

## English Studies 12 – Term 3: Speculative Fiction

Our focus for the final term could not be more timely or relevant. As you leave the hallowed halls of this (online) school, you will inherit a world that is in a precarious situation, and all of the skills and knowledge you have accumulated to this point will not be enough to ensure you inherit the world you want; you will need to understand first what is going on out there in order to be able to adapt, grow, and thrive in a sustainable way.

### Speculative Fiction

The type of novel you will be reading falls under a very broad category. Like all literature, speculative fiction deals with the human condition and who we are as a species. However, who we are as a species is examined closely through the lens of “what if”. What would we as a society be like if we made contact with an alien civilization? What would we be like as a society if we could travel through time? Would we as a race be able to stave off extinction brought about by our own vices? The various works of speculative fiction try to answer these types of questions.

Take a look at the infographic I made. You will see that there are many different subgenres to speculative fiction. You might even find the novel you chose. We will get into some of those sub-genres in another week. For now, just recognize that speculative fiction is a LARGE genre that represents MANY of the more popular cultural artifacts (movies, literature, art, etc.) in our modern age.

### Why Study Speculative Fiction?

Good question. Take a look at this Ted Talk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ed8OeZcOBI>

As Joelle Renstrom notes in her Ted Talk, science fiction (or speculative fiction) deepens students' understanding of a variety of subjects, shows students what is possible in the world – for better or worse – and reassures students that “virtually nothing is impossible”.

So, if students are going to save the future, they must first try to understand the present. What is happening in our world right now, and what will the overwhelming change we are all caught up in mean for our futures? The article from the Sunday Times suggests several possible consequences to the current global pandemic. Which do you believe are most likely to come true? Which are least likely to come true? How does your perception of the world help to inform your opinions?

## Book Club

The majority of the work you do this term will be in the form of group discussions taking place on-line. As you read your chosen novel, you will ask questions and make observations and connections to the world we live in now. Each novel – *1984*, *Fahrenheit 451*, and *Oryx and Crake* – was at some point a strange and outlandish thought experiment based on each respective author's view of their contemporary society. Yet as the novels become older and older, in many ways they come to mirror our world with increasing accuracy.

Here is what you will be doing each week for your assigned readings:

- Answer the questions I provide you.
- Defend your answers and opinions with specific evidence from the text.
- Be active, thoughtful, and respectful in your postings and communication with your group members.
- Ask questions of your Book Club members.
- Look to make connections between elements within the book, and elements without. Document, link, paste these connections into your discussion, and don't forget to explain why you think it is important.

**Please consult the list of annotation and discussion topics I have included for a more comprehensive list of what you can be thinking about.**

## How to Get Started

1. Decide your novel and email me for a copy if you haven't already done so; decide if you will be working in a group or on your own (5 people max per group).
2. Start up a Google Doc. Share it with me and grant me edit permission; I will post questions and links within the doc. PLEASE WRITE YOUR NOVEL TITLE and GROUP MEMBER NAMES at the top of the doc.
3. Start reading and thinking, and let's see where this Book Club takes us! A rubric for assessment of your participation in the Book Club will be coming out in the next week or so.

That's it! Check your doc for the relevant questions and links. I look forward to reading these books with you.