus the machine.

SF is a rich genre which has across the board appeal with its action, characterization and social commentary. (Philosophical ideas)

Structure and point of view are very important elements in science fiction. A quest, mission, voyage, adventure are essential to the plot. Alien narrators are not convincing.

The reader needs to relate to a character.

SF readership has changed.

Are we reading for Plot?

World Building

Everyone read Dune by Frank Herbert and another title from the list, keeping in mind the characteristics of the genre when reading. The A & E production of Dune is very good.

Study Group's Reactions to Dune:

Pros:

Reading the background material *first* made the story seem plausible.

Helpful glossary.

Book's appeal is its depiction of a world unlike Earth.

Chapter headings are good lead-ins to their content.

Wonderful to listen to on tape.

Comparable to Tolkien in its creation of another universe.

Dune is the standard length for today's science fiction, i.e., Gabaldon, Jordan, Rowling. Not so in sixties.

Creates a larger world to come.

Science fiction and fantasy elements.

Herbert gives detailed political background for characters' motivations.

Everything depends on Spice and we are shown how and why it is important.

Lots of parallels to present world: East meets West/Different religions and cultures/Islam, Christianity/Important ecological issues/Drug problems/OPEC and the oil crisis/Desert war/Vision of *haves and have nots*/Similar human motivations though this is an alien world.

Can picture Arrakis perfectly.

Herbert is prophetic in his belief that science and technology consider the *whole* planet as each part affects and interacts with every other part.

Implication of "uncertainty principle" in real life is that free will does exist and that determinism is scientifically impossible.

Quotes at each chapter's beginning lend the book authority.

Elements of palace intrigue and primitive desert conditions appeal to readers of historical fiction.

Cons:

Offensive depiction of gender/Women are fighters but subservient to men.

Wedding at end is silly.

Story hard to get into/Difficult to read/Too complex.

Too much left unexplained/Weak delineation between animal and human species.

General Asides:

It was generally agreed that Dune is not hard science but rather a socio-political primer on Machiavellian ethics. Ecology issue may be Dune's hard science aspect.

Frank Magill's Survey of Science Fiction Literature features a good essay on Dune.

Points to Consider in World Building Science Fiction Literature:

Story's structure in contributing to world building theme.

Patricia Wrede believes science, technology, transportation and culture are vital components.

Stephen Baxter includes environmental issues.

From the notes of Annie Frank:

Herbert wrote that charismatic super heroes are disasters for mankind, even though their intentions are good. Power eventually corrupts and any mistakes the super hero makes are magnified because of his/her super hero status. CHOAM is OPEC. Spice is an allegory for oil.

Themes:

Gender/Concubine and wife/Strong females who use their sexual power.

Women are givers/Men are takers. (Author's bias?)

Patriarchal, feudal society.

Imperialism.

Merchant class, but reader does not see this world.

Economy of water.

Similar to the *ugly American*.

Arts and entertainment, i.e., gladiators.

Architecture/Sense of buildings.

Several worlds, i.e., desert and water/What does each require from inhabitants for survival.

Book alludes to future worlds that are amplified in subsequent titles.

Dune is a stand-alone.

Surprises:

Scope of Herbert's creation is phenomenal/Epic in scale.

Appealing tone.

Excellent book/Well organized/Not necessarily science fiction.
Book's length may be a drawback for discussion groups.
Too intimidating for non-science fiction fans.
Reader cares about characters and wants to learn more about Herbert's world/Tribute to his good writing.
Reader peels away layers to get to the core/Author does not reveal all at once/His gift to his readers.

Individual Titles:

Harvest of Stars Pool Anderson

To rescue Earth from the nightmare of totalitarianism, pilot Kyra Davis journeys to the moon and a new world threatened by a dying star. Her goal is to save Earth's last freedom leader.

Post United States/North American pseudo scientific cult takes over the world. Main character is an immortal computer who has a monopoly on space travel.

No sense of wonder. Room for more to happen the story.

The Pride of Chanur C. J. Cherryh

This is a first contact novel. Pride of Chanur is "manned" by a felinoid race that interacts with other alien races. When a human lost in space boards a Hani merchant ship, his presence upsets the balance of power among the crew with disastrous consequences.

Adventure. Species building, not necessarily world building. Latter is more important. Predominant alien race. Feminist science fiction. Not an effective or well-developed universe. Plot driven.

Ringworld Larry Niven

Engineers in a creative world. More to come in the next novel. Plausible. Good character building. Scale of life is achieved. Ominous /Danger elements very appealing and convincingly presented.

Ender's Game Orson Scott Card

A world isolated on a ship. War games. Military action and adventure. Ender is thrust into a situation as a Messiah. Male dominated society.

Rendezvous with Rama Arthur C. Clarke

It is the year 2130, and a huge cylindrical space ship is headed straight toward the sun. The book details this expedition and its outcome. Not a

detailed world. Plot driven adventure. Simple, not hard science.
A metallic world within a cylinder. Few characters control the ship. Little is known about this world, yet the author appears to have his reasons.

Red Mars Kim Stanley Robinson

In 2026, 100 carefully screened scientists from Earth are selected to be the first colonists on Mars. They have endured a year in Antarctica to test their capabilities at forming a community. As the Group approaches its new home, old ideologies and passions collide. Some want to make Mars another Earth while others want it to become a new, independent planet. An arid environment that determines inhabitants' lifestyles. Philosophical issues that parallel today's world includes Arabs, multi-nationals, terrorism, cultural conflicts, religious strife. Good science but stereotypical people and relationships. Spaceship mentality pervades the book. Speculative fiction.

Primary Inversion Catherine Asaro

The Alliance of Earth shares power with two mortal enemy empires; the Skolians and the Traders. Sauscony Valdoria of the Skolian world is a female warrior with powerful psychic abilities. She falls in love with the evil Jabriol, heir to the Trader Empire. Sauscony soon realizes that love between her and Jabriol has been foreordained to weaken her nation's power.

An inconsistent, simple world. More romance than science fiction. Not a separate world. Main character is sophisticated female warrior who falls in love with the wrong guy. Her brother rules the universe. Shallow read. Fast action. Romantic ending. Speculative science.

Foundation Isaac Asimov

Asimov's galactic empire is a bureaucratic nightmare vulnerable to attack. Historian, mathematician Hari Seldon is aware of this horror and predicts a new Dark Age. His attempt to gather his world's knowledge in an Encyclopedia Galactica is a noble cause, but who will take up this task when he is gone?

