

Activities in Support of Science Fiction / Fantasy Literature

Teacher: Mr. Jacob Johnson

Course: Science Fiction / Fantasy Literature

Semester: 2

Dates: 3/17/20-3/30/20

Email: johnsonjl@bpcschools.org

Background: The following activities are to be completed as support material for Mr. Johnson's Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature Course. We are nearing the last part of the 3rd Quarter and are about to begin the 4th Quarter, so these materials will largely reflect information and coursework that we have been discussing in class from that timeframe. While this work will not be submitted to Mr. Johnson, the activities are expected to be completed in order to help prepare for our eventual return to normal classwork once this event has cleared up enough to return to our regular schedules. You should attempt to do one activity a day, ideally. Should you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me via email.

Activities:

Your Own Personal Utopia - Part 1: The word "utopia" has many different interpretations and definitions, but the gist of the concept is always about an idealized or perfect place. In other words, a utopia describes a place of ideal perfection, especially in laws, government, and social conditions, an impractical scheme for social improvement, or an imaginary and indefinitely remote place.

The term was born out of the idea of not necessarily being possible to actually obtain or to visit, but even so, we may dream of such a concept on our own.

What would your personal Utopia look like? Keeping it school appropriate (I know... I know boohoo), think about what your perfect place would look like. On a relatively small scale a perfect place could be quite simple. What would a small scale personal Utopia look like for you? Think about what your daily life would look like. What would an average day consist of? How would you personally spend your time in such a place? Try create a diary entry detailing what this one day would look like.

Your Own Personal Utopia - Part 2:

What would your personal Utopia look like if your dreams are quite a bit larger: What would a perfect world look like instead? What kind of government would you envision? What kinds of laws would there be? Would there still be schools? How would education be handled? Would people still work jobs? Would it be up to you if you went to school or worked a job? What might the economy look like? Would there be money? How would money be made? Would there be social classes? How would we determine what people do with their time? What incentives would we have? How would the justice system work? What consequences might be available? Try envisioning your world as if you were describing it in a travel brochure for someone who was interested in visiting your world.

Interview others on their vision of Utopia: Try interviewing some of the people around you and comparing what their Utopias would look like. Are these various views at all compatible with one another? How many compromises could be made where we still consider it to be a Utopia for all? What elements do they have in common? What elements are different? Be sure to ask about a number of the questions you have already asked yourself previously in the earlier exercise.

Is Utopia Even Possible? Ponder the following and try asking people around the same question (ideally, the people whom you have already interviewed). Is it possible for us to even have a Utopia? If everyone has an idea of a different Utopia, how could one Utopia ever meet the needs of everyone? We know that some people's vision of a Utopia might never be possible, but is any Utopia truly possible? What would a "feasible" Utopia look like? Would people even still recognize this as a Utopia? How does the act of making it "workable" alter the ideal vision in the end?

The Biggest Obstacle to a Utopia: In your opinion, what is the single greatest obstacle towards ever establishing an objective Utopia for all to enjoy together - perfection? Try to explain your reasoning in a paragraph or so. While this is your opinion, you should still back up your ideas with rational explanations. Consider both what we have talked about in class and what history seems to tell us about most attempts at supposedly establishing a formal Utopia. Let's assume we are talking about a modern incarnation of the United States. Don't concern yourself with the rest of the world. Consider this scenario: America, perhaps under a new Presidency and new Congress has begun the discussion of leading a revolutionary, fundamental change to the way this country is run and operated. Their goal? Utopia.

Retro-Futurism Part 1: Try to either respond through a small essay or discuss the following prompts with a partner. Compare and contrast your responses. What role do you imagine World War I and World War II had to play in changing the kind of future Americans imagined for themselves and the rest of the world? Describe at least two positive impacts and two negative

impacts that these wars had on how people viewed society. Consider employment, the inventions of the time, and the needs of that generation.

