

Sci-Fi Short Story Writing

Introduction

The student booklet was developed from the *Who Writes the Future?* Summer School for young writers, run by the Bodleian Libraries in 2019. The original course was facilitated by author Jasmine Richards, illustrator Nurbanu Asena, and computer science researcher Jacob Ward. The young writers considered how writers in the past had envisaged our present. They also met with researchers from the Department of Computer Science of the University of Oxford to consider how emerging technologies might affect society in the future. The short stories produced on the course were collected into an anthology.

The summer school course was subsequently developed into workshops for visiting schools by the Bodleian's Education Team. We have produced this resource for teachers who want to develop short-story writing with their own classes or writing clubs.

Contents

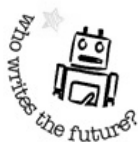
The resource includes the following elements:

- Teacher notes
- Student Booklet
- Historical examples of predictions made about our present
- *Who Writes the Future?* anthology

Student Booklet

The student booklet is designed to be printed as 8 A4 sides, although the separate elements can be used as stand-alone activities. The booklet takes students through seven steps, culminating in a first draft of their short story.

1. **Decide on a specific setting.** Start to build a world for the story.
2. **Select your story idea / concept.** Students are asked to think about the particular impact of a technology, but taking this 'hard sci-fi' approach is not essential.
3. **Select a theme.** We have included a list of suggestions but students may wish to choose another.
4. **Decide on the point of view,** i.e. first, second or third person narrative.
5. **Develop your character.** We have included a template to help students think about the central character(s) in their story.
6. **Outline your story.** This is the bit students sometimes want to skip! We have found that it really helps to take a few minutes to plan an outline before writing the first draft. We have left a space blank so students can write, draw a diagram, or draft a storyboard as they wish.
7. **Write your story.** We have included a few lined pages.



Ideas and inspiration

We have included the other elements of the pack to provide ideas and inspiration for students.

Historical examples

How did writers in the past view our present? We have included some predictions, written around 1900, about what life would be like by the end of the twentieth century and beyond. From our perspective, we can see how the themes and concepts that pre-occupied writers at the time influenced their predictions and how accurate (or not) their predictions were. You are free to use these stories with your students but not to reproduce or disseminate them further without permission.

- **What may Happen in the Next Hundred Years** by John Elphreth Watkins, Jr. *The Ladies Home Journal* Vol XVIII Iss.1 (December 1900). ©The Bodleian Libraries.
- **A Tale of the Twentieth Century: The Abduction of Alexandra Seine** by Fred C. Smale. *The Harmsworth Magazine* Vol V No.28 (November 1900). © The Bodleian Libraries

Who Writes the Future? Anthology

We hope your students will be inspired by the work other young writers who have developed stories using these resources. You are free to use these stories with your students. Copyright is held by the original authors who have given permission for their use under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike licence ([CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)).

Feedback

We hope you find the resources useful. We would love to hear about how you have used them and any suggestions you might have for improvement. Please contact us at education@bodleian.ox.ac.uk.

You can find more resources for schools here:

- The Bodleian website: <https://visit.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/learning/resources-teachers>
- TES Resources: <https://www.tes.com/member/BodEdu>

Acknowledgements

These resources have been developed and are provided free to schools through the generosity of the Helen Hamlyn Trust.