No sense of wonder. Rather flat. Boring characters. A world affected by actions of a few. Many planets with separate political agendas. Author manipulates time and history. Book of ideas, not plot or story.

Dragonflight Anne McCaffrey

Benden Weyr's nobles see Lessa as a mere kitchen maid that has

managed to stay alive by serving those who seized her father's lands. Things suddenly change when Lessa meets a dragon queen. Both vows to protect the planet and the Dragons from an evil substance called Thread. Feudal world with its own glossary, appendix and language. A dragon world. No science. You accept what happens. Author attempts to offer rational explanations. Telepathy between dragons and Lessa. Colonists are scientists. Book is an example of the relationship between fantasy and science fiction...the dragon represents fantasy and magic. World building in the science fiction aspect.

Helliconia Spring Brian Aldiss

The planet Helliconia takes about 2000 years to orbit its binary suns, and thus its inhabitants live only one "season." Cultures are born in spring, flourish in summer, and perish in winter. It is now summer and humans can tend to their own lives, because their enemies the Phagors are docile this time of year.

World building story with centuries of winter and spring. Four species. No glossary, obscure words. Very difficult to get into. Ecology is dominant theme. A virus (Lyme disease) wipes out population. Four species, two are sentient, two can ancestor talk. Earth observation station. Little character development. Master of the Guild possesses all knowledge. Women not allowed to read, yet it is they who try to discover why their world keeps ending.

TekWar William Shatner

A 22nd century detective attempts to clear his name after being framed for the use of an illegal drug that can destroy the human brain.

A bad Blade Runner. Moviescript? A new reality. Too many plot holes. Predictable. Would have been better as a TV mini-series.

To Your Scattered Bodies Go Philip Jose Farmer

The explorer Richard Burton is resurrected after death and finds himself alive with billions of others on a foreign planet. Each person possesses his own container of food, cigarettes, alcohol and lipstick. Burton and the survivors are determined to discover the river's source and who is providing them with their means of existence.

A pulp fiction adventure. Everyone who has ever lived and died comes alive here. Character driven. Richard Burton is the leader trying to figure out who is in charge. No sense of wonder. Primitive technology. History and culture are already in place.

Sundiver David Brin

Sundiver refers to a human project that uses a ship to explore the interior of the Earth's sun. Two diagrams at the beginning of the book illustrate the setup of the Sunship. (Author does not offer an appendix). In this future world alien species inhabit the planet. They learn about the Earth's humans and their unusual political systems and internal conflicts.

Not a difficult read, but a confusing story line. No complex inter-relationships between human and alien species. Technology is not advanced.

The Many Coloured Land Julian May

It is the 22nd century and Earth's humans have colonized other planets and joined friendly alien races to create the Galactic Milieu. In Provence, France, Theo Guiderian discovers a way to travel 6 million years back to the past...a one way journey only! Eventually this time portal is used to exile misfits into the past. These sterilized groups are forced into exile in the Pliocene Epoch where they discover two warring races.

Berserker Fred Saberhagen

The "berserker" is a huge space battleship programmed to destroy all life it encounters. Living beings are "badlife" and an obedient re-programmed human being is "Goodlife." The novel is a set of inter-linked stories which taken as a whole create a palpable sense of horror. Those few who resist the will of the berserker do so with acts of self-sacrifice and love. Their battle against the "mind controller" is frightening. Female characters are mere objects. Author creates a frightening world, reminiscent of 1984.

Apocalyptic Fiction

Everyone read A Canticle for Leibowitz by Walter Miller and one other title.

General Comments/A Canticle for Leibowitz by Walter Miller

Setting in a medieval Catholic monastery was fascinating.

Lots of philosophical issues/Real insight into medieval Church's treatment of its members/Author forces reader to pay attention to issues of morality, belief and experience.

Difficult to read, especially the tri-part structure/Study guide needed.

Everyone knew Latin in the fifties.

Subtle humor similar to Tolkien.

Complex time line.

Repeated readings uncover different ideas.

Lovers of historical and socio-political fiction would enjoy the book.

Could be read on several levels as it deals with the human condition.

How important are the scientific elements in the book? Are they or can they be ignored by readers of literary fiction?

Great story without the science fiction.

Wonderful characters in books early chapters, especially, Brother Francis/People are flawed.

Weak ending/Too preachy/Depicts the relentless cycle of life and man's ultimate stupidity.

An optimistic ending because the mutant has survived and will not repeat mistakes of the past.

Subjugation of Francis would not exist today. |

Closed communities exist today.

How important is the theology? Allusions to theology deter smooth reading of the text.

Myths and symbolism abound.

Individual Titles:

The Drowned World by J. G. Ballard

Intensive solar activity has melted the earth's ice cap. London is a swamp and several humans have the courage to embark on a nocturnal journey.

Good world building novel/Dated/Human species dies out/Stereotypical characters/Little techno-science fiction/Racist elements/High society Brits versus Blacks/No adventure/

The Postman by David Brin

Civilization has been destroyed and Gordon heads West hoping for a new life. He stumbles upon an abandoned jeep containing the skeleton of a dead postman. Assuming the identity of the postman, Gordon moves through the wilderness and delivers messages of hope among isolated communities in a Restored United States.

Realistic apocalyptic fiction/A post-nuclear world with no infrastructure.

This Is the Way the World Ends by James Morrow

The world has been destroyed in a nuclear holocaust. Six surviving Americans are placed on trial by those who *have never been born* because

civilization has been annihilated. The trial presents both sides of the deterrence theory.

Dated/Difficult to read/Absurd humor/Against the arms race/Heavy satire/Soft science/Delves into issues of science, religion and morality/Prophecies of Nostradamus coming true.

The Long Tomorrow by Leigh Brackett

A tale about the advent of a nuclear disaster/Adventure story/Economic theories of supply and demand and specialization are discussed/Not morbid/For socio-political fiction fans/Characters try to ward off a nuclear disaster/One needs to learn how to survive a nuclear holocaust.

The Wild Shore by Kim Stanley Robinson

This is a coming-of-age story set in Southern California fifty years after a nuclear disaster. Henry, the young protagonist and his friend Steve search for ways to survive this new world. Orange County has become a community of farmers and fishermen ruled by consensus. The United States is isolated from the rest of the world because of its greed, and Henry and Steve must deal with the foreigners imposing this quarantine. Well written/Character driven/First person narrator/Rudimentary life style/Beautiful description of the deployment of neutron bombs.

