Categories of Science Fiction

- **Aliens & Alien Invasion**: When one species, civilization or planet is invaded or has interactions with a new, foreign species. *War of the Worlds, Independence Day, Signs, E.T.*
- **Alternate History**: Society is altered due to fundamental changes in history, what may have happened if history had gone differently. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court, The Butterfly Effect, Watchmen, The Man in the High Castle.*
- **Apocalypse & Post-Apocalypse**: Event involving destruction or damage on an awesome or catastrophic scale, the complete destruction of the world and/or the aftermath. *The Road, The Walking Dead, Mad Max.*
- **Artificial Intelligence & Robots**: Stories with advanced artificial beings, often involving a disruption to society, struggle to incorporate into humanity, search for identity. *A.I., I, Robot, Star Wars, Star Trek.*
- **Cryogenics**: The use of stasis or very low temperatures or “freezing” for space travel, future travel. *Avatar, Alien series, Demolition Man.*
- **Dystopia/Utopia**: Attempts at a perfect, positive, wonderful society turn bad – dominated by negative factors. *Pleasantville, Waterworld, Mad Max, Brave New World, The Giver.*
- **Fantastic Voyage**: Heroic adventure, unknown regions, strange inhabitants. *Harry Potter, The Odyssey, Fantastic Voyage* by Isaac Asimov
- **First Contact**: Chronicles first encounters between humans and extra-terrestrials or new life forms. *Contact, E.T., Alien.*
- **Future**: Stories which take a look at a possible near or distant future. *Gattaca, Star Trek.*
- **Hard Science Fiction**: The science is possible & believable. *Jurassic Park, Contact, Twelve Monkeys, The Martian, Gravity.*
- **Medical Science Fiction**: Includes breakthroughs in medical science, such as cloning, reanimation, regeneration, genetics, mutation, disease, etc. *The Strain, Frankenstein, Brave New World, Robocop, Resident Evil, The Stand, Ex Machina.*
- **Military Science Fiction**: Involves military technology, war is the basis of the plot, battlefield is often space or planets beyond Earth, set in future, theme of honor, heroes. *Halo, Starship Troopers, Star Wars – Clone Wars.*
- **Overpopulation**: The science fiction story is driven by overpopulation of the Earth or another planet, often involves colonies on other planets and restrictions to living on home planet. *Elysium, Wall-E, District 9.*
- **Psychological Science Fiction**: The plot is driven by psychology, the characters and/or the audience are shocked, surprised, confused by motives, actions and plot within the story, it messes with the mind. *Inception, Fight Club, 12 Monkeys, The Matrix.*
- **Science Fantasy**: Often includes talking animals, mystical elements, magic, strange creatures, dragons, unicorns, and there’s always a hero and a conflict. *Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings, Narnia.*
- **Sociological Science Fiction**: Explores how people & aliens exist in alien and human societies or react to societies where science & technology have made dramatic changes. *Fahrenheit 451, District 9, Elysium.*
- **Soft Science Fiction**: Focus is more on the relationships than the science. *AI, The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, Star Wars, Star Trek.*
- **Space Exploration**: Involves characters (human or alien or both) developing space vessels and exploring new planets and galaxies. *Star Wars, Star Trek, Buck Rogers, Contact, Alien.*
Space Opera: Set in outer space, on other planets, or in other galaxies, basically a Soap Opera played out in space. *Star Wars, Guardians of the Galaxy.*

Steampunk: Set in the past or in a world resembling the past, but with futuristic elements and gadgets. Heavily influenced by Industrialization, steam power, and the Victorian era. *Firefly, Wild Wild West, Sherlock Holmes* (with Robert Downey, Jr.)

Superhumans: Stories largely born out of comic books, characters have superpowers from various sources & causes. *Spiderman, Wonder Woman.*


Telepathy/Mind Powers: Characters have the power to read others' thoughts, communicate mentally, move objects with their minds, etc. *Matilda, X-Men, Firestarter.*

Time/Dimension Travel: Involves traveling through time or visiting new dimensions or alternate worlds. *A Wrinkle in Time, Back to the Future, Sliders, Terminator, Stargate.*


Unexplained Phenomenon: The science fiction just happens & we can’t explain it or don’t know where it came from or why it’s there. Often, UFO’s, Bigfoot, Chupacabra, etc. get lumped into this category, but it also refers to a story where the characters and audience can’t explain what has happened.

Themes – A lot of literary themes in fiction also appear in Science Fiction.

- Man vs. Self
- Man vs. Machine
- Man vs. Alien
- Man vs. Universe
- Man vs. Society
- Man vs. Space
- Man vs. Galaxy (for these themes, replace Man with Woman or Alien or Person or Creature)
- Man vs. _______
- Good vs. Evil
- Power
- Change
- Coming of Age or Growing Up
- Justice & Injustice
- Hero’s Journey/Quest
- Self-Knowledge/Awareness
- Honor
- Courage
- Perseverance
- Character
- Circle of Life
- Darkness & Light
- Love
- Loss of Innocence
- Hope
- Sacrifice
- Survival