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Science Fiction: A Survey of Twelve Science Fiction Books Recommended for Junior and Senior High Students

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Recommended Citation

Hughes, Judy, "Science Fiction: A Survey of Twelve Science Fiction Books Recommended for Junior and Senior High Students" (1975). *Honors Theses*. 309.

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SCIENCE FICTION

A Survey of Twelve Science Fiction Books
Recommended for Junior and Senior High Students

By Judy Hughes
Fall 1975

SCIENCE FICTION

The following pages contain a brief look at twelve science fiction books and their authors. All of these books are recommended for either junior or senior high students.

As a prospective school media specialist, I wanted to know more about the literature that students from the ages twelve to eighteen read. Science fiction was one area in which I lacked background. Many of the students enjoy science fiction, especially the boys. So, I decided to read a sample of this type of literature to gain more knowledge in the field. After reading each book, I checked to see how many of the developmental tasks for this age group it contained. I listed the tasks that the book contained after a short annotation of that book. I then searched out a small amount of basic background information on each of the twelve authors to check their qualifications for writing science fiction.

I now feel a little more informed about science fiction and some of its authors. I also feel more qualified to make subtle recommendations out of this type of literature.

Ballou, Arthur W.

Arthur Ballou was born on May 9, 1915 in Brookline, Massachusetts. He married Marjorie Clapp in 1942.

He attended college and business and administration school in New England. He was employed as public relations consultant in Boston from 1939 to 1940 and as a petroleum marketer for a firm in Boston from 1940 to 1962. He has been a free-lance consultant and writer in Boston since 1962.

He is the author of Marooned in Orbit, Bound for Mars, and other works under an undisclosed pseudonym.

Marooned in Orbit by Arthur W. Ballou

Two men trapped in a space craft in orbit around the moon. A rescue ship manned by Major Ike Sandborn is sent up in record breaking time. However, it is discovered that the marooned ship had lost part of its oxygen supply.

The rescue must be stepped up, but this will expose Major Sandborn to extra radiation. The final decision must be his. Can the marooned vessel be reached in time?

Developmental tasks:

- Adaptability
- Adversity, overcoming
- Courage
- Devotion to a cause
- Duty, sense of
- Efficiency
- Friendship values
- Responsibility

Bradbury, Ray

Ray Bradbury was born in Waukegan, Illinois on August 22, 1920. He is the son of Leonard Spaulding Bradbury, a lineman for the Bureau of Power and Light. His mother, Esther Moberg was born in Stockholm, Sweden, and brought to Wooster, Mass. where her father worked in the steel mills.

Except for two years until 1934, Bradbury lived in Waukegan. When he was fourteen he moved to Los Angeles where he graduated from high school in 1938, this ended his formal education. He began writing in high school and has written everyday since.

Bradbury, the author of hundreds of stories has been reading science fiction since the age of eight.

Especially familiar to librarians is his Martian Chronicles, a Science Fiction Book Club section, which covers the years 1999 - 2026 A.D. Some more of his writings are The Illustrated Man, Fahrenheit 451, and Golden Apples of the Sun.

R Is for Rocket by Ray Bradbury

R Is for Rocket is a collection of space stories. Included is "R Is for Rocket" from which the title of the book was taken. Bradbury gives the reader just a glimpse into the future space age. Most of these stories use a teenage character.

In one story the reader sees a boy waiting impatiently to be called for special flight and space training. In another he sees the son of a space pilot waiting and hoping for the return of his father from each long and dangerous trip, only to discover that he is unable to stay on earth with his family over a short period of time.

Developmental tasks:

Friendship values
Mother-son relations
Occupational orientation

Caidin, Martin

Martin Caidin is the author of sixty-three books. In 1968 he won the Aviation/Space Writers Association's Fiction Award for No Man's World. In 1958 and 1961 the same association awarded him the James J. Strebig Memorial Trophy as the nation's outstanding authority in the field of avia[']tional writing.

Caidin is a commercial multi-engine pilot. He is the only civilian ever to have flown aerobatics in an F-100F Super Sabre with the famed Air Force Thunderbirds. He is an active parachutist.

Until recently he was consultant to the Air Surgeon, Federal Aviation Agency, Bureau of Aviation Medicine.

Caidin is also the author of Four Came Back.

Four Came Back by Martin Caidin

There had been eight members of the Epsilon crew. They were due to return to earth. The Epsilon had been a well planned, successful space effort involving the mutual effort of four nations. Colonel Michael Harder was commander of the ship.

