

What is Science Fiction?

To start this semester off, we should probably take a look at what we know about the genre of Science Fiction, and more importantly perhaps, where we stand, philosophically in terms of what lies in store for us in the future. Here are quotations by two famous Science Fiction writers. After each quote, write what you think they are trying to say.

"A good science fiction story should be able to predict not the automobile but the traffic jam."
- Fred Pohl

"The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible."
- Arthur C. Clarke

Now let's see where you stand on some philosophical issues involving Science Fiction. Answer the following questions as best you can. Explain your position.

1. As human beings, we often strive to gain more knowledge and know more about the world around us and about ourselves. Can we know everything? How far should we go?

2. Is technology good for us? Should there be any limits to how far we go with technology?

3. Is there such a thing as a "perfect" society? Can it ever be achieved?

4. Are we alone in the universe?

There are some historical events which shaped and led fiction down the road to Science Fiction. Below is a list of historical or literary events and ideas. Write down what you know for each of the following in a sentence or two. Then we will discuss them, and you will fill in what you don't know.

1. Prometheus

2. Frankenstein

3. The Industrial Revolution

4. Hiroshima and The Atomic Age

5. UFO's

6. Sputnik/The Space Race

7. Computers/The Microchip/Cyberspace