

Imagine That!?: Science Fiction as a Learning Motivation

1 - Good afternoon. I'm Val Ontell and I'm a Librarian Emeritus at San Diego Mesa College. Science Fiction provides many vehicles for stimulating the imagination and thus motivating students to learn. This presentation will discuss just some of the many Science Fiction works (for the purpose of this discussion, defined as including the sub-genres of fantasy and horror) that can be used at the various education levels. Don't panic; I have provided a list for you. I also don't want to talk only about "classic" SF. Thus, the following caveat: because titles can go in and out of print, there is no way I can guarantee that all the titles I mention will continue to be in print. This is also why the list does not include publishing information.

2 - In The Ascent of Man Jacob Bronowski wrote, "It is important that students bring a certain ragamuffin barefoot irreverence to their studies; they are not here to worship what is known, but to question it." Whether the students are in the elementary grades, middle school, high school, or higher, it is the function of teachers and librarians to provide the tools that enable them to question intelligently. Mark Twain, who was honored as "Dead Guest of Honor" at the 1993 World Science Fiction Convention, provided one such tool in this book, **[click]**

3 - A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. Written in 1889, it may be the first time travel as well as the first alternate history story. This great American writer is not alone in having written material in a genre which for years many academicians claimed was "not literature."

4 - Among the other "classic" writers who have written Science Fiction stories are those listed here. Even William Shakespeare used Science Fiction elements: the ghost of Hamlet's father and the witches in Macbeth are two examples. There are many, many more.

5 - Modern "mainstream" authors such as these have also contributed to Science Fiction's continually growing canon.

6 - Writers who were not Science Fiction authors when they were writing have had certain of their works identified with the genre. Who hasn't identified these titles as Science Fiction?

7 - Others, (Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and H.P. Lovecraft) have become identified with the genre for the totality of their works.

What does all this mean to a teacher or a librarian? It means that Science Fiction has an historic legacy and legitimacy.

8 - Legitimacy did not suddenly appear when Madeleine L'Engle won the Newbery medal for A Wrinkle in Time in 1963. Legitimacy did not suddenly appear when Madeleine L'Engle won the Newbery medal for A Wrinkle in Time in 1963. Subsequent awards to [5 clicks] Lloyd Alexander for The High King in 1969, Robert C. O'Brien for Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH in 1972, Robin McKinley for The Hero and the Crown in 1985, Lois Lowry for The Giver in 1994, and Neil Gaiman for The Graveyard Book in 2009 are not the reasons why the genre became more acceptable. Acceptance has come because there is a wealth of truly fine material from which to choose, material that can be used in a wide variety of subject areas. But first teachers and librarians, at all grade levels, must get over the idea that Science Fiction is "not really literature." It can be done.

9 - There was an English teacher at The Bronx High School of Science (where I was a librarian for eight years) who gave his sophomore class a short story assignment which included a reading list. When he brought his class to the library to look for books, I noticed that there were no Science Fiction stories on the list and asked him about it. His answer: "Science Fiction is not literature." As I disagree, I set out to change his mind - no easy task. I handed him this book, [click] Harlan Ellison's short story collection Shatterday, and asked him if, as a favor to me, he would read it, especially "Jefty is Five" (the 1978 winner of the Hugo award for best short story) and the title story. He agreed. Two weeks later, he brought the book back. When I asked him his opinion, he said the stories were "pretty good" - high praise from someone who doesn't think much of most modern authors (i.e. post-1900). The result was an agreement that he would allow his students to use any Science Fiction story that I recommended or approved. Well, it was a start - and over the years I built on it. Because the fact is that all genres are literature.

10 - Science Fiction fans often quote Sturgeon's Law (attributed to author Theodore Sturgeon): [click] "Ninety percent of everything is crap." It is no different with "literature," whatever the genre. All have crap and all have some truly excellent works. Science Fiction is perhaps the victim of its popularization in the pulp magazines of the 1940s and '50s.

11 - Its image was not enhanced by the grade-B and lower films produced in great quantities during the '50s, including, unfortunately, the film often voted by critics the worst ever made, [click] Ed Wood's Plan 9 From Outer Space. But there were good films during this period of which teachers can make much use.