Bill Jordan, one of the two engineer aboard, was the first of the crew members to be stricken. Others were soon to follow. What was causing the dreaded disease? Why were some of the crew still healthy? The panic on earth and the fear of taking the dreaded disease back with them made it impossible to return to earth. Would the whole crew have to die in space? Their supplies could not last forever. Could the answer for the cure be found in time?

Developmental tasks:

- Age-mate relations
- Co-operation
- Courage
- Death, adjustment to
- Efficiency
- Friendship values
- International understanding
- Leadership
- Level-headedness
- Self-control
- Work
- Adaptibility

Clarke, Arthur Charles

The most commercially successful and highly respected contemporary science fiction author is reputed to be the British-born Arthur C. Clarke, who has been called "the science fiction writer's science fiction writer."

Half of the forty books Clarke has written on space and underwater adventures are nonfiction, and his careful attention to fact lends a ring of credibility to his fantasies.

Born in Minehead, England, on December 16, 1917, Clarke has two brothers and one sister. In 1936 he lacked the money to go to college and took a job as an auditor. He joined the British Interplanetary Society during this time.

He joined the Royal Air Force in 1941 and became a radar instructor. He was later commissioned as a flight lieutenant. While in RAF he published several articles on electronics and sold science fiction stories.

Clarke enrolled in Kings College in 1946. He received a B. Sc. degree with first class honors in physics and pure and applied mathematics in 1948. He had completed one term of graduate studies in advanced mathematics when he became the assistant editor of the journal, Science Abstracts.

His first book was Interplanetary Flight. He was awarded the UNESCO Kalinga Prize for science writing in 1962. In 1965 he was awarded the Aviation/Space Writers Association's General Writing and Cobert S. Ball awards.

Some of his works are Going into Space, Indian Ocean Adventure, 2001: A Space Odyssey, Dolphin Island, A Fall of Moondust, etc.

2001: A Space Odyssey by Arthur C. Clarke

Clarke takes his readers on a space trip with David Bowman. Hal, the computer of the ship, is the only one on board who knows the final objective of this trip. The stress of Hal keeping this secret from the crew who had worked with him for so long cause a malfunction. Hal is the cause of the death of all the crew members, except Bowman.

Bowman finally manages to disconnect Hal, but can he get back to earth? The reader continues to follow Bowman beyond the limits of man's previous knowledge.

Developmental tasks:

Courage
Co-operation
Death, adjustment to
Friendship values
Level-headedness
Perseverance
Work

Crichton, J. Michael

Michael Crichton was born on October 23, 1942 in Chicago, Illinois. He received his A.B. (summa cum laude) at Harvard University in 1964 and M.D. from Harvard Medical School in 1969.

Crichton writes: "Have been a student for 80% of my life; never held a real job." He is currently working on a post-doctoral at Salk Institute for Biological Studies.

He won the Mystery Writers of America Award in 1968 for A Case of Need. Other writings include: The Andromeda Strain, Five Patients, and others under a pseudonym.

The Andromeda Strain by Michael Crichton

The entire population of Piedmont, Arizona, except for an old man and an infant, died after the crash of an unmanned research satellite.

Four American scientist, chosen in advance for their experimental achievements in the fields of clinical microbiology, epidemiology, pathology, and electrolyte chemistry are summoned under conditions of a total news blackout to the Wildfire's secret laboratory five stories beneath the Nevada desert. There they work to find the antidote to the unknown microorganism that threatens the world. What does the old man and the infant have in common that has kept them both alive?

Developmental tasks:

Courage
Duty, sense of
Services to others
Work
Co-operation

Del Rey, Lester

Lester Del Rey was born in Saratoga, Minnesota, in 1915. He attended George Washington University in Washington, D.C. He has done bibliographical and editorial work.

In writing for young people he feels "that giving young readers a better knowledge of the world -- its past as well as the possibilities of its future -- is the most important job an author can undertake." His juvenile contributions include: Cave of Spears, Moon of Mutiny, Outpost of Jupiter, Rockets Through Space, Steps to the Stars, etc.

Moon of Mutiny by Lester del Rey

Fred had been at the top of his class in the space academy; however, he had a lot of points against him because of discipline. He was on his last round of flight training when he failed to use the computer to make a difficult landing and depended on his own computations. He could not believe they would kick him out of the academy.