Eternity Road by Jack McDevitt

Eternity Road is set in a world destroyed a plague 1000 years from the present. Artifacts are discovered but the few remaining humans who live in city-states do not remember how to use them. Roadmakers have stored all knowledge in a place called Haven.

No culture/Crumbling cities/Fires/Mystery, adventure story leading up to a very suspenseful conclusion./Lots of travel/Some humor.

Alas Babylon by Pat Frank

The timeframe is World War III. A defective missile has destroyed all major American cities. The residents of Fort Repose find themselves in a primitive environment where they must fight starvation, disease, crime and fear.

Alas, Babylon is the code word for a nuclear holocaust. A scary, subtle, horror novel/Russian media becomes silent, so then what happens? /Some humor/Each day is progressively worse than the previous one/People cannot travel/No infrastructure within cities/Library becomes savior of human race and helps rebuild lives.

The Turning Place by Jean Karl

Not morbid, grim or apocalyptic/ Juvenile concepts/Each story is separate/Survival fiction/Each story moves toward a more progressive society through different characters/Episodic.

The City, Not Long After by Pat Murphy

Mary Laurenson scatters Nepalese monkeys around the earth's population centers in order to bring peace to the world. A plague develops and kills most of the world's white people. Mary survives and eventually gives birth to a daughter. Mother and daughter live in a San Francisco artists' colony with other survivors. This haven soon becomes unsafe because enemies invade the city.

Fairy tale/Magical realism/Too many characters.

Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut

A demented scientist invents a substance which can kill life. It is called Ice-Nine and it can freeze all of the earth's water. This satire contains many colorful characters and depicts the possible fate of the planet.

Good character portrayals/Humorous situations/Considered to be Vonnegut's best/A cautionary tale but not heavy-handed.

On the Beach by Nevil Shute

The entire Northern Hemisphere has been destroyed by a nuclear war. Australians face the inevitable fact that radiation fallout from this horror is moving toward their country.

Timeless classic/Quiet suspense/Character driven/Readable and well written/Life is meaningful/Dark story, but optimistic.

Drowning Towers by George Turner

The world's population centers are destroyed because global warming has elevated sea levels. Archaeological teams try to discover why civilization allowed the world to drown. In this socio-political novel, there are three classes of people (Australians) who inhabit the towers. Tobacco is used as an opiate to render the survivors sterile and without hope.

No humor/Not true science fiction.

Cyberpunk

All read Neuromancer by William Gibson and another title.

Cyberpunk Fiction Features:

Edginess

Contrived language

Frantic feeling/frenetic pace

Not a plastic covered Sears sofa

A dirty, grimy real world

Apocalyptic rather than utopian vision of world

Lends itself to film/good special effects/angular environment

Neuromancer General Comments:

Hard edged/violent

Nightmares of the eighties come true, i.e., Japanese take over, formation of multinationals, no real middle class (only rich or poor)

What is human?

What are relationships? People need to work at being empathetic

Non-emotional beings

How addicted have we become to our computers?

Would you want to hook in biologically?

Care about characters, though story is not character driven

Case is not likable

Women are strong

Computer aspects of story are dated

Gibson is not a tech-head, but a writer

Candid treatment of sex

Plotless/does not create a real world

No firm concepts felt upon completing book

Everything about book is bleak, dreary, depressing

Setting evokes a gray, rainy day

Characters are desperate, confident of their special abilities yet fearful of technology that surrounds them

Book is somewhat of a thriller but grayness places it in SF genre

A struggle to understand futuristic aspects but this is part of book's appeal

A thriller with an edge

Intriguing tale but could not follow the action or understand terminology

All about sex, drugs rock & roll

Hero "jacks" into Cyberspace to connect with AI
Matrix *seems* to have taken some ideas from Gibson

Is it Literature?

Emotional themes

Allusions/Are we more than we seem?

What makes something more than itself? (Symbolism)

Idea driven?

Individual Titles

City Come A Walkin' John Shirley

Superhuman, futurist, elements/plot driven/allegorical

Stu Cole attempts to maintain a thriving nightclub in future San Francisco despite attacks from the mob. He is visited by an incarnation of the city in the form of an techno-amoral super-hero that hates the bad guys.

The Hacker and the Ants Rudy Rucker

Dated explanations/quirky programming language/cutting-edge language/need a glossary/too near future/not real cyberpunk/clichés/high definition TV becomes a reality.

Silicon Valley will never be the same after hacker Jerzy Rugby lets loose the ants in virtual reality. The recently divorced Jerzy works at home, hacking for GoMotion and trying to develop an artificial intelligence (Personal Robots). There are constant interruptions, however, with real estate agents to show the house, amorous diversions, and his children vying for his time along with an "Alice in Wonderland" type adventure in cyberspace with ants that grow and bite.

The ants invade not only Jerzy's computer but also his life and the shared network. When GoMotion makes Jerzy out to be responsible for the resulting computer mess, he decides he has had enough. Lots of humorous situations, funny characters and a lively plot make this one fun to read.

Appeal would be to readers who like humor, computers, sarcasm, and Southern California's kooky characters.

Noir by K. W. Jeter

Sexual experiences/clever "communion"/full "Prince Charles

Treatment"/urban darkness/characters see in black and white

Detective McNihil of Los Angeles has his eyes surgically altered so that everything he sees looks like an old Humphrey Bogart film. A young

executive has been murdered and McNihil is coerced into tracking down the dead man's *prowler*, a computer simulation. The detective's accomplice is a woman named November whose fingernails are implanted with lethal magnetic currents.

Holy Fire by Bruce Sterling

Futuristic/94 year-old woman is the protagonist/an experiment makes her 20 years old/young are poor and the old are wealthy/story takes place in Stuttgart/fast pace

Gerontocrats dominate the world and disenfranchised youth are in a constant state of rebellion. Mia Ziemann has lived a long, safe life but feels that she has missed the "holy fire" of youth. A radical new procedure makes her young and free to escape society's clutches.

Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson

Ultimate cyberpunk/set in a dystopia/not dark, but humorous/virtual reality universe but one does not really die/Mafia, Feds, religious cults/mystery elements/CIA and LC morphed into one thing/cult spreads like a virus/idea and character driven.

