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Christian Sci-Fi Worksheet

Reflection

The questions below enable Christian discernment of science fiction. There are no right or wrong answers. As a Christian sci-fi author, I am comfortable aligning biblical truths with science fiction themes. At the same time, this doesn't negate boundaries for you as an author or for your readers. You set the rules in your Christian sci-fi works as you seek readers intrigued by your perspective.

- Can sci-fi tropes be resolved biblically?
 - Aliens
 - Time travel
 - Evolution/mutation
 - Faith in science
- Should Christians focus on the “fiction” in science fiction, allowing them to overcome any dissonance with biblical perspectives?

Analysis of a Work

I find science fiction is a marvelous vehicle for biblical truths, seen in stories with a specific Christian perspective as well as secular stories with interesting characters and strong messages (e.g., *Interstellar*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*). The following questions can help identify godly fundamentals.

- How does the story portray good and evil?
- Do characters display a Christian worldview? Is it overt?
- Is there unbiblical behavior? Is it necessary for the plot and messaging?
- Does the story serve as a parable? If so, is it a commentary on world events or personal truths?
- Do any of the characters “play God?” If so, what are the consequences?

With thanks to Cherie Stamile, “Landmarks in Science Fiction Literature”

Personal Favorites

I write Christian sci-fi novels and short stories. While I specialize in print media, my roots are in movies and TV as my late mother Elinor was an adolescent sci-fi fan in the 1950s who became a screenwriter (credits include the 1972 cult classic telefilm *Gargoyles*). Favorite works are in order of preference in each category. Some feature mature themes/images/language.

Novels

1. *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury
2. *Parable of the Sower*, *Parable of the Talents*, Octavia Butler
3. *1984*, George Orwell
4. *Rendezvous with Rama*, Arthur C. Clarke
5. *The Martian Chronicles*, Ray Bradbury
6. *Contact*, Carl Sagan
7. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Douglas Adams
8. *Stranger in a Strange Land*, Robert Heinlein
9. *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley
10. *Dune*, Frank Herbert
11. *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut
12. *Lilith's Brood* trilogy, Octavia Butler
13. *Snow Crash*, Neal Stephenson
14. *Redshirts*, John Scalzi
15. *Foundation* trilogy, Issac Asimov
16. *The Andromeda Strain*, Michael Crichton
17. *The Midwich Cuckoos*, John Wyndham
18. *Accelerando*, Charles Stross
19. *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy
20. *The Shrinking Man*, Richard Matheson
21. *The Sparrow*, Mary Doria Russell
22. *The Iron Heel*, Jack London
23. *Devolution*, Max Brooks
24. *The Invisible Man*, H.G. Wells
25. *Jurassic Park*, Michael Crichton

Short Stories/Novellas

1. "A Sound of Thunder," Ray Bradbury
2. "The Fog Horn," Ray Bradbury
3. "Frost and Fire," Ray Bradbury
4. "After King Kong Fell," Philip José Farmer
5. "The Nine Billion Names of God," Arthur C. Clarke
6. "The Last Question," Isaac Asimov
7. "Flowers for Algernon," Daniel Keyes
8. "There Will Come Soft Rains," Ray Bradbury
9. "The Time Machine," H.G. Wells
10. "It's a Good Life," Jerome Bixby
11. "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream," Harlan Ellison
12. "The Sentinel," Arthur C. Clarke
13. "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale," Philip K. Dick
14. "The Man," Ray Bradbury
15. "Dogfight on 101," Harlan Ellison
16. "Who Goes There?" John W. Campbell
17. "The Fire Balloons," Ray Bradbury
18. "Nightfall," Isaac Asimov
19. "The Lovers," Philip José Farmer
20. "Finis" ("The Last Dawn"), Frank L. Pollack
21. "The Machine Stops," E.M. Forster

22. “‘Repent, Harlequin!’ said the Ticktockman,” Harlan Ellison
23. “Zero Hour,” Ray Bradbury
24. “The Minority Report,” Philip K. Dick
25. “Kaleidoscope,” Ray Bradbury

