

SCIENCE FICTION

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DYSTOPIAN SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction, in general, emphasizes worlds and technologies that plausibly could exist. It is future-oriented and emphasizes science and technology. This is a direct contrast with fantasy, which tends to be more focused on the old and timeless and centers magic. One of the most popular subgenres of science fiction, dystopian fiction, doesn't always emphasize science, but it is very future-focused. So, dystopian fiction features terrifying depictions of the future. The societies in these books usually involve an oppressive, totalitarian government, and science fiction authors often use the genre to critique and explore the present. The genre features a wide breadth of tones, which can range from literary fiction to cyberpunk (a gritty, noirish dystopia that features both "high tech and lowlife").

Pierce Brown:

Though dystopian science fiction is often set here on Earth, Brown's popular *Red Rising* series takes place on a futuristic Mars that has societal castes. The books follow a protagonist born into the lowest caste who joins a resistance group. This fast-paced, gritty, dark series offers up ample action alongside thoughtful social commentary and detailed worldbuilding with a classical influence. Start with *Red Rising*, the first in the series.

If you like Pierce Brown:

- Megan E. O'Keefe
- Suzanne Collins
- Neal Shusterman
- R. F. Kuang
- Brandon Sanderson
- Victoria Schwab

George Orwell

Orwell wrote in a wide range of genres, but he remains best known for his striking dystopian fiction, *1984* and *Animal Farm*, both condemnations of totalitarian and authoritarian political systems. Orwell's bleak work features thought-provoking themes and premises, complex characters (even when they're not even human), and elegant prose. Start with *1984*.

If you like George Orwell:

- Octavia E. Butler
- Aldous Huxley
- Margaret Atwood
- Ray Bradbury
- Anthony Burgess
- Kurt Vonnegut
- Marc-Ewe Kling
- Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah

Ray Bradbury

Bradbury wrote a wide range of science fiction, fantasy, and horror, but like Orwell, he still remains best known for his dystopian fiction. Bradbury's evocative, character-driven, thought-provoking work focuses on people and society, which he probes with accessible but lyrical prose and layered stories. Start with *Fahrenheit 451*.

If you like Ray Bradbury:

- George Orwell
- Aldous Huxley
- H. G. Wells
- Isaac Asimov
- Octavia E. Butler
- Margaret Atwood
- Ursula K. Le Guin
- Stephen King
- Cadwell Turnbull

Philip K. Dick

Dick's tense, thought-provoking, gritty, and highly imaginative work focuses on unusual heroes surviving in a bleak future. His darkly funny, offbeat, philosophical, character-driven books are a strong influence on the cyberpunk subgenre of science fiction due to their frequent focus on the role of technology. Start with *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, which inspired the movie *Blade Runner*.

If you like Philip K. Dick:

- Isaac Asimov
- Harlan Ellison
- Kurt Vonnegut
- Neal Stephenson
- Ian McDonald
- Jonathan Lethem
- J. G. Ballard

Harlan Ellison

Like Bradbury, Ellison wrote in a wide range of speculative genres but remains best known for his gritty, bleak, noir-inspired, thought-provoking dystopian post-apocalyptic work. Ellison's work is dark, disturbing, and violent and can feature graphic content. Alongside Philip K. Dick, Ellison is an influential figure in cyberpunk for his unsettling, tense work. Start with *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream*.

If you like Harlan Ellison:

- Philip K. Dick
- Roger Zelazny
- Ray Bradbury

Paolo Bacigalupi

Bacigalupi writes dystopian science fiction, as well as fantasy. His gritty, violent, action-packed dystopian work has a strong ecological undercurrent and cyberpunk influences, which has led it to be classified as biopunk. Bacigalupi's work is well-researched and features imaginative, detailed worldbuilding and strong, complex, interesting characters. Start with *The Wind-Up Girl*.

If you like Paolo Bacigalupi:

- Greg Ewan
- Ian McDonald
- Ann Leckie
- China Mieville
- John Scalzi
- Kim Stanley Robinson
- Ted Chiang
- Neal Stephenson
- Cory Doctorow
- Margaret Atwood
- N. K. Jemisin
- Yoon Ha Lee

Waubgeshig Rice

Rice's two-book series of character-driven, literary post-apocalyptic fiction seamlessly blends dystopian fiction with Indigenous culture in its tale of a societal collapse, as experienced by the residents of a remote Northern Canadian reserve. The first book, *Moon of the Crusted Snow*, leans into horror more than its sequel, *Moon of the Turning Leaves*, and both feature thoughtful, slow-burning stories. Start with *Moon of the Crusted Snow*.

If you like Waubgeshig Rice:

- Emily St. John Mandel
- Margaret Atwood
- Michelle Good
- Stephen Graham Jones

Blast from the Past

Aldous Huxley often gets overlooked in dystopian discussions, perhaps because his version of futuristic worlds differs so starkly from his contemporaries. While most of his counterparts wrote about grim totalitarian governments, Huxley's complex but accessible work instead focuses on a more subtly insidious future, a feel-good one that is ultimately empty and hollow at its core. Start with *Brave New World*.