Snow Crash is a drug, a virus and even a religion to Reverend Wayne's Pearly Gates followers. It is able to crash computers and render hackers comatose. Hiro Protagonist is the dominant hacker in this wild, cyber caper. According to Hiro, the U. S. has the best music, movies, software and pizza in the entire universe.

A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess

Cliff's Notes helped with this one/15 year-old boys create their own language/sixties technology/more punk than cyber/What if there is no free will? /violent/sexual/literary/hard edged characters/bleak/cult book.

This tale reveals a bleak future in which a classical music student creates his own language to attack a political system he despises. His capture and treatment are tragic.

Blood Music by Greg Bear

Reckless scientist/multiple narrators/biopunk/virus overcomes you/covers North America/each cell is a living mind/horror elements/"Frankenstein-Like" control systems

A dedicated nanotechnologist experiments with minute computers the size of human cells. He injects himself with his virus (?), because he fearful of

being banned from his laboratory. These "intelligent cells" take over the host and spread a plague.

Mindkiller by Spider Robinson

Cyberpunk/cynical/confusing/suicides/ explicit sex/no contrived language/Those whom you would suspect to be evil are not necessarily so Scientists discover a method of mind control that can help a patient experience the heights of ecstasy, but the technique can also kill the user.

Kamikaze L'Amour: A Novel of the Future by Richard Kadrey

Story set in San Francisco/technology, experimental music/Rain Forest/world of rock musicians/

Rock star Ryder is fed up with the shallowness of fame and fakes his suicide. He even enjoys the media creation of his death, which elevates him to the status of an icon. A golden light occasionally appears in his head and he wants to discover its musical source. He also possesses the gift of synesthesia or sensory crossover. Ryder flees to San Francisco where a genetic experiment gone awry greets him as the Amazon rain forest is now moving into Southern California. There he meets Frida who dabbles in musical novelty and a drug lord that wants to rekindle his career. Lots of satire, surrealistic images and commentary on decadent, contemporary, American culture.

Psion by Joan Vinge

A young boy with psychic potential infiltrates a terrorist, rogue band/elements, chip-crystal enable people to run computers with great speed/Computers operate on computations/telepathy/clichés/not edgy but cynical/dystopia

Part of a series. Cat is kidnapped by the government and forced to acquire powerful psionic capabilities.

Military Adventure

All read Starship Troopers by Robert Heinlein and one other title from list.

General Comments on Military Fiction and Starship Troopers

Literate fiction about survival

Militaristic utopia built on Darwinism and political principles

Movie misses the point of the book/Too soft and dated
Story works without science
Were the book written merely as SF, Heinlein would not have found himself in trouble
Study of military life, but not necessarily SF or adventure
No achievable goals
Heinlein's philosophy of future war
Heinlein has an ax to grind with his controversial ideas
Benchmark book because of the action
Introduction is great!
Too simplistic/suitable for 12-14 year old boys
St. James lists it as a children's book???
Coming of age fantasy for early Tom Clancy, Alistair MacLean or Patrick O'Brien fans/I am scared but I want to join/Major life choices made through chance
Realistic depiction of boot camp
Johnnie Got His Gun read-alike
Pro or anti war treatise?
Defines the good citizen/Citizenship is something to be earned/Military discipline creates the responsible adult, i.e., the good citizen, a society's elite class
Are Heinlein's characters heroes? Depends on your point of view

Deb read an essay on Heinlein's beliefs and asked the group to discuss evidence of them in Starship Troopers

Rico is Everyman simply doing his job/No heroes
Passages are chilling in comparison to today's world situation
Skinnies versus the Bugs...Somalia
Is Heinlein prophetic/Are we always doomed to repeat past mistakes?
War does change everything
Great book for discussion/Philosophical ideas
Poor choice for discussion/Little character development/Flat characters/Did not feel strongly about any character even the death of the beloved sergeant
Relationship with father is good
Bit of irony...father volunteers in old age to contribute to the "glorious cause"
Juan has many substitute fathers yet is unprepared for war

Realistic Elements

Love- hate relationship between recruits and officers
Soldiers do not know what is going on
No gray in the military

Other Comments

Recruits are still idealistic and naïve, and suffer indignities of any young soldier
Traditional military discipline and regimentation same as in all wars
Bait and switch philosophy of battle
Well-written/Rapid pace
Believable, futuristic elements
Enjoyed author's focus on role of the military in society rather than military maneuvers
Better listened to than read
Empathetic protagonist
Women are peripheral but educated/Male dominated novel
On the Bounce=original euphemisms
Neat premise; jumping to tops of buildings, miles ahead, etc.....
References to military history, figures, battles makes tale credible
Enjoyed Heinlein's comments on the army as an institution and the role the government played
For action,adventure fans/Lots of personal close-up action

Individual Titles

Man-Kzin Wars by Larry Niven

Short stories/no military, war, pestilence/Shortage of food forces Kzims to attack humans/Action driven/Shared world anthology/Series explores wars and relationships between humans and the complex Kzin/Latter is a catlike, predatory race

Forever War by Joe Haldeman

[Engaged in a thousand-year interstellar war with the Taurans, young private William Mandella learns that you can't go home again. Because of space displacement, while fighting in outer space, he ages mere months while those on Earth age decades. One of the first recruits, he is also one of the first veterans of the war and finds upon his return that things have changed immeasurably. Most everyone is now homosexual, and needs a bodyguard because of widespread violence. While visiting his girlfriend,

Marygay, and her parents on a commune in South Dakota, William witnesses the murder of both her parents. He soon discovers that in-order to have enough money to live on earth, he must re-enlist for many years. He and Marygay decide Earth is no longer home and the Forever War is their destiny. As years go by, younger recruits come from an alien world and William is almost an anachronism. Although Haldeman's book was probably meant as a satire on the Vietnam War, there were many parallels to the current Iraqi war, the status of the recruit, the futility of war, the doubt about the intent of one's leaders...chilling.]

Berserker by Fred Saberhagen

Humans versus aliens/Soldiers are heroes/Short Stories with common elements/No political intrigue/Soldiers make the ultimate sacrifice/Apocalyptic fiction

[Berserkers are killing machines designed to rebuild themselves. Their computer capabilities challenge human colonies. Reminiscent of Moby Dick, Niles Domingo seeks the immense berserker, Leviathan. He succeeds but his determination transforms him into the monster he destroyed.]