12 - One in particular, 1951's The Day the Earth Stood Still, with its peace-seeking alien and concerns about our future use of nuclear weapons, provides an excellent basis for discussions in **[click]** Philosophy, Sociology, History, and Science classes of tolerance, the arms race, war and peace, mankind's relationships with each other and the universe, and the concepts of space travel and life on other worlds. In connection with the story upon which it was based, "Farewell to the Master" by Harry Bates, written in 1940, it could be used in **[click]** an English or film class to analyze adaptation from one medium to another and similarities and differences in the mediums. In light of the current world situation, the film takes on a new relevance and immediacy. It also reminds students that films were not always in color. Many Science Fiction books, short stories, films, and television shows can be used in class. This is because Science Fiction often deals with the topics being taught.

13 - The number of alternate history stories in Science Fiction has increased dramatically over the past few years; a boon to history classes. Such anthologies as **[click]** the two-volume What Might Have Been series edited by Gregory Benford and Martin H. Greenberg and **[click]** the collections Alternate Presidents and Alternate Kennedys, both edited by Mike Resnick, have contributed to this phenomenon. These stories could be used to encourage students to do research on the actual events to which the stories are positing alternatives. Once they have done their "homework," discussions of both the real and alternate events can allow them to see both the events themselves and their consequences in history. Novels can also be given the same treatment. **[click]** Jerry Yulsman's Elleander Morning, asks the question "what if Hitler had been killed before he came to power in Germany?" **[click]** Harry Turtledove's The Guns of the South postulates a Confederate victory in the Civil War. The ramifications of such drastic changes in history - and the possibilities for student explorations - are fascinating.

14 - The novels of Harry Turtledove, in particular, are excellent for this type of thing as many of them deal with two of the major cataclysms of the 19th and 20th centuries: the Civil War and World War II.

15- George Santayana noted that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." And you're never too young to start -

16 - say, with the "alternate history" of Mr. Peabody and his boy, Sherman, from the old Rocky and Bullwinkle series (still seen on the Cartoon Channel). What better way to begin teaching these lessons?

17 - One device for setting up an alternate history story is the one Twain used in Connecticut Yankee: time travel. **[click]** Novels such as H.G. Wells' classic The Time Machine, **[2 clicks]** Time After Time by Karl Alexander (in which Wells battles Jack the Ripper in modern-day San Francisco), and Time and Again by Jack Finney (in which a time travel project takes the protagonist to 1880's New York City) use different methods of

achieving the goal of traveling through time. A physics class could have some lively debates as to the best method (or if it's even feasible), in the course of which various laws of physics could be explored. Likewise, a psychology or sociology class could take the "fish out of water" elements of such stories and apply them to a variety of aspects of life. And these are just two of many elements worthy of exploration (and no, not all time travel books have the word time in their titles).

18 - In her article "Using Science Fiction to Teach the Psychology of Sex and Gender," Hilary M. Lips discusses how she uses Ursula K. LeGuin's The Left Hand of Darkness and Marge Piercy's Woman at the Edge of Time to "illustrate the links between a society's assumptions about gender and its practices." **[click]** Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1915 utopian novel Herland, with its tale of two men who stumble onto an all-female society, provides a vehicle for discussion by Psychology and/or Sociology classes of sex, gender, and male-female relationships, among many possible topics. Similarly, these same classes could use **[click]** Robert Silverberg's Dying Inside as an excellent springboard for studying loss; not only the loss of his ESP powers by protagonist David Selig, but the various kinds of loss we all experience in our own lives.

19 - Controversial issues are discussed at almost every level of education and in many different courses (e.g. English, Social Studies). Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451 deals with a society that has banned all books and the dissenters who have memorized their contents so they will not be lost forever. Could there be a better basis for a unit on censorship and/or oppression? **[click]** Norman Spinrad's Pictures at 11, with its tale of the takeover of a local Los Angeles television station by "ecoterrorists," provides an excellent starting point for discussions of terrorism, the environment, and the role of the media in our society today. **[click]** The Foundation Trilogy by Isaac Asimov, voted the best Science Fiction series of all time, introduced the concept of "psychohistory." Along with its recent sequels, its variety of tales and characters provides material for History, Psychology, Sociology, and Anthropology classes.

