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Science Fiction and Heroism

Science Fiction is dated to be a genre as far back as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, an early Sumerian text depicting a hero Gilgamesh and his many stories. It is even said by many scholars that *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is the origin of all genres. All science fiction stories have always had the ability to go beyond where the normal genres would normally stop. Orson Scott Card was once asked in an interview what the difference between Science Fiction and Fantasy was. Card responded with “It was a matter of rivets versus trees. If the cover of a book shows trees, it is fantasy, but if it shows rivets holding pieces of metal together, then it is science fiction.”(Donnelson, Pace 117) Being able to bend and create new futures or times lines was a privilege synonymous to the science fiction genre. From dystopian stories like *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy to alien invasions in *Ender’s Game* by Orson Scott Card, the writers have always created a new world in which a hero figure stands out. The Hero is a character that every science fiction writer has put into each story in some way. For Cormac McCarthy in *The Road*, The man is a hero to the boy despite all the horrors and troubles the man has to get through. The ending, as anger inducing as it is, the man still is the hero until the last moment. *Ender’s Game* has Ender has the final hero. The hero in each story has to go through different experiences to get to where he is at the end. Sometimes, because it is the science fiction genre, the experiences are not anywhere near what normal people would experience. Despite this fact, the heroes are always working through strenuous and extraordinary circumstances in way that makes the reader feel

more involved or engaged into the genre. Without a hero, the story only has a problem and no one to solve it.

I grew up reading science fiction and always loved it. The books I chose were mostly books that I had good experiences or heard about being amazing. However, the books I chose tended to have an overarching theme of heroism. One person stands before an army or one person surpasses all odds and wins. The books that I chose will hopefully interest one into delving deeper into the genre of the science fiction, where anything can happen.

Work Cited

Donelson, Kenneth L., and Aileen Pace. "Contemporary Realistic Fiction: From Tragedies to Romance." *Literature for Today's Young Adults*. 8th ed. New York: Pearson Education, Inc 39-55. PDF File.

Anderson, Kevin J., and Rebecca Moesta. *Heirs of the Force*. New York: Boulevard, 1995. Print.

Star Wars is one of the most well known science fiction series of all time. This is the first book in a saga that is the continuation of the Star Wars storyline. Past what is believed by many to be the end of the Star Wars original trilogy. This novel follows the story of Jacen and Jaina Solo who are currently enrolled in Luke Skywalker's Jedi Academy. This story follows them after the destruction of the empire. It soon becomes clear where the story is going and how the story unfolds in the next books, but this book is probably one of the better iterations of the *Young Jedi Knight* series. This book follows the theme of heroism because who is not a better hero than a Jedi and why not one who is the son and daughter of Han Solo.

Dashner, James. *The Maze Runner*. New York: Delacorte, 2009. Print.

This book is set in a dystopian era. *The Maze Runner* begins as a boy awakens in an elevator as it is going up. He does not remember his name, but tries very hard only to remember the words, Thomas. Upon his arrival the reader is thrown in a world where a giant maze that is constantly shifting surrounds the community he joins. Thomas begins to bring change to the community and instills courage to take on the maze at dangerous times. Thomas eventually begins to lead the group further and further into the maze. This book falls under the central theme of heroism. The main character is thrown into a world that he knows nothing about. He

then leads the inhabitants to their freedom as he pushes the boundaries of what is seen as capable by the people of this world.

Card, Orson S. *Ender's Game*. New York, NY: Tom Doherty Associates, LLC, 1991. Print.

This is my favorite book of all time. This book is about an underdog who goes by the name of Ender who is the age of 5. In this storyline, the world has survived two alien attacks. This has called for all the brilliant young children to be sent to a school far in space where they are trained to become soldiers. They play simulation games and Ender is constantly being rooted against. Ender becomes the hero as soon as he enters the academy. He becomes a leader of a group who ends up becoming the main force against the alien force. This runs along the central theme of science fiction in that it is a futuristic timeline and the hero goes through extraordinary experiences to get to where he is.