Shards of Honor by Lois McMaster Bujold

Great story of court politics and intrigue/Upper echelon/Series is part of a multigenerational saga/Romantic elements that are not flowery/Character driven/Hero is caught in a double-cross/Expensive political assassination/Reads like a family saga/Two cultures in conflict/Not necessarily science fiction

On Basilisk Station by David Weber

Likable but under developed and vulnerable characters/Hard science fiction/Good writing/Strong women/Lots of battle details/Political intrigue/Foot soldiers in the field are important/Theme of leadership dominates/Good for old Clancy fans

[Honor Harrington is exiled to Basilisk Station in disgrace. To the dismay of her detractors, she attempts to halt the foreign dominance of a major space station with her woefully under-powered ship Fearless.]

Children of the Lens by E. E. (Doc) Smith

Protagonists are supermen/Unrealistic action and characters/An irritating read/Jack Ryan in space/Last in the series /Superior scientific knowledge and intelligence of the Lensmen children enable the latter to conquer evil

Once a Hero by Elizabeth Moon

Hero is a young girl who assumes leadership role on ship after a mutiny/Few battles/Fourth in series

[Esmay Suiza is court marshaled for her emergency take-over from a traitor captain. Upon her release she returns to her home planet and discovers a secret from her childhood. She is later reassigned to another space mission and finally comes to terms with her past and nightmares.]

Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card

Reluctant hero/Main character is really an isolationist/Foot soldier
(Reviewed previously)

A Hymn Before Battle by John Ringo

Science fiction writers are brought in to plan war/Funny/Plot driven, action packed/Describes boot camp/

Humans become fighting allies of the pacifist aliens/Lots of power armor, lasers, and tanks/Earth is under siege/Small group politics and disciplinary problems among marines and special operatives

Pride of Chanur by C. J. Cherryh

Heavy-handed/Contrived exclamations/First contact/Not militaristic/Feline race is the crew of the spaceship Chanur/Different cultures and races interact/Little technology, more "character driven"/First of a series

Dorsai by Gordon R. Dickson

Story centers around main character, Donal Graeme but this is not personal recollection/Follows his early military training and fighting experiences/Part of a cycle of stories following development of mankind from 14th through 22nd centuries

[Humans settle in different planets and though there are no aliens, the Dorsai are the Warriors. Donal's involvement is that of an officer planning strategies. He is a hands-on character not unlike Paul in Dune]. Donal possesses unusual talents that are the result of the accidental mixing of genetic traits.

Similar Threads Among Military Science Fiction Group Read

Attempts at humor

Military framework is the environment for action

Heroes/adventure/political intrigue

Some books are more concerned with politics than war
Lives of foot soldiers and upper echelon are included
Not hard science fiction nor heavy descriptions of technology and
weaponry
Things need repairing and these jobs do get done
Heroes are obedient for most part
Spaceships
Action varies among the titles

Humor

Everyone Read Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams.

General Comments on Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams
Funny satire on a world obliterated.
How is something so sad made to appear funny?
Humor is silly and cultish.
Satire is strictly entertaining.
Element of alternative history... What if mice did rule world?
Adams pokes fun at self-important people.
Basically a book for college people who see through the pomposity of an
older generation.
What is the question? Answer is 42. Funny???
Not challenging.
Appeal is to grade schoolers and teens.
Points out the absurdities of life ala Monty Python, Kurt Vonnegut, John
Irving, Terry Pratchett, Tom Robbins.
Not hard science fiction...just some spaceships. The science fiction cannot
be taken seriously.
Humor is what brings you to this book. Some sly, wry comments.
Not hard SF but rather a British comedy set in outerspace.
Plot flows well and characters are identifiable types.
Author has no agenda other than to give the reader a good time.
A good book to get a non-SF reader introduced to this genre.

Humor: General Comments

Humor is often an illusion to something else, but you need to identify the
something else and that is often dated.

Some books are very funny for their time only. *Hitchhiker* stands the test of

time with its answering machines, digital phones, etc.

A good story that lasts.

British and American humor are very different.

Humor is subjective.

The skill of British humor lies in its pacing...(Monty Python)

American humor is predictable.*i.e.*, gallows humor, whistling through graveyards, *etc.*

There is a difference between visual and print. (Humor)

Slapstick is silliness; satire is irony.

Humor is something one can identify with and a lot is going on in the background.

Individual Titles

Lord Kelvyn's Machine by James P. Blaylock

A three- part "steampunk" fantasy finds amateur scientist Langdon St. Ives avenging the death of his beloved wife Alice at the hands of the evil Dr. Narbondo. Ives momentarily forgets his grief and attempts to thwart Narbondo's goal of placing earth on a collision course with a comet. Langdon uses Lord Kelvyn's machine to travel back in time to murder a younger Narbondo and bring his beloved to life.

Flying Dutch by Tom Holt

Tom Holt's novel is a funny, British, fantasy take-off on the Flying Dutchman legend. Julius Vanderdecker and his entire ship's crew accidentally drink an immortality elixir back in the sixteenth century. As a result a terrible odor surrounds the whole crew and subsides only once a month every seven years.

Star Trek Q-In Law by Peter David

The *U.S.S. Enterprise* is the site for a wedding of two powerful merchant families called the Tizarin. Captain Picard is ready and pleased by the event, but his happiness is cut short by the arrival of Federation delegate Lwaxana Troi, who has romantic designs on him. The situation is further complicated by the arrival of the evil Q who has come to challenge the human concept of love. The Tizarin are plotting war and Lwaxana plans to teach Q a lesson in love that he will not forget.

Dad's Nuke by Mark Laidlaw

It is 1998, and suburban communities have become walled camps with no

communication among residents. People are jobless and spend their days plugged into computer simulations. Doc Edison has the people's apparent trust in this somewhat heavy-handed satire on warped, ancient values. Some philosophical, moral implications to the story.

Callahan's Crosstime Saloon by Spider Robinson

Bartender Callahan provides a safe atmosphere for people who seek absolution in his tavern. His guests include aliens, "regular folk," cyberspace aliens, telepaths and time travelers. Each relates his experience to save the world. The stories are filled with puns, especially those told on Tuesday. Tall Tales Night is just what it claims to be and it is a sidelight to the main story.

The Stainless Steel Rat by Harry Harrison

Some humor, ala James Bond. YA. Part of a series. Jim diGriz is the stainless steel rat and a criminal that cons humans, aliens, robots and even the police. He is a "likeable con man" and revels in his own professional competence at breaking the law. A thief, not a murderer, di Griz possesses personal charm and values human life.

