

How to Write Science Fiction

Want to get your bookworm interested in science? Try science fiction! This genre of literature is not only great for thinking about the larger issues behind scientific progress, like technology and humanity, it makes great material for creative writing, too!

What You Need:

- Book (have your teen choose a book, or try the classic *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card)
- Computer or pen and paper

What You Do:

1. Read the book together (maybe during the summer when your child has less school work, or consider choosing a sci-fi book if there is summer reading required by the school).
2. Discuss! Some discussion topics relevant to *Ender's Game* are:
 - What is scientifically accurate in the book? Inaccurate? For example, are the descriptions of the “no-gravity” battle rooms realistic? What about “Dr. Device”?
 - Does the story predict any future science concepts or technologies that have come true? For example, *Ender's Game* was originally published in 1977, long before the Internet became widespread. The “net” is a crucial part of the story, how does it compare to today's Internet?
 - What larger societal issues does the story address? Does the xenocide (annihilation of an alien race) of the Buggers compare to real historical and current genocides?
 - What role does religion play in the story?
 - Most teens today have plenty of experience playing video and computer games. Discuss the roll of “games” in the story and how *Ender's Game* blurs the lines between games and reality.
 - How does the story treat the concept of childhood? How do the values we place on childhood today compare to the value of childhood in the story?
 - Consider the themes of good versus evil in the story. Ultimately, who is good and who is evil? Is Ender good or evil? Does the end justify the means?
3. After you have identified some interesting themes and questions from your science fiction reading, it's time to get writing! Have your teen write his or her own science fiction story, keeping in mind the themes of technology and humanity that so many science fiction books explore. Here are three story prompts to get your teen started:
 - *Forever Young* Imagine that you were cryogenically frozen for a hundred years. What would life look like when you woke up? Would the year 2108 look relatively the same as today, or drastically different? Try to imagine how technology in particular might look and work in one hundred year's time. It's not as easy as it sounds!
 - *Disaster-tastic* You've seen at least one of the slew of natural disaster movies like *Deep Impact* or *The Day After Tomorrow*. Whether it's floods, fire, climate change, or earthquakes, what would the world look like if a natural disaster of staggering scope struck? Try to imagine the circumstances (meteor hurtling toward earth, rising sea levels) and the reaction of the human population. Would we be driven underground? Would we invent new mechanisms for keeping our civilizations intact?
 - *Designer Babies* Scientists have cracked the code of the human genome. What might happen if parents could genetically engineer their children, or clone themselves? Think about all the arguments for and against these ideas. Extra credit: What makes us human?



