

*Mister Moon* (dir. Mitchell and Kenyon, 1901)  
*A Trip to the Moon* (dir. Georges Méliès, 1902)  
*The ? Motorist* (dir. W.R. Booth, 1906)

Lesson by Jenni Heeks, Woodford County High School

Lesson for English  
Key Stage 3

The second of the Sci-Fi Creative Writing Unit, this takes various sci-fi shorts and uses them as prompts for student exploration of writing within the genre. Looking at how the visual can be transferred to writing; cinematic structures; 'show, don't tell' writing technique.

Students are given the opportunity to discuss how cinema reflects our knowledge and a chance to discuss ideas about the development of film in terms of Change and Continuity.

Students should have already watched the films for this unit, but may need a reminder-watch of 'A Trip to the Moon'. Initially, students discuss the importance of what we know in the creation of fantasy films – considering how *A Trip to the Moon* might be different if it was made today. They then have the opportunity to discuss and evolve their own creative ideas on this concept, before finally writing their own piece of Sci-Fi creative writing on the story *A Trip to the Moon*. Students enhance their understanding of genre and have the opportunity to study this in some depth; they also will develop and improve their own creative writing, focusing specifically on developing interesting ideas and using appropriate structures.

### Lesson Objectives

- To understand the key ideas found within sci-fi and to use these ideas in our own creative writing.
- To understand how our ideas about fantasy and sci-fi develop with our evolving knowledge.

### Curriculum Links

- Key Stage 3 Creative Writing in different genres.
- Linked clearly to future creative writing tasks at Key Stage 4.

### You will need...

*A Trip to the Moon*  
(1902) DVD.

Plenty of scrap paper  
for students to write  
ideas on.

## Activities

### TRAILER: What is Science Fiction? Coming up with ideas

Watch *A Trip to the Moon*.

Ask if any of the students can tell you why this film is an example of the sci-fi genre. If not explain what sci-fi is. Explain that they are going to continue looking at some sci-fi films to inspire their own creative writing, and today they will be working on 'What We Found on the Moon'. Then explain that the sci-fi genre is particularly interesting because it develops according to our knowledge of the universe and also according to our worries about the world.

Get the students to draw a table in their exercise books. One column should be titled 'What we see on the Moon' and the other titled 'What this tells us about society'. In pairs, students have five minutes to complete the table, **just thinking about** the silent film *A Trip to the Moon*.

Then, get the students to think about how changes in our society might change what a film about what we would find on the moon might show.

They should **firstly** fill in the column 'What this tells us about society', with points about

- a) What we now know about the universe,
- b) What our major concerns in society are.

Once they have done this, they should think about how 'what we know' would affect a story about a trip to the moon, and fill in the left hand column 'what we see on the moon'.

### MAIN ATTRACTION: Discussion and Planning

Students' main task is to write their own 'What We Found on the Moon' story. Before they begin planning, though, they should have time to discuss and write down ideas for their story. In order to encourage students to feel free to 'get it wrong' and develop their confidence in the writing and drafting process, they should do this on scrap paper, and feel free to cross things out/throw things away. Ideally, students should spend between 15 and 20 minutes on this process.

They can work on their own, in pairs, or use the following structure to maximise the possibility for discussion:

The students should plan under the headings 'Characters'; 'What they find on the Moon'; 'Beginning' and 'Ending'.

- Number the students 1-4.
- For planning for 'Characters', students should plan with the student with the same number on the table to their left.
- For 'How they get to the Moon', students should plan with the student with the same number on the table to their right.
- For 'Beginning', Number 1s should plan with the number 4s on their table; number 2s with the number 3s.
- For 'Ending', Number 1s should plan with the number 3s on their table; number 2s with the number 4s.

### **END CREDITS: Writing Time**

Students now have time to work on their own creative writing piece. They should use all of the discussion and ideas used so far in the lesson. They could do this either in their exercise books, or you might want to book a computer room/get separate paper and get the students to type up or write up their stories for display.



# SCI-FI

## DAYS OF FEAR AND WONDER

### Sci-Fi Creative Writing Narrative Frame: Moon Stories

My title: \_\_\_\_\_

Outline of my plot (what happens):

#### **Section One: Introduction**

In this section you should introduce your main characters and describe your setting.

#### **Section Two: The Main Event**

Here you should describe the main event of your story: what is the key thing that happens?

#### **Section Three: The Ending**

Here you should write the ending of your story – describe how the events are resolved.

## Extras

### Other Ideas

*For Key Stage 4 or 5 English Language students...*

- One or more of these films could be used as an 'inspiration' resource in students' creative writing units (e.g. in preparation for a creative writing coursework, show the film, then get students to write their own piece based on it with little to no scaffolding work).
- The silent films in particular are useful as a prompt in a lesson about structuring interesting narrative, and particularly in teaching students about the importance of a simple narrative. (as opposed to the 'this happened then this happened etc' formula)

*For Key Stage 3 Students*

- For lower ability students, or simply as a scaffold, see the 'creative writing frame' document attached, which can be used to help students structure their narrative when they get to the individual writing section of the lesson (End Credits).

### Read

Sci-Fi stories about the Moon...

*The Magical Land of Noom* by Johnny Gruelle (1922)

*Prelude to Space* by Arthur C Clarke (1951)

Sci-Fi stories about Journeys...

*The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams (1979)

*Dune* by Frank Herbert (1965)

### Watch

*A Grand Day Out* (dir. Nick Park, 1989)

*The Automatic Motorist* (dir. W.R. Booth, 1911)