To Say Nothing of the Dog by Connie Willis

This science fiction fantasy has all the components of an old-fashioned Victorian novel, a time-travel tale, a comedy of errors, and a literary game. It is an examination of our misconceptions about people of bygone days.

Lest Darkness Fall by Sprague L. DeCamp

This alternate history chronicles the political, scientific and cultural problems of Western Civilization during the fifth and sixth centuries. In exchange for \$5.00 worth of modern coins, Ph.D. candidate Martin Padway uses 93 post-Imperial silver sesterces to live in Old Rome and attempt to save the Roman Empire.

Bimbos of the Death Sun by Sharyn McCrumb

This mystery novel is a parody of the subculture that draws in science fiction and fantasy fans. Famous Science Fiction author Appin Dungannon has been murdered at a SF/Fantasy convention filled with Trekkies and Dungeon Masters. James Owen Omega and his girlfriend Dr. Marion Farley are professors at a local university. It is through their eyes that the reader observes the pageantry and peculiarities of the convention guests.

Omega is a sympathetic protagonist and the author's satire is directed at those who have no other life but their fantasies.

Tales from the White Hart by Arthur C. Clarke

Written in the fifties, this book is a series of short stories told at the White Hart Bar by a group of scientists, writers and laymen. Obnoxious Henry Purvis is the primary storyteller whose tales are not quite believable. The reader learns of carnivorous orchids, special silencers, and ballistic computers.

Alternate History

Everyone read *The Man in the High Castle* by Philip K. Dick.

Comments

Terrible time trying to read and finish the book.

Dialogue and discussions are tedious.

Least enjoyable of all titles read.

Mixed views on the audio version.

Likes the idea of an alternate history within an alternate history tale.

General comments on the sub-genre

The story should be based on real historic fact.

Some titles are more literate fiction rather than science fiction.

Good characterizations/better than some others we have read.

Time period of major events has a direct effect on the story.

Details are very important.

Most enjoyed reading this sub-genre/"What if" factor is intriguing and there is not too much science fiction.

How different is this title from other science fiction books we have read?

More social/political issues than scientific.

Enjoyable for readers of historical fiction, though they may not like science fiction.

Role of I Ching is a reflection of the sixties.

Readers feel this book one of the first to cross the line between science fiction and literature.

Author/story is a "realist" rather than "gee whiz" /Would appeal to science

fiction readers who appreciate the "what if"/This feature is an asset for non science fiction lovers.

Won a Hugo Award in 1963/well-deserved.

I Ching manipulates people.

Juliana is a favorite and one reviewer feels she is a pivotal character.

Individual Titles

The Gate of Worlds by Robert Silverberg

Story takes place in 1985 in an alternate world in which the Black Death has killed three-quarters of the world's population in 1348. Turks can conquer Europe and non-Western civilizations are on the rise throughout the world. Dan Beauchamp is the hero that migrates to the rich Aztec Empire from England.

West of Eden by Harry Harrison

It is the dinosaurs rather than mammals that have evolved into somewhat intelligent species in Harrison's story. Descendants of the former battle with the later for survival and dominance. Kerrick is a hunter reared among the dinosaurs. His knowledge of their ways makes him a natural leader of humans and eventually the reptiles' enemy.

Finity by John Barnes

A universe of conflicting memories. It is the year 2063, Hitler has won the war and intelligent cars and personal ballistic transports are part of everyday life. The United States has vanished from everyone's memory. Hence the mystery of "what if" begins as the books' characters try to deduce what has occurred.

Pavane by Keith Roberts

A novel comprised of six stand-alone short stories each narrated by six separate characters. Tales are set in a primitive twentieth century that witnesses the assassination of Queen Elizabeth I and the triumph of the Roman Catholic Church.

Lest Darkness Fall by Sprague L. De Camp

Action-packed, but reader must set aside beliefs to enjoy. More time travel than alternate history. Set in ancient Roman times. (6th century)

Comparable to *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. History professor Radway is transported back to Rome a few years before the Fall. He attempts to create a life for himself and halt Rome's decline.

Resurrection Day by Brendan DuBois

Story takes place in 1972, and its initial premise is that during the 1962 Cuban missile, the Russians did not back down. The Soviet Union has been annihilated and Washington, D.C. is a radioactive crater. Britain is a major world power. JFK is rumored to be alive and unjustly despised for causing World War III. Lots of tension with harsh, plausible answers.

SS-GB: Nazi Occupied Britain 1941 by Len Deighton

Murder mystery, political intrigue, an intellectual activity for the author. Story line relates life within Nazi-occupied Britain one year after Germany has conquered the world. Churchill has been killed by a firing squad and the King is imprisoned in the Tower of London. But the intriguing premise of this book is that America believes the war has ended. Thus begins the tale...

The Guns of the South by Harry Turtledove

The South is losing the war so an alien group appears and offers AK 47s to the Confederates. The aliens are a racist South African group that enables the South to triumph. One reviewer did not enjoy book. Too much detail/repetitive though a history lover may cherish this aspect of the book. Another reviewer thought it did move quickly. On the lighter side...Lee was able to receive nitroglycerin for his heart and coffee was available just by boiling water.

The Difference Engine by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling

It is London, 1855, and the Industrial Revolution is operating in full force until one Charles Babbage creates and perfects his Analytical Engine and thus ushers in the age of computers. The only problem is there is no power source to run the new technology. Plus London's extreme summer heat has driven the wealthy from their homes leaving the subversive, anti-intellectual Luddites to appear and confront the intellectuals for power in the city.

Wild Shore by Kim Stanley Robinson

World-building book. A trilogy set in California that offers three futures: post nuclear war environment, a pollution-free world, and a city of urban sprawl. A coming of age story in which a young boy saves America.

Triumph by Ben Bova

A book that needs to be read carefully as one might miss its meaning.

Depicts a radically altered post World War II Europe in which Stalin dies and Roosevelt lives. At the Tehran Peace Conference, Churchill hands Stalin a plutonium-laced sword that kills the later. Eisenhower and Patton also play roles in this novel covering the thirty days of April, 1945.

The Last Starship from Earth by John Boyd

People need to marry within their own station. If a couple from another station fall in love they are condemned to the Planet Hell.