---. *Pathfinder*. New York: Simon Pulse, 2010. Print.

Pathfinder follows the story of a boy named Rigg who has the power to perceive "paths of living things throughout time". In short, he is able to see the paths that the dead have walked before. The story is about a new colony on a new planet called, Garden. On said planet, few colonists have begun to gain powers of their own. Rigg's father dies and this causes him to start his journey to find his mother and sister whom he has never known. Rigg travels to different cities only to learn more about himself that he would have never known had he stayed where he was. This book falls under the theme of heroism in that it Rigg tries to help the people around him.

Clarke, Arthur C., and Stanley Kubrick. *2001; a Space Odyssey*. New York: New American Library, 1968. Print.

A 3 million year old monolith is found in a crater on the moon. This sends a group of scientist to Saturn in order to make contact with the alien life-form that made said monolith. Dr. Dave Bowman and his crew find their way to this planet for answers only to be shown more questions. This book is an amazing example of the idea that, the more that we think we know, the less that we actually do. This is said to be one of the best science fiction novels of all time. The book follows the theme of heroism because a central enemy is placed as the hero, overcomes all odds and destroys it.

Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic, 2008. Print.

The Hunger Games is about the story of a dystopian era in which one central government has taken control as to prevent violence but ironically has the kids of each district, which is

separate communities where people live, run around in an arena and slaughter each other. Katniss Everdeen is the main heroine in this book. She volunteers for the battle royale instead of her sister. She is plunged into a world of fear and death. This book is a great example of the idea of heroism. She is the hero for her sisters and eventually becomes a beacon of hope for all of the citizens of this dominate country. Soon the reader is place into the shoes of Katniss as she faces insurmountable odds and overcomes them to become the hero that the districts have been waiting for.

McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. New York, NY: Vintage International, 2006. Print.

This book is about an unnamed man and his unnamed son as they travel through a wasteland that used to be Earth. This world is now inhabited by survivors what will do anything to survive. The father constantly teaches the son about the new world is always watching out for him and calls his son, his light. The father is shown as the hero because to the child, the father is the hero. The hero is always making sure that in every action he does, the father protects the son. In another sense, the son is a hero to the father, showing the humanity still exists in the world and they cannot give up. This book falls in the lines of the theme central theme of heroism; the alternate timeline where the world has been destroyed to the unbelievable hardships that they overcome.

Doctorow, Cory. *Little Brother*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 2008. Print.

Little Brother follows the story of four teenagers in an futuristic San Francisco after a terrorist attack causes the Department of Homeland Security to disregard the Bill of Rights and put San Francisco in a state of complete control. This book is a very good example of how science fiction can go where no other book dares to go. The author, Cory Doctorow, creates a world that we are all familiar with and adds layers of futuristic control onto the people there. The group of kids is the heroes in the story as they fight against their own country for their most basic rights. It is an interesting and familiar take on what would happen if the next terrorist attack was on our coast

Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993. Print.

The Giver is a well known book that is based on a community that has no rights and only follows the rules set by the leaders. They are also set in a dystopian era which is a popular form of science fiction today. Jonas, the main character, is elected to become the receiver of memory, a person who stores all the memories of the past before Sameness; Sameness is the affliction that has been set upon the community by the leaders to remove emotion from the world. In the story Jonas is the hero as he begins to realize how wrong it is to take people's emotions from them. This is when his story begins as he tries to right this wrong and his journey to become the hero starts.

Patterson, James. *Maximum Ride: The Angel Experiment*. New York: Little, Brown, 2005. Print.

This novel is the first book in a series that are about the main character, Maximum Ride, and his group of friends. They are ordinary kids only with wings and can fly. This change causes their lives to spiral out of control. One of the kids, Angel, is kidnapped by a place called “School” in which she is experimented on. It is up to Max and his friends to save her. Classic heroism story in which the main character has to work with a group of people to save a “princess” while at the same time Max discovers more about himself and their origin.