Fred returned to the space station where his father was in command and where he had lived since childhood. How could he explain to his father? Fred had built his life around being a spaceman; now what was he to do? He was not qualified for anything else.

He was to have one more chance. One of the pilots for a supply vessel would be unable to make the trip. Fred was granted a temporary pilot's license and was to go as copilot. However, he was warned death could be the penalty for mutiny.

Developmental tasks:

- Co-operation
- Courage
- Father-son relations
- Friendship values
- Growing-up
- Level-headedness
- Obedience
- Self-appraisal
- Trustworthiness
- Work
- Responsibility
- Occupational orientation

Heinlein, Robert A.

Robert Heinlein was born in 1907 in Butler, Missouri. He grew up in Kansas City and attended school there. Science of all sorts and astronomy in particular was his hobby as a boy. He originally planned to be an astronomer.

However, he received an appointment to the United States Naval academy at Annapolis and became a Naval Officer instead. He graduated in 1929 and served as a line officer in the U.S. Fleet. He was retired for physical disability in 1934.

He started writing in 1939. His first book was science fiction.

Heinlein has been a recipient of the Hugo Award three times for his science fiction; for Double Star in 1956, for Starship Trooper in 1960, and for Stranger in a Strange Land in 1962. Some of Heinlein's other works are Red Planet, Rocket Ship Galileo, Time for the Stars, Beyond the Horizon, etc.

Beyond the Horizon by Robert A. Heinlein

Heinlein gives his readers a peek into the future where travel from one world to another is a common occurrence. A war of genetics has already occurred. With all of man's advancement we see him still asking the same questions, (e.g. Is there a life after death?) and facing the same problems of power struggle.

A man out of the 1920's wakes up in this new world. How does he adjust to a world where men again kill over honor instead of have a fist fight, where each couple has the right and ability to choose what their offspring will be like?

Developmental tasks:

- Courage
- Duty, sense of
- Age-mate relations
- Friendship values
- Social attitudes
- Self-control
- Co-operation
- Civic competence and responsibility

L'Engle, Madeleine

Madeleine L'Engle was born in New York City on November 29, 1918 and lived in New York for the next twelve years with a jaunt or two to Europe. Her father, Charles Wadsworth Camp was a writer and her mother a pianist.

At twelve Madeleine and her parents moved to Europe where she lived mostly in France and Switzerland. She went to college in South Carolina and Smith College.

She acted some in Greenwich after graduation in 1941. She thinks this was an excellent school for writers. After she married, she and her husband moved to Connecticut where they opened a small store. They later moved back to New York and the theater.

Madeleine L'Engle is the author of A Wrinkle in Time, Meet the Austins, and Both Were Young. She was the recipient of the Newbery Medal in 1963 for A Wrinkle in Time.

A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle

A Wrinkle in Time is the story of how a young boy, who is a genius, and his sister with the aid of a young friend search for their father. Their father, who is a scientist, is caught in a world of darkness and evil.

L'Engle tells of a way to travel through time and space; she calls it a wrinkle in time. The suspense rises as the children reach this land of darkness and evil. Can they help their father to escape or will they too be caught where no one can think for himself?

A Wrinkle in Time won the Newbery Award in 1962.

Developmental tasks:

Age-mate relations
Brother-sister relations
Courage
Family relations
Fear-overcoming
Mother-daughter relations
Mother-son relations
Self-appraisal
World concepts (to a small degree)

Norton, Alice Mary

Alice Mary Norton was born in Cleveland, Ohio. She had two years of college at Western Reserve University.

She was assistant librarian at Cleveland Public libraries and a children's librarian in Cleveland from 1932 to 1950, except for a wartime period in Washington, D.C. as a special librarian at the Library of Congress. She has been a free lance writer, mainly for teenagers since 1950. She was an editor for Gnome Press in Hicksville, New York from 1950 to 1958.

She received the Invisible Little Man award for science fiction in 1963. She is the author of The Prince Commands, The Sword is Drawn, Scarface, Android at Arms, Sargasso of Space, etc. She sometimes writes under the pseudonym, Andre Norton.

Android at Arms by Alice Mary Norton

Andas Kastor woke up in a strange prison in a strange world. The prison was strictly kept by robots. The prison also held leaders from other worlds. It was as if time had stopped, no one appeared any older than the last time they were able to remember, but according to the dates they were last able to recall they had been there for some time.