Fire on the Mountain by Terry Bisson

A Civil War era book whose premise is that John Brown and his Raiders did succeed. Another alternate history story in which Brown dies is also part of this book.

Television and Movie Tie-Ins/Series Books

General Comments on Star Trek/Star Wars/Series:

Lack of familiar characters, family sagas or multigenerational features.

Too much is assumed on the part of the reader as to plot, characterization, and historical events.

Lots of references to other books in series.

Similar to Perils of Pauline.

Action-adventure is their biggest appeal (ala Indiana Jones)

Often the books' descriptions are too long, but the movies are great!

Heavy-handed one sentence paragraphs.

World building elements.

Genre does not seem as popular as it has been in the past.

On-line material, graphic novels, DVDs, are very good.

Not true science fiction except for space and alien elements.

Little machinery.

Westerns/Soap operas in outer space.

If you change the characters, story could take place anywhere.

Hack writing.

Formulaic, plot driven.

Some are romance, mystery and need not be read sequentially.

Characters can be separated from home, have their own adventures, and then return to their former worlds.

Not written sequentially.

George Lucas controls his timelines but the Star Trek series are not this

restrictive.

Publishers seem to exert great control over this genre.

Did not care to finish book, as I did not care about the characters.

Appeal:

For movie buffs who want to keep the story going, or learn more about the characters.

Enjoyed by archaeological mystery fans, plus horror, adventure and speculative fiction fans.

Adventure, suspense, and tension are real and stories are easy to get into.

Characters are likable.

Not for hard case SF fans.

1014 year-old boys like the paperback adventures.

No sense of wonder or science/Dr. Who is the exception as this series is more sophisticated, funny and could be regarded as a bridge to science fiction books.

The following titles were read by the group:

The Courtship of Princess Leia *Star Wars* Dave Wolverton

Mutiny on the Enterprise *Star Trek* Robert E. Vardeman

The Morpheus Factor *Stargate-SG-1* Ashley McConnell

Rogue Planet *Star Wars* Greg Bear

Vendetta *Star Trek* Peter David

Dr. Who Day and the Day of the Daleks Terrance Dicks

Contamination *Star Trek* John Vornholt

Tatooine Ghost *Star Wars* Troy Denning

The Arrival *Earth Final Conflict* Fred Saberhagen

Alien Nation The Day of Descent *Star Trek* Judith Reeves and Garfield Stevens

Imzadi *Star Trek the Next Generation* Peter David

Reunion *X-Files* Kevin J. Anderson

A Fury Scorned *Star Trek the Next Generation* Pamela Sargent

Heir to the Empire *Star Wars* Timothy Zahn

Rebel Dream *Star Wars New Jedi Order* Aaron Allston

Q Continuum *Star Trek* Greg Cox

Terminator 3 Rise of the Machines David Hagberg

Enterprise The First Adventure Vonda McIntyre

Star Trek James Blish

X-Wing Rogue Squadron *Star Wars* Michael A. Stackpole

House of Cards *Farscape* Keith R. A. De Candido

Q-in- Law *Star Trek* Peter David
Quantum Leap Ashley McConnell
Vulcan *Star Trek* Kathleen Shy
Splinter of the Mind's Eye *Star Wars* Alan Dean Foster
Heritage *Gene Roddenberry's Earth Final Conflict Heritage* Doranna Durgin

Some Individual Titles:

The Arrival by Fred Saberhagen

This is a prequel to Roddenberry's *Earth: Final Conflict* TV Series. The book is dull. The Taelons (really alien Companions) make their grand arrival on present day Earth at the San Simeon Hearst Estate, now the home of wealthy Jonathan Doors. His wife suffers from cystic fibrosis and the Taelons claim they can cure her, so he is very optimistic about their arrival. This optimism ends, however, when Jonathan's father relates his own sobering experience with the Taelons in 1936, at San Simeon. Jubal's story takes up a significant portion of the novel, sometimes reminding me of tales of alien abductions. This premise of Jonathan meeting the Taelons at the same location his father had met them is the one that I was not able to buy into. It occurred to me repeatedly that since I thoroughly enjoyed the characters in *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, I was more likely to allow poetic license, but the arrival characters were not especially engaging and, in fact, just stupid.

I did not see the TV series and really don't want to.

Star Wars: Heir to the Empire by Timothy Zahn

Picks up where the movie *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* leaves off. The first of a trilogy. It is now five years later; Han and Leia are married. She is expecting twins and trying to learn to be a Jedi knight while continuing with her New Republic duties. There is a growing sense of division within the Republic as well as a bit of complacency in regards to its own security. Han, Leia and Luke are in the midst of a diplomatic mission when they are attacked. Leia goes with Chewy to his home planet (very interesting sequences resulting), while Luke and Han attempt to discover what new threat the Empire is posing. We see familiar characters and brand new ones. The most interesting and dangerous are Grand Admiral Thrawn, leader of the Imperial Fleet, Mara Jade, a powerful woman with a past, and an interesting newcomer/smuggler Talon Karde. Slow in the beginning, but satisfying overall.

Enterprise: Surak's Soul by J. M. Dillard

The story centers on T'Pol, the Vulcan science officer on the first Enterprise. Due to an accident in which she is forced to kill in order to defend a fellow crew mate, T'Pol has made an ethical decision regarding whether to use or carry a weapon and whether or not she is willing to kill, even in self-defense. This puts her in conflict with Captain Archer when she refuses his command to carry a weapon. This conflict carries over into the rest of the plot as the Enterprise comes across a planet whose civilization has been destroyed, because it would not kill ANY living entity. Archer suspects the real murderer to be Wanderer, a being who boarded the ship under the pretense of attempting to discover who killed the inhabitants of this planet. But T'Pol is the only person able to speak with Wanderer and she is convinced that he is a peaceful, non-aggressive entity.

Appeal: For Young Adults/Few details as to character development, place, equipment/Some references to televised episodes.

Force Heretic II: Refugee *Star Wars* Sean Williams and Shane Dix

Refugee has three story lines. One follows Luke and Mara with Jacen (son of Han and Leia) as they try to find a lost sentient planet called Zenoma Sekot. The later is believed to have the capability of defeating the Yuuzhan Vong. They are working with the Imperials to find this planet. Zenoma Sekot was first mentioned in *Rogue Planet*, a novel set in the time before Luke was born. This story involved the original Anakin's training with Obiwan Kenobe to become a Jedi.