20 - The printed page is not the only possible source. Make use of the fact that students these days are attuned to the visual. The TV show Babylon 5 episode "Gropos" provides an excellent basis for a discussion of how the true horror of war, the loss of loved ones and friends to death, does not change no matter how technologically advanced we may become. The effect going into battle has on both soldiers and those they leave behind is another topic addressed by this episode.

21 - Anthology shows such as The Twilight Zone and The Outer Limits very often dealt with sociological and psychological issues. **[click]** An examination of conformity, rebellion, and individuality can begin with The Twilight Zone episode "Number 12 Looks Just Like You," a story in which a young woman tries to reject treatments that will make her physically flawless but look like everyone else.

2 - Likewise, "Eye of the Beholder," in which surgeons attempt to improve the looks of a supposedly "ugly" girl so that she can live among the "normal people" you see here, provides one of the best beginnings possible for a discussion of the question "what is beauty?"

23 - The same question, as well as the power of love, can be taught to younger children using the book and video of Beauty and the Beast. This story

24 - as well as Shrek!, based on the children's book by William Steig, can also teach children about not "judging a book by its cover" - and using the books incorporates reading as well. Come to think of it, these would work for students of any age.

25 - The value of friendship can be most charmingly taught through the three Toy Story films [[click](#)] and Monsters, Inc. Friendship is also a theme in Finding Nemo, along with love and tenacity. Pixar films all seem to incorporate material in them that can be extremely useful for teachers and librarians. They are also films that both adults and children can enjoy and share. Don't hesitate to recommend them - or any other film, book, etc. - to parents. After all, they are the most important teachers children have. In the interest of full disclosure, I must tell you that I have stock in Disney/Pixar. But my recommendations come as a librarian and someone who has seen all these films and totally enjoyed them (who says a teaching tool can't be fun for teachers too?).

26 - For older students, Babylon 5's "The Geometry of Shadows" and the Star Trek episode "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield" open the door to considerations of the destructive power of racism.

27 - The rigidly stratified society depicted in the latter series' "The Cloud Minders" supplies fodder for considering the issues of class and slavery, both in the U.S. and the rest of the world. Indeed, Star Trek episodes have dealt with so many social issues that they can be and are the basis for entire courses.

28 - The character of Mr. Spock alone allows students to delve into something we all have experienced at one time or another: the feeling of being an outsider and not knowing who we are or where we fit in. Elementary school students especially need to understand that they are not alone in having such feelings. In the classic episode "Amok Time," the character T'Pol asks Spock, "Are thee Vulcan or are thee human?" Spock's need to answer this question lays the groundwork for discussion in any college Psychology class - and resonate with any group of mixed-race elementary school students.

29 - Likewise, the Star Trek: The Next Generation episode "Measure of a Man," in which a scientist wants to take the android Data apart in order to eventually replicate him, asks students to answer that most basic of questions, "what is life?"

30 - Star Trek: Deep Space Nine's "Family Business," in which Quark's mother defies her society's conventions as to what she can and can't do, deals with mother/son and male/female roles and sex stereotypes and can be used with Herland to discuss these basic topics in anthropology, psychology, and sociology classes. All the Star Trek shows can be the basis for classroom dialogues.

31 - And then there's Fringe, episodes of which could be used in any of the Sciences.

32 - Other shows (Farscape; the various incarnations of Battlestar Galactica (the remake, not the original) and Stargate, Dollhouse, Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel, Supernatural, and the always mindbending Lost) also have episodes that can be used. In English classes, any and all of the works mentioned in this talk can be used to teach the elements of fiction writing. But where any genre could be used to do this, Science Fiction brings in the element of imagination more than others do. The possibilities inherent in just the two words "what if" provide a wealth of topics for composition, creative writing, speech, film, and literature classes.

33 - The Star Trek of authors, Stephen King, can be used as a teaching tool for older students via Carrie (another story about someone who feels like an outsider). As for younger students – How many of you know that King wrote a book for young people, [[click](#)] The Eyes of the Dragon (a story of good vs. evil)? He wrote it for his own children.