Already like Huxley's work?

- George Orwell
- Anthony Burgess
- Kurt Vonnegut

Branching out from Dystopian Science Fiction

Enjoy this genre but looking to try another one with similarities to it?

- Dystopian young adult fiction (Lois Lowry, Suzanne Collins, Neal Shusterman, Marie Lu)
- Literary fiction with dystopian themes (Margaret Atwood, Anthony Burgess, Haruki Murakami, Kazuo Ishiguro, Thomas Pynchon, Emily St. John Mandel, Cormac McCarthy, Kurt Vonnegut)
- Hard science fiction with dystopian elements (Cixin Liu, Stephen Baxter)
- Soft science fiction with dystopian themes (Octavia E. Butler, Ursula K. Le Guin)
- Space operas with dystopian elements (Adrian Tchaikovsky)
- Military science fiction with dystopian elements (Orson Scott Card)
- Science fantasy with dystopian elements (N. K. Jemisin, Nnedi Okorafor)
- Alternate history science fiction with dystopian elements (Harry Turtledove)

HARD SCIENCE FICTION

In hard science fiction, the focus is on accurate, well-researched science and technology that infuses the story with an element of detailed realism. Hard science fiction also often relies on the hard sciences, like physics and astronomy, versus social sciences, which tends to be the focus of soft science fiction.

Andy Weir

Weir's books may seem to have a comparatively light touch for hard science fiction—they have a keen sense of humor, as well as a fast, cinematic pace—but their focus on presenting detailed, accurate logistics of space travel make them excellent examples of this genre. Weir's books emphasize imaginative problem-solving with accessible but real scientific facts, as well as inspiring, appealing characters, who are usually astronauts. Start with *The Martian*.

If you like Andy Weir:

- Ernest Cline
- Kim Stanley Robinson
- Mary Robinette Kowal
- Neal Stephenson
- Jack London

Isaac Asimov

Asimov is one of the most influential writers in science fiction history. He is generally classified as hard science fiction, due to the intellectual rigor of his work and the depth of his material, though he sometimes introduces social sciences into his work. He blends scientific fact with adventure and philosophy. His thought-provoking, reflective books often feature non-human characters and span everything from space travel to robotics to biology. Start with *Foundation*.

If you like Isaac Asimov:

- Arthur C. Clarke
- Philip K. Dick
- Cixin Liu
- Ray Bradbury
- Robert A. Heinlein
- Hugh Howey
- Vernor Vinge
- Edgar Rice Burroughs
- Nnedi Okorafor

Robert A. Heinlein

Heinlein is considered an early pioneer of hard science fiction, and his work, which can be sharply funny, remains perennially popular with lovers of the genre. His books delve deeply into the personal relationships of characters and include detailed worldbuilding but also emphasize plausible scientific information and exciting, fast-paced action. His compelling characters are strong and independent, and his work often depicts mature themes, as well as libertarian political philosophy. Start with *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress*.

If you like Robert A. Heinlein:

- Isaac Asimov
- Larry Niven
- Octavia E. Butler
- Ayn Rand
- Ted Chiang
- John Varley
- Lois McMaster Bujold
- Nnedi Okorafor

Jules Verne

Considered by many to be the father of science fiction, Verne wrote imaginative stories that often predicted eventual scientific advancement, including submarine travel and hot air balloons. His entertaining, fast-paced novels emphasize exciting adventures and eccentric scientists. The modern science fiction subgenre of steampunk, which blends Victorian aesthetics with advanced technology for the period, is highly influenced by Verne's work. Start with *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

If you like Jules Verne:

- Edgar Rice Burroughs
- H. G. Wells

Cixin Liu

Chinese science fiction writer Liu skyrocketed to fame in the West for his Three-Body Problem trilogy, which presents a hard science fiction take on alien invasion set during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Liu's complex, thought-provoking work presents well-researched and imaginative takes on science in an accessible manner and as part of intricate worldbuilding. Start with *The Three-Body Problem*.

If you like Cixin Liu:

- Isaac Asimov
- Arthur C. Clarke
- Frank Herbert
- Greg Egan
- Ted Chiang
- Adrian Tchaikovsky
- Neal Stephenson
- Arkady Martine
- James S. A. Corey
- Ann Leckie
- Yoon Ha Lee
- Gregory Benford

Stephen Baxter

Baxter's work blends hard science with space adventure and thought-provoking social commentary on our own world. His books are well-researched, with a strong emphasis on the worldbuilding. Start with *Proxima*, the first in a two-book series about the forced colonization of a red dwarf star.