Movies

1. *King Kong* (1933)
2. *Alien* (1979); *Aliens* (1986)
3. *The Terminator* (1984)
4. *Planet of the Apes* (1968)
5. *The Road Warrior* (1981)
6. *Forbidden Planet* (1956)
7. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951)
8. *Things to Come* (1936)
9. *Interstellar* (2014)
10. *Five Million Years to Earth* (1967)
11. *The War of the Worlds* (1953)
12. *When Worlds Collide* (1951)
13. *The Incredibles* (2004)
14. *The Martian* (2015)
15. *Escape from New York* (1981)
16. *Blade Runner, Final Cut* (1982/2007)
17. *AI: Artificial Intelligence* (2001)
18. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)
19. *Alphaville* (1965)
20. *Godzilla, King of the Monsters* (1956)
21. *Jurassic Park* (1993)
22. *Them* (1954)
23. *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957)
24. *Star Wars: Episode IV, A New Hope* (1977)
25. *The Thing from Another World* (1951)
26. *Robocop* (1987)
27. *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968)
28. *Frankenstein* (1931)
29. *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982)
30. *Back to the Future* (1985)
31. *E.T.* (1982)
32. *Soylent Green* (1973)
33. *The Invisible Man* (1933)
34. *Arrival* (2016)
35. *On the Beach* (1959)
36. *Solaris* (1972)
37. *Children of Men* (2006)
38. *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1954)
39. *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* (1953)
40. *The Time Machine* (1960)
41. *Star Trek* (2009)
42. *Fantastic Voyage* (1966)
43. *Avatar* (2009)
44. *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014)

45. *Silent Running* (1972)
46. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956)
47. *Snowpiercer* (2013)
48. *Metropolis* (1927)
49. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977)
50. *The Matrix* (1999)

TV Series

1. *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964). Favorite episodes: "The Monsters Are Due On Maple Street," "On Thursday We Leave for Home," "The Odyssey of Flight 33," "It's A Good Life," "Time Enough at Last," "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet," "The Old Man in the Cave," "Living Doll," "Steel," "Third from the Sun," "The Obsolete Man," "To Serve Man," "The Lonely," "The Passerby," "The Invaders," "Nick of Time," "A Hundred Yards Over the Rim."
2. *Star Trek* (1966-1969). Favorite episodes: "The Doomsday Machine," "Journey to Babel," "Space Seed," "Amok Time," "The City on the Edge of Forever," "Arena," "Who Mourns for Adonais," "The Menagerie," "Bread and Circuses," "The Ultimate Computer," "Balance of Terror," "The Corbomite Manuever," "What Are Little Girls Made Of?" "Assignment: Earth," "A Private Little War," "The Devil in the Dark."
3. *The Outer Limits* (1963-1965). Favorite episodes: "The Sixth Finger," "Demon with a Glass Hand," "The Galaxy Being," "The Duplicate Man," "The Forms of Things Unknown," "The Man Who Was Never Born," "Soldier," "The Special One," "The Inheritors."
4. *For All Mankind* (2019-). Favorite episodes: "Red Moon," "Rupture," "The Gray," "Happy Valley," "Stranger in a Strange Land," "Goldilocks," "Perestroika," "Home."
5. *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* (1964-1968). Favorite episodes: "Jonah and the Whale," "Terror on Dinosaur Island," "The Cyborg," "The Monster's Web," "Leviathan," "The Menfish," "The Mechanical Man."
6. *The Six Million Dollar Man* (1973-1978). Favorite episodes: "The Secret of Bigfoot," "Straight on 'Til Morning," "One of Our Running Backs is Missing," "Day of the Robot," "The Seven Million Dollar Man," "Kill Oscar," "The Return of Bigfoot."
7. *Quatermass and the Pit* (1958-1959). BBC miniseries adapted into a 1967 feature film, retitled *Five Million Years to Earth* for the American market (see above).
8. *The Mandalorian* (2019-2023). Favorite episodes: "The Sin," "The Tragedy," "The Apostate," "The Rescue."
9. *Thunderbirds* (1965-1966). Favorite episodes: "Trapped in the Sky," "Pit of Peril," "Operation Crash-Dive," "Attack of the Alligators," "Terror in New York City."
10. *Foundation* (2021-). Favorite episodes: "The Emperor's Peace," "The Mathematician's Ghost," "The Final Crisis," "King and Commoner," "Long Ago, Not Far Away," "Creation Myths," "The Stress of Her Regard."

Make an inventory of your favorite works. Analyze them from a Christian perspective. Determine what sub-genres and tropes you enjoy and want to write. I write hard sci-fi with its emphasis on well-explained tech. I also write dystopian, space opera, cyberpunk, and first contact. Sub-genres invariably overlap.

Observation and Research

Writing Christian sci-fi requires a mix of faith and genre. Talk to believers who enjoy science fiction. Learn their favorite works and media habits. Through this process, I've identified target readerships for my books:

Men, age 50+, who grew up with the classic sci-fi movies and TV shows I've listed above.

Women who like strong female sci-fi protagonists like Ellen Ripley in the Alien franchise and Katniss Everdeen in The Hunger Games franchise.

Young adults who enjoy current offerings from the Star Wars and Marvel cinematic universes, recognizing the decades-long roots of both.