Keep in mind that “Retro-Futurism” is a thing because we are able to note a very definite and discernible shift between how our depictions of the future used to look and how they began to look. Our depictions of the future have continued to evolve and change as time went on - we can still note these changes today. Our views are always evolving based on the culture, climate, rate of invention, employment rates, concerns, and other variables as time marches on.

Retro-Futurism Part 2: Watch a film or a movie that has Retro-Futuristic Qualities. You May also choose a TV show, if you find one. Note the specific details about the future that stand out to you as being Retro-Futuristic. What do these details say about the society who dreamt them up? What were their ideals? What did they expect the future to hold for them? Why would our current view of the future differ from this Retro-Futurism inspired view? What is the most zany or ridiculous element, coming from your modern perspective? Does any of it hold water today?

Retro-Futurism Part 3: Try to find some Art that has a Retro-Futurism bent to it. Do a quick Google search on Retro-Futurism. What trends do you see? What shows up in most of the images? What does this tell you about the society who depicted this art? What does it tell you about the way they viewed the future? What trends do you see that differ between the decades, as time has marched on? How does this sort of art from the 1920s differ from this sort of art in the 1960s, for example? Ask others what they see when you show them this work.

Retro-Futurism Part 4: Try your own hand at sketching a scene of a Retro-Futuristic world. What would it include? You can use any medium you want, even digital art on a computer or some sort of sculpting, etc. I'd love to see these if you want to email them to me. Consider transportation. Consider what buildings would look like. Are there flying vehicles? Are we still on Earth? Have we mastered Space? Are there robots? Do they live in domes or in cities or towns, or perhaps even underground? What do the people look like? What are they wearing? What are their roles?

Research J.R.R Tolkien's impact - Part 1: We have begun researching J.R.R Tolkien as an author who has had a prominent impact on the genre of Fantasy as a whole. Continue researching this man, his life, and his contributions by asking people around you if they know anything about any of his works? Do they remember ever reading his books? Have they seen any movies inspired by his works? Have they played any video games inspired by his works? What details do they remember from this media? Did they look back on reading, playing, or watching any of this fondly? In other words, did they like it? If so, which parts? If not, what turned them off to his works? What did they not like about them?

Research J.R.R Tolkien's Impact - Part 2: We have discussed many of the elements of Tolkien's fictional, Fantasy based works in our classroom. What aspects of his work can you see inspiration from in other works or mediums that you have access to? Are there any movies or tv shows that you feel have been inspired by his work in some part? Are there any video games that you feel have been inspired by his works? Try looking up works that have been inspired by or that include elements that he invented or otherwise popularized. Why do you think these particular aspects have stood the test of time and shown up in so many works? Try responding with a paragraph or two.

The Hero's Journey- We have discussed this a little bit in class, although we have not dug into the topic as much as I would have liked to due to this little break we've got. We will be exploring it much more when we come back together. In preparation for that, research the various elements that are part of the Hero's Journey. Which parts are crucial Which parts only occur part of the time? Create a list of each of the major aspects of a hero's journey. You may use some of the notes I have previously uploaded or look it up online, but it may not be necessary at this point to know the proper names for each section, provided that you at least understand the gist of them. We can get to their formal categorical names later on.

Identifying Heroes in Media: Part 1- Pick any movie or tv show that depict a hero of some kind and map out his journey as each part of the story moves forward, clear from the beginning to end.

Identifying Heroes in Media: Part 2- Pick a second movie or tv show that also depicts a hero of some kind and map out his journey as each part of the story moves forward, clear from the beginning to end. Take note to be particular. Do not be vague.

Identifying Heroes in Media: Part 3- Now that you have both watched and mapped out this journey between two different films or tv shows, what elements do they have in common with one another? What elements are different? Compare and contrast these two different stories and how they have chosen to depict the nature of a Hero's Journey. What patterns have started to emerge for you? Did one Hero stand out to you as being more Heroic than the other? Ask yourself: Why did you feel this way? What made him or her the better Hero? How strictly did that character follow the key elements of the Hero's Journey?