34 - And imagine what a college psych class can do with the the character of Norman Bates in the Robert Block's book, and especially Alfred Hitchcock's film, Psycho. Needless to say, care should be taken in using this since it is, in my opinion, one of the scariest movies ever made.

35- A book like The Winged Tiger by Phil Yeh, which tells its pro-reading story in ninety-six pages of wordless cartoons, stimulates an elementary school student to supply those missing words. What better beginning for a child developing vocabulary?

36- The challenge of creating an entirely new world can be a byproduct of reading such series as the Dragonriders of Pern or Harper Hall of Pern, both by Anne McCaffrey, the first Science Fiction author to make The New York Times best seller list.

37- These (Ursula K. LeGuin's Earthsea, Larry Niven's Ringworld, J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth in Lord of the Rings, and C.S. Lewis' Narnia) are others.

38 - The more recent dystopian world of Panem in the Hunger Games trilogy is another example and, **[click]** along with Disney/Pixar's Brave, can also provide role models of strong young women to a variety of educational levels.

39 - Even young children can see how worlds are created by reading James Gurney's Dinotopia series (also a TV special and short-lived series).

40 - And let us not forget certainly one of the most popular worlds ever, that of the phenomenal Harry Potter. As a librarian, I say "Thank God for J.K. Rowling" for the rich source of reading and learning motivation she has created.

41 - And the movies are bringing new readers to the books - a wonderful "vicious circle."

42 - Likewise, the success of The Lord of the Rings and Narnia films has led to an increase in the reading and appreciation of their worlds. Even though they were written as adult series, the films have caused more young adults to seek out the books.

43 - The Star Wars films, whose appeal after so many years seems unabated, can also provide world-building stimuli as well as an excellent basis for teaching elementary school students such values as loyalty, honor, fighting for what you believe in, and (most obviously) the difference between good and evil (and how resisting evil can result in good). Even that overworked concept of "The Force" can teach children the value of looking within yourself and using the strength found there. In an era that is stressing the teaching of "values," these perennially popular Science Fiction films can be a valuable tool.

44 - Simplified for young children, the concepts of good and evil, the triumph of good, the value of friendship, the beauty from within, and more can be taught through the Disney and Pixar versions of fairy tales, folklore and stories.

45 - It is a given that the science postulated in Science Fiction can be a source of lessons and discussions in Science classes. **[click]** Ernest Callenbach's novels, Ecotopia and Ecotopia Emerging, which postulate a society in which ecological concerns are paramount, can be the basis for an entire unit on ecology as well as an analysis of the society the author has created - an excellent opportunity for interdisciplinary assignments between the

Science and Anthropology departments. **[click]** Stories like Brave New World allow for the exploration of scientific ethics. Indeed, ethics in general can be a topic found in many Science Fiction stories. **[click]** Karen Haber's Mutant series opens the door to studying not only the scientific reality of such powers as ESP and telekinesis, but also the ethical aspects of their use - another chance for cross-disciplinary teaching between the Science, Psychology, and Sociology departments.

46 - There are even books that teachers can use to begin relating science fact and Science Fiction, some of which you see here

47 - and here - and which might encourage students to read in areas in which they might ordinarily not show much interest. Issues of feasibility of everything from Star Trek's warp drive and transporter to the possible existence of an E.T. open vistas to students that mere pedagogy would not tap.

48 - And these vistas go beyond the Sciences, as you can see here.

49 - During the twelve years I was the librarian at Intermediate School 88 in Brooklyn, we had a remedial program for students two or more years deficient in reading. Their reading problems, of course, impacted their work in other subjects. One was Science. The seventh grade Science teacher and I were talking one day about problems he was having teaching his students about astronomy. He could not seem to interest them in the subject. Knowing that he was a **[click]** Star Trek fan, I suggested the possibility of using the show to teach the subject. We spent some time discussing alternatives until we hit upon the idea of having the students write their own story, which we would stage and videotape. To do this, they would first have to demonstrate enough knowledge of astronomy to incorporate this information into the script. The students went for it in a big way. We scheduled them into the library to do research not only on astronomy but any other topics their script required. I shall never forget the point in their writing where they needed an exotic-sounding flower to use for comparison as part of a story point. Everyone ran for the encyclopedias and the flower books to find the best name - and they did. When they completed their script, we produced it. The students painted scenery, made costumes and props, and of course, acted the roles. We then created a videotape complete with music, titles, and credits. The 15-minute cassette became a part of the library's audio-visual collection. We even sent a copy to **[click]** Gene Roddenberry, the show's creator, receiving a very nice acknowledgement in return. Imagine how this added to the students' self-esteem. The assignment provided the students with more than just a means of learning astronomy. It allowed them to practice a number of skills: storyboarding, writing, editing, basic videotaping, working cooperatively, and of course, reading.

