



# SciFi & Fantasy Lesson Plan

**Topic:**

SciFi & Fantasy

**Duration:**

Flexible

**Materials Needed:**

- Paper
- Writing/drawing utensils
- Digital or hard copies of hyperlinked readings (below)

**Grade Level(s):**

9-12

**Standards:**College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards:

- W.CCR.3. Writing: Text types and purposes (grades 6-12).
- W.CCR.4., W.CCR.5., and W.CCR.6. Writing: Production and distribution of writing (grades 6-12).
- W.CCR.10. Writing: Range of Writing (grades 6-12).
- R.CCR.2. and R.CCR.3. Reading: Key Ideas and Details (grades 6-12).
- R.CCR.5. and R.CCR.6. Reading: Craft and Structure (grades 6-12).
- R.CCR.7. Reading: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (grades 6-12).
- R.CCR.10. Reading: Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity (grades 6-12).
- SL.CCR.1, SL.CCR.2., and SL.CCR.3. Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration (grades 6-12).
- SL.CCR.4. Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (grades 6-12).

**Outline:**

1. Warm Up
2. Connect
3. Describe
4. Listen
5. Write
6. Prepare

## 1. Warm Up

A key technique—and task—in science fiction and fantasy writing is *worldbuilding*. These genres ask you, as a writer, to not only conjure a compelling setting on the page but to dream up a new world entirely, attending to details like societal norms and expectations, belief systems, weather, laws and rules, time, and more.

You have a lot of freedom to make choices about how your fictional world will illuminate, reflect, or contrast our human one—and to do so in ways that support your ultimate underlying message. For example, you might conjure a world in which inequity does not exist, inspiring readers to

make connections to present-day injustice. Or you might pen a post-apocalyptic tale with physical imagery that casts a warning sign to readers, calling upon them to care for our planet.

For now, take a few minutes to freewrite (meaning you should keep your pen moving or fingers typing) about the messages or causes you would like to communicate/advocate for through your science fiction or fantasy story. If you identify your answer early on, you might also freewrite about how or why these genres will best serve your goal.

## 2. Connect

After you have identified the goal of your story, it's time to start constructing your world. Read or listen to a teen-authored fantasy piece featured in Write the World's literary journal, [Write the World Review](#). As you read/listen, take notes on the following:

- What do you notice about the author's approach to worldbuilding? What does this piece inspire you to wonder (about the content, or about writing in general)?
- What captured your attention most, and why?
- What would you say is the main message of this story? What makes you say so?
- Critique the author's technical choices. What writing techniques (e.g. dialogue, concrete nouns, sensory details, etc.) felt most effective for worldbuilding, and how else might the author have strengthened the sense of place in this piece?

When you're done, turn and talk with a partner (or small group, or the class) about your findings. Did you and your peer have any similar thoughts or ideas? What from these authors' approaches might you try in your own writing?

Jot down a few bullet points about how you'd like to approach your own worldbuilding—what you might include, how you might make your world apparent to readers, etc.

## 3. Describe

Sci-fi and fantasy involve similar techniques—but while they are often grouped together in bookstores and library aisles, they are, in fact, quite different.

How so? Read [this article](#) about critical elements of the genres, as well as their intersections. Then, reflect on the key message you identified in Activity 1 for your own sci-fi or fantasy story, as well as your thoughts on worldbuilding from Activity 2. Which genre—sci-fi, or fantasy—would best support your goal, and why?

In about a paragraph, describe what genre you've chosen for your draft, and why it's the best fit for your intended message and audience. Then, in a few sentences, provide an overview of what you hope to write about—your plan, your dream, your draft.

## 4. Listen & Provide Feedback

Once you have your description, turn and talk with a partner (you might swap descriptions and annotate each other's drafts) or share your work with the class as a whole.

As you read and listen to your peers' ideas, practice your peer reviewing skills by considering and responding to the following (remember, all work is in a brainstorming stage right now and is meant to be very much in process!):

- *What is the most surprising, interesting, or intriguing element of your peer's proposed piece, and why?*
- *What in your peer's piece are you eager to learn more about?*
- *Make a connection between your peer's idea and a class discussion, reading, or resource.*
- *Make a connection, or highlight a difference, between your peer's idea and your own.*

## 5. Write

Think for a moment about some of your favorite fantastical characters from books, movies, or television shows. Perhaps you were enraptured by the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland* as a child, or spellbound by Harry Potter, or captivated by Ged in Ursula LeGuin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*.

What makes these characters so compelling? Are they human or nonhuman, or a mixture of both? What makes them feel relatable, yet otherworldly? And what about the author's *writing* facilitates these feelings in you as a reader/viewer? Perhaps life-like dialogue, or human emotion, or vulnerability mixed with supernatural strength.

Talk with a partner about your first thoughts in relation to characters you connect with. Then, dream up the protagonist—the main character—of your own story (returning to your work on worldbuilding for inspiration). Complete this [Character Study](#) worksheet, and get to know your character on a deeper level. What and who are they? What do they look like? How do they sound (and how will you portray them through dialogue)?

As an optional extension, you might sketch, paint, or use a technology program to create a visual representation of your character as you imagine them in your mind's eye. Be sure to share your

character brainstormings and creations with a partner or the class, and explain why you made the compositional choices you did.

## 6. Prepare

Every story, no matter how short, comprises some version of a *narrative arc*, a pathway that carries readers through the conflict of the story, acquainting them with key characters and building context along the way before cresting and tumbling toward a conclusion.

As you prepare to pen your own sci-fi or fantasy short story to enter Write the World's competition, [check out this resource](#) that explains each step in a narrative arc, and [look at this image](#). Then, map out your own—and set pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) to type out your competition draft. Remember that peer review is a helpful tool as you iterate and hone your work, and Write the World offers rubric-based Expert Review feedback to early entrants. Happy writing!