With the prison cells open the prisoners are able to explore and still be fed. They manage to escape by way of a supply ship.

Andas finally manages to return to his world after the death of some of their members and discovering at different stops great changes in the worlds they thought they knew. Andas finds that there is already someone in his world claiming his own identity. He is forced to flee for his life in the secret passages beneath the castle, only to find himself in a twin world to his own.

He begins to doubt if he is the real Andas Kastor. Could it be that he is an android along with everyone else that was in the strange prison?

Developmental tasks:

- Age-mate relations
- Courage
- Duty, sense of
- Friendship values
- Fear, overcoming
- Leadership
- Intercultural understanding

Nourse, Alan E.

Alan E. Nourse's first story appeared in 1951. A doctor and author, he presently lives in North Bend, Washington. He took a leave of absence from medicine in order to write full-time. His medical background accounts for the vividness and accuracy of the scientific detail which enlivens all of his writing. He has concentrated his writing on science fiction.

He is the author of The Counterfeit Man, Raiders from the Rings, Rocket to Limbo, etc.

Raiders from the Rings by Alan E. Nourse

Why is Ben's father so upset and against this raid? It is just like hundreds of others the spacers have made to rob earth of food and women so that they might survive. It is Ben's first full-fledged raid.

When Ben returns home to Mars he finds his father dead and the outpost destroyed. It was clear Ben's duty was to rejoin the Spacer fleet in its fight for life in the asteroid rings. But with two Earth prisoners aboard his crippled ship and his father's black web belt around his waist, Ben's return meets with unexpected delays.

He begins to wonder if the earth people are all so bad or just poorly informed and frightened. When he encounters the powerful and invisible Phantom Ship, he and his prisoners realize what is at stake and work together to try and stop the terrible war about to take place.

Developmental tasks:

- Age-mate relations
- Courage
- Co-operation
- Death, adjustment to
- Devotion to a cause
- Fear, overcoming
- Friendship values
- Growing-up
- Level-headedness
- World peace

Verne, Jules

Jules Verne was born on February 8, 1828. He had a happy boyhood. His father was a lawyer in Nantes. He started to follow his father as a lawyer, but took more interest in literature.

Although he never studied science, he collected an immense number of facts reading fifteen papers a day, and bulletins of scientific societies.

During his writing career Verne averaged writing two books a year. He made one trip to America, which suggested his Floating City. He died in Amiens.

Verne is the author of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, Michael Strogoff, From the Earth to the Moon, and Floating City.

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne

Verne takes his readers to the bottom of the sea and gives them a glimpse of all of its wonders.

What had been attacking the fleets of the world? It could not be of man's making, but if not, what terrible monster stalked the seas?

The creature takes three prisoners; a French scientist, his valet, and a Canadian seaman. The reader follows these three as they travel through all the seas of the world and tell of their wonders. Who is the mysterious Captain Nemo? Where does he come from? And why does he hate the land and the people of the land so much?

Developmental tasks:

Adaptability
Courage
Death, adjustment to
Friendship values
Resourcefulness

Wells, Herbert George

Herbert George Wells is an English novelist, historian, and scientific writer who signs his works H. G. Wells.

Wells was born on September 21, 1866 at Bromley, Kent. His father had been a gardner and had turned small shop keeper. Wells never forgot that he came from the lower middle class. He won a scholarship at the Royal College of Science. He took his B. S. with honors at London University in 1888.

Wells started his career as a biologist, turned journalist, then he turned to literature, and finally set up shop as a prophet. Since 1895 he has averaged something better than a book a year.

His works can be divided into three catagories: the fantastic, the pseudo-scientific, and the realistic. Wells has shown pessimism in his books since World War II; it is as if he sees everything for which he apparently fought for doomed to defeat. Many of his books contain a political theme.

He is the author of The Time Machine, The Invisible Man, The War in the Air, The Science of Life, etc.

The Invisible Man by H. G. Wells

Wells introduces the readers to the mysterious stranger as he gets off a train in a small mountain village and makes arrangements to stay in the local inn. The stranger explains his bandages by saying he had been in a serious accident in which he was severely burned. The curious innkeeper is unable to get anything else out of him.

Why does he keep his door locked all the time? The shades are always drawn and there is mysterious rattling of bottles. Where does he go on his long night walks and why does he continue to wear his heavy coat and hat even when the weather gets warmer? No one even knows the stranger's name.

Developmental tasks:

Readjustment
Social attitudes
Fear

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