50 - And if there is anything librarians and teachers should be doing, it is encouraging reading at every opportunity and in every way possible. I utilized a number of techniques to do so, many involving Science Fiction. One is a habit I maintain to this day: Each week I sit down with this ([TV Guide](#)) and look for any ties between upcoming television shows and the books or stories on which they are based or for which I know I have related materials. A lot of these have been in the areas of Science Fiction, fantasy, and horror. From Dr. Seuss to Stephen King, Dickens to Roald Dahl, Garfield and Peanuts

51 - to this star of one of the one of the most successful motion pictures in history [[E.T.](#)]; I have used them all by creating reading lists and displays. It works. The books go out. Add the telecasting of movies (including [old movies](#)) and you increase the pool of materials - and a lot of Science Fiction films are based on books and short stories.

52 - "The Sentinel" by Arthur C. Clarke (which became [2001: A Space Odyssey](#)); "Who Goes There?" by John W. Campbell, Jr. (which became [The Thing](#), aka [The Thing From Another World](#)); "A Boy and His Dog" by Harlan Ellison; and "Enemy Mine" by Barry Longyear are examples of short stories for older students.

53 - They – and more - can be found in either of these anthologies.

54 - [Planet of the Apes](#) by Pierre Boule; [[3 clicks](#)] [The Martian Chronicles](#) by Ray Bradbury; Michael Crichton's [Andromeda Strain](#) and [Jurassic Park](#), D.F. Jones' [Colossus](#),

55 - and two modern classics, Bradbury's [Fahrenheit 451](#) [[click](#)] and [Blade Runner](#) (based on Philip K. Dick's [Do Androids Dream About Electric Sheep?](#)) are among the many novels -

56 - [Charlie and the Chocolate Factory](#) by Roald Dahl and [The Black Cauldron](#) by Lloyd Alexander are among the novels for younger students -

57 - and let us not forget the transformation of Shakespeare's [The Tempest](#) into the Science Fiction classic [Forbidden Planet](#) - what an introduction to the Bard for high school students!

58 - Novelizations of popular movies and television shows can provide the same "recognition factor" for motivating students to read. A caveat: Sturgeon's law really applies here; the number of really bad books is extremely high in this format. For every well-done version like [[2 clicks](#)] [Fantastic Voyage](#) by Isaac Asimov or [Star Wars: Attack of the Clones](#) by R.A. Salvatore, there are a lot of awful rip-offs.

59 - Prime examples of both are found in that previously mentioned perpetual motion machine called Star Trek. The original show and its four successors (The Next Generation, Deep Space Nine, Voyager, and Enterprise) have seen their characters spun off into dozens of original novels. Authors such as Barbara Hambly, Diane Duane, Peter David, and Hugo award winners Joe Haldeman and Vonda McIntyre have contributed to these ongoing series. Some have been very good. Others have been awful. But students will read them. The teacher's and librarian's job is to try to provide the good ones while filtering out the bad just as s(he) would with any other books. But the effort can be worth it.

60 - I had a student - one of those 7th graders in the remedial reading program - who came into the library one day with a challenge for me. Having not done any of his previously assigned book reports, he had been told by his English teacher that he had to turn in the next report "or else." His challenge to me: find something he would like to read. I started by asking my two standard questions: "What do you like? What interests do you have?" His answer: "nothing." But I kept at it and finally found out that he liked to watch Star Trek. I asked him if he knew that there were books that contained short story versions of the episodes. His eyes widened - I had him! I gave him this – **[click]** James Blish's first collection of stories. He took it out; he read it; he did his book report; he came back for more. He read his way through all the Blish books, then **[click]** Alan Dean Foster's Log books, then all the original novels we had, good and bad. Finally, I had to tell him that he'd read our entire Star Trek collection. Would he trust me to give him something else? He did. **[click]** I gave him an Andre Norton young adult Science Fiction novel. From then on he read through every Science Fiction novel in the collection (this was an annex, not the main school library, but there were quite a few books and I even "borrowed" a few from the main building). By the end of the school year he had begun to branch out into other forms of fiction - and his reading level had appreciably improved. It would not have happened without that one television show - and I've had similar experiences with other Science Fiction series. But Science Fiction can be used even earlier.