The second story line follows Han and Leia along with Jania (their daughter and Jacen's twin). The trio is trying to recruit allies and have gone to the planet Bakura. Again, events are from another novel titled *Truce at Bakura* published in 1994. The latter was written prior to the New Jedi Order series. This series appear to follow a united story line and combine elements created by other authors from previously written novels and movie plots.

The third story line follows Nom Anor, a discredited member of the Yuuzhan Vong. It seems that this character has been used in almost all of the New Jedi Order series of novels and is one of the connecting strings in the series.

Seaquest DSV by Diane Duane and Peter Morwood

This book is the novelization of the first episode of the television series as it introduces Captain Nathan Bridger and sets up events that result in his assuming command of SeaQuest DSV. The political situation and technical advancements of the world in the near future are described in interesting

detail. People live and work under the worlds' oceans, and the political affairs of the world above have spilled over into the depths. But as the book was published in 1993, and the near future described is supposed to be around 2018, it seemed a bit off in comparison to the way things really are when reading it in 2003.

Ruins by Kevin J. Anderson

Based on the X-Files series by Chris Carter. This novel finds the intrepid team of FBI agents Dana Scully and Fox Mulder investigating the disappearance of an American archaeological team at the lost Mayan city of Xitaclan. Accustomed to solving mysteries involving the paranormal and extraterrestrial, the two agents find themselves in the middle of a war among Mexican drug lords, revolutionaries and a covert military operation intent on destroying Xitaclan. Putrid stench emanate from the cenoto at the base of the temple, volcanic activity erupts on the seemingly flat jungle area and feathered serpent-like creatures slither in the dark. Reminiscent of Raiders of the Lost Ark and Indiana Jones, agent Mulder does indeed find evidence of extraterrestrial life within the ruins, but will he be able to survive and possibly rescue other team members?

Science Fiction/Soap Opera

Common Elements of SF to other genres:

Great Story/action, adventure/romance/political thriller, horror, mystery. This genre has all elements of other genres but often uses an alien universe as a time frame. Young Adult and coming of age themes. Emphasis on the commander of the crew. Could be western novels.

Soap Opera Science Fiction:

Aliens/outer space/costumes/high drama/interplanetary travel/sociological component/more soft than hard SF.

Hero: one good man on an almost impossible quest who at first seems totally unprepared for the challenge/single protagonist/ gathers a few friends along the way and is able to succeed with their assistance/ More adventure than action/lovers usually do not reveal their innermost thoughts.

Family connections are very important/series in this subgenre may replace family sagas.

Political maneuvering and diplomacy are common elements.
Mystery fans might enjoy this subgenre/

The Vor Game by Lois McMaster Bujold

Hard science fiction/religion/episodic/cliffhanger/you follow plot through characters/plot driven/

Liked the ice parts and sense of aloneness/

The negation of physical authority is a clever idea/

The model is Russian aristocracy/

Author plays with her readers/

Miles is ridiculous, laughable/coincidence and timing play important roles, but he is somewhat intelligent / internal dialogs, dissembling and his height are clever touches/a true adolescent full of surprises/an alter Woody Allen as we witness his thought processes/

Miles has a wicked sense of humor and understands his own limitations/

His doubts make him endearing/

Bujold's secondary characters are stronger than her primary ones/

Like Peter Wimsey, Scarlet Pimpernel/

Won a Hugo (Fan driven) 1991/Think about the competition for a given year/

Asides on Science Fiction:

Space Travel/heavy science fiction dulls drama of hard SF/strategy takes the place of mechanics and pits one person against another/lots of detail/rivets /Do we learn something about science?

Why is Science Fiction such a hard sell?

SF is not all ray guns and bug-eyed monsters!! Wide variety of stories for almost any reading interest and SF crosses into other genres with ease/mystery, humor, literate, history, alternate history, romance. Some titles inform readers with scientific information-principles Dune/One-shot novels, series, episodes...really something for everyone.

Individual titles:

Sargasso of Space by Andre Norton

This, the first of a trilogy, stars Dane Thorsen, an apprentice cargo master, who signs on with the Free Trader ship, Solar Queen. Shortly after its first trip, the crew has a chance to bid on trading rights to the newly surveyed planet Limbo. Pooling all its money, the crew wins the auction. Before

taking off to see the prize, the crew takes on an archaeological team as passengers. When Limbo turns out to be a brunt out plane with seemingly no assets to trade, it seems strange that these passengers can hardly wait to land. Things turn ugly when a suffocating fog descends, odd creatures appear and strange humming force pulses from underground, that traps the Solar Queen. It seems that Limbo is similar to the death ground for sailing ships on earth, the Sargasso Sea. Only this time errant spaceships are lured to their demise on the Sargasso of Space.

Emphasis on camaraderie of crew once a member has proven his worth/

Detailed descriptions of new world/ aliens/

Seen through the eyes of a rookie

A Million Open Doors by John Barnes

Great world building novel/

Higher Education by Charles Sheffield

Adventure / misfits / extended family

Reality Dysfunction by Peter F. Hamilton

Disturbing

Primary Inversion by Catherine Asaro

Ruling families / hard science fiction / finely drawn characters /

Consider Phlebas by Iain M. Banks

Disturbing / cultural wars / Weaponry / Body regrows before the head is completely removed/ little character development /

Naked in Death by J. D. Robb

Detective suspense that takes place 55 years in the future/

Subtle SF Elements/ Eve Dallas is police detective with unknown past /

Coffee is a rare and expensive commodity and the multi-billionaire, Roarke, does business in outer space but there is no mention of aliens. Also there is a well-established, very legal anti-gun ban, which means the police are armed with lasers; guns are also considered to be collector's items. Even with these elements, if you ignore them, the reader might think the story was taking place in the present.

This novel is a great example of a space opera. The characters are well developed and there is action and adventure in Eve's murder investigations of the three women. There is a budding romance between Eve and Roarke

that I presume will continue in the next title of this series. But unlike, Miles in *The Vor Game*, who accepts his limitations, Eve difficulty in dealing with her past cripples her emotionally and psychologically Events are seen through the eyes of Miles and Eve.

Thank you, Debbie, for your hard work, thought-provoking discussions and informative background materials that you offered for each subgenre. My own interest in and knowledge of the science fiction genre has been expanded, thanks to you!

(I believe I am speaking for our whole group with the above comments)

**Respectfully submitted,
Mary Cella**