61 - The number of students who learned to read and love reading thanks to this man (Dr. Seuss) is probably incalculable.

62 - Jane Yolen's Commander Toad stories also attract young children to the wonderful world of books. Diane Duane's Young Wizards series, as well as the works of William Sleator, Daniel Pinkwater, and the recently deceased Diana Wynne Jones (among many others) provide a wonderful continuity from those of such earlier lights as

63 - Isaac Asimov's Lucky Starr series, [2 clicks] the works of Andre Norton, and the "juvenile" novels of Robert Heinlein. Indeed, giving a child a good story, Science Fiction or otherwise, is still the best way to instill the love of reading that is so essential to lifelong learning and lifelong success.

64 - And it is never too early to start. Maurice Sendak is one place.

65 - The fairy tales of Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm, [3 clicks] Hans Christian Andersen, and Charles Perrault and the fables of Aesop are other resources for teaching the very young. What can teachers and librarians do? Many things. Some possibilities:

66 - 1. Determine your students' interests. Whether it is a Young Adult adventure story such as [3 clicks] Robert Silverberg's Time of the Great Freeze, a fantasy such as Andre Norton's The Warding of Witch World, or the humorous Hitchhikers' series by Douglas Adams (where the answer to the meaning of life is 42), there is a good chance that there are stories for all ages to cater to that taste, both within Science Fiction and without - and these can be incorporated into the learning process.

67 - 2. As I mentioned earlier, read TV Guide and the movie listings in newspapers, magazines, and the Web. Based on what you find there, you can create displays and book lists of titles on which the films and/or TV shows are based.

68 - You can include sets of titles based on the shows; novelizations; and related non-fiction books (such as the extremely successful Star Trek, Star Wars, Babylon 5, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer).

69 - TV shows for children such as "Reading Rainbow", "Between the Lions," and web sites like [click] this one for the Sci Fi Channel can lead to even more resources.

70 - 3. Lists and displays of non-media based titles can also be created. One means is to get copies of syllabi or curriculum outlines from instructors and finding appropriate titles. Another is to utilize various "Best Books" and other lists, which may be [click] books or [click] listings such is the New York Public Library's annual Books for the Teen-Age which after 80 years, [click] became the online Stuff for the Teen Age in 2009.

71 - The May 15, 1999 issue of Booklist contains a "Core Collection: SF/Fantasy Reference Sources" which, despite its age, will still be of help.

72 - Another resource is the Golden Duck Awards. Their web site is on your handout. <www.goldenduck.org> There is a wide array of information that will be of use, **[click]** including a book list and resources for teachers. **[Click on “Good Books” and “Teacher Resources” to go to those pages; click outside graphic to go to next slide]**

73 - Another Web resource is the Database of Award-Winning Children’s Literature <www.dawcl.com>. Though this lists all award winners, **[click]** it *does* provide a source of award-winning SF. **[Click on slide to get to site – show search screen]**

74 - There are many more on the web **[4 clicks]**

Locus Magazine, probably the “bible” of SF, puts up the Locus Index to Science Fiction <www.locusmag.com/index//0start.html>. Though it says it covers only 1984-1997, if you scroll down **[click]**, you’ll find links that take the list up through 2002.

Free Speculative Fiction Online <www.freesfonline.de> is from Denmark but the short fiction listed is mostly from the US. What is unique about this site is that the material is all online.

Michael Swanwicks Periodic Table of Science Fiction <www.scifi.com/scifiction/periodictable.html> is a part of the SciFi Channel’s web site and another source of online stories.

Publishers also provide lists of their books. One example **[click]** is Baen Book’s Free Library <www.baen.com/library>, again providing online material, but these are novels.

Many SF clubs have web sites with recommended reading lists. **[click]** This one is from the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, known as LASFS.

75 - The April 15, 2000 issue of Booklist recommended the SF Site as being “an interesting combination of E-Zine, resource locator, hosting service, and information provider” containing, among other things, “a rather wide-ranging array of reviews of books published in the last three years, not only from mainstream talents.” I’ve looked at the site and like it too. **[click]** It, too, has a recommended reading list.

76 - 4. Arrange for author visits. **[click]** The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) maintains a speaker's bureau and can be a resource, **[click]** particularly since **[click]** they list authors’ web sites and other information.

77 - For college students, a good site is the Center for the Study of Science Fiction. **[click]** Their “About SF” section provides a lot of useful information. Take a look at it.

78 - At the risk of tooting our own horn, "Reading for the Future," initiated by authors David Brin, Gregory Benford, and Greg Bear to encourage reading by using SF, particularly among Junior High School students, may be of help. The web site is at www.readingforfuture.com. You might even consider joining. We'd love to have you.

79 - Contacting your local Science Fiction clubs (and most cities and towns have them) can be another conduit.

80 - Attendance at Science Fiction conventions (and there is one just about every weekend of the year somewhere in the country) provides another means of making such arrangements. This was the means by which I arranged for visits by Anne McCaffrey, Ben Bova, and the late Isaac Asimov.

81 - Contacting publishers and trying to "piggyback" on a book tour is another possibility.

82 - Lastly, you can attend readings and/or signings at local bookstores and speaking with the authors there

83 - or locate addresses (in such sources as [Contemporary Authors](#), [Something About the Author](#) (which lists only children's and young adult authors), and [Who's Who in America](#)) and write to them.

84 - That's how these authors ended up at I.S.88. Never be afraid to ask; the worst that will happen is that they'll say "no" - but they will also often say "yes."

85 - 5. Librarians should look for openings to make suggestions to teachers. Suggest alternatives to written papers such as oral presentations and student-created videos (as I did with that science class' [Star Trek](#) video), either originals or adaptations of books. They are often looking for such options. The original scripts from TV shows and movies can also be used for role-playing. Both teachers and librarians have to continuously use their imaginations. **[click]** 6. Do book talks as often as possible and display materials during library instruction sessions. Nothing provides a better way to stimulate students than your own enthusiasm about books and stories you truly like, particularly in the elementary grades; enthusiasm is hard to fake and students know it.

86 - These are just some of the possibilities. You're limited only by your imagination.

87 - Two of the best sources for whatever background information you may need about the genre, the people who write it, etc., are the [Encyclopedia of Science Fiction](#) and **[click]** the [Encyclopedia of Fantasy](#). Get them. But the most important thing you can do is to **[click]**

88 - read, [2 clicks] read, read (and view, view, view movies and TV shows). You can't do any of these things if you don't know what's out there that you might be able to use - nor can you convey enthusiasm for things you haven't experienced yourself.

89 - By reading, you'll find books like these for children,

90 - or these, written for young adults,

91 - Or these adult books that can be used with young adults,

92 - and films like these that an imaginative teacher or librarian could use to motivate students in ways that would be enjoyable for all.

93 - Don't forget about comic books and video games. Both with or without movie versions, they are more routes to reading and learning. Though I'm no expert on these, I believe they can also be used if one searches for the right ones.

94 - Why Science Fiction? Can't we do the same things using other forms of fiction? Perhaps. [click] But not with the same attraction for students. [click] Not with the same provision for a sense of wonder. [click] Not with the same ability to prompt a reader's imagination to soar to other worlds and other (alien) life forms. [click] Not with the same viability for usage in a wide variety of disciplines to teach an array of concepts.

95 - And I don't mean just books. There are a lot of SF magazines out there. These are three of the best known.

96 - C.S. Lewis once wrote, "For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning." We are constantly looking for new ways to reach students; to stimulate and motivate them; to help them find truth and meaning -

97 - to take them to the [click] "imagi-nation," as Kris Kringle says in the wonderful Miracle on 34th Street. Science Fiction in all its forms provides many such ways. Teachers and librarians should take advantage of them. We owe it to our students. Thank you.

[THE END]