If you like Stephen Baxter:

- Alastair Reynolds
- Arthur C. Clarke
- Iain M. Banks
- Kim Stanley Robinson

Ted Chiang

Chiang's work is noted for its thoughtful, thought-provoking, and challenging examinations of the intersection of technology and human nature alongside strong, imaginative worldbuilding. His philosophical books include well-researched hard science incorporated with perceptive and emphatic takes on humanity. Start with his short story anthology *Stories of Your Life and Others*.

If you like Ted Chiang:

- Robert A. Heinlein
- Cixin Liu
- China Mieville
- Isaac Asimov
- Greg Egan
- N. K. Jemisin
- Ann Leckie
- Martha Wells
- Paolo Bacigalupi
- Jorge Luis Borges

Kim Stanley Robinson

Robinson's work combines thought-provoking ideas with compelling, accurate hard science fiction facts, imaginative worldbuilding, and an elegant, literary prose style. He is especially interested in incorporating thoughtful social commentary in his character-driven work, which can be set on Earth or in the solar system. Environmental issues and climate change are a recurring concern. Start with *Aurora*.

If you like Kim Stanley Robinson:

- Neal Stephenson
- Gregory Benford
- David Brin
- Frank Herbert
- Ann Leckie
- Nancy Kress
- Greg Bear
- Ben Bova

Neal Stephenson

Stephenson writes in a large range of genres, spanning historical technothrillers to cyberpunk. What unites all his work is his strong emphasis on incorporating well-researched science and technology into the plot, which can range from World War II cryptology to modern computer hacking to futuristic space travel. That depth of research encapsulates the heart of hard science fiction, even when he is technically operating outside of that genre. Stephenson's complex work specializes in elaborate but fast-paced narratives, elegant prose, dark humor, and philosophical themes. Start with *Snow Crash*.

If you like Neal Stephenson:

- Philip K. Dick
- Michael Crichton
- William Gibson
- Charles Stross
- Iain M. Banks
- Vernor Vinge
- James S. A. Corey
- Ann Leckie
- Thomas Pynchon

Blast from the Past

Arthur C. Clarke was one of the leading science fiction writers of the 20th century, often billed as one of “The Big Three,” alongside Asimov and Heinlein. He also cowrote the screenplay for the famous science fiction film *2001: Space Odyssey*. Clarke was especially interested in space travel, and his futuristic, action-packed but character-driven work often focused on the possibilities of space exploration and colonization. He incorporated well-researched and accurate science and thought-provoking philosophy into stories of well-observed and realistic human protagonists. Start with *Childhood’s End*.

Already like Clarke’s work?

- Isaac Asimov
- Cixin Liu
- Greg Bear
- David Brin
- Gregory Benford
- Robert Charles Wilson
- Ian McDonald
- Annalee Newitz

Branching out from Hard Science Fiction

Like hard science fiction but interested in trying other genres?

- Science fiction-tinged literary fiction (Haruki Murakami)
- Hard science fiction-tinged dystopian fiction (Philip K. Dick, Harlan Ellison, Paolo Bacigalupi)
- Technothrillers (Michael Crichton, Tom Clancy, Clive Cussler)
- Hard science fiction space operas (Adrian Tchaikovsky, Ann Leckie, Poul Anderson)
- Military science fiction (John Scalzi, Orson Scott Card, David Weber, David Drake)
- Hard science fantasy (Anne McCaffrey, N. K. Jemisin, Roger Zelazny)
- Hard-ish science fiction alternate history (Mary Robinson Kowal, Harry Turtledove)
- Science nonfiction (Richard P. Feynman, Stephen Hawking, Carl Sagan, Neil deGrasse Tyson)

SOFT SCIENCE FICTION

Science fiction readers can differ on what constitutes “soft” examples of the genre. Soft science fiction can focus far more on the social sciences, such as sociology, political science, psychology, and linguistics, rather than hard sciences. Sometimes, the science aspect of the plot may also be de-emphasized entirely with far more of a focus on the human characters. This is a distinct contrast from hard science fiction, which often concentrates on themes and plot more so than character. Dystopian science fiction is often soft science fiction as well.

Martha Wells

Martha Wells writes a lot of fantasy, but her biggest claim to fame is the charming soft science fiction series, *The Murderbot Diaries*. The funny, thrilling series focuses on a snarky, amusing, disinterested android that would much rather be watching TV but gradually and reluctantly forms personal connections with humans along its own complicated journey toward personhood. Start with *All Systems Red*.

If you like Martha Wells:

- Becky Chambers
- Ann Leckie

Becky Chambers

Chambers writes essentially the cozy equivalent of science fiction. Her heartwarming, hopeful, character-driven work usually has outer space settings that can be harsh, but the likable, engaging, well-developed characters themselves are good-hearted and interested in putting aside their differences to build a better world (or worlds). Characters and vibes are emphasized over action. Her Wayfarers series features separate stand-alone books that focus on found family during space missions, while the Monk and Robot series follows the outer space adventures of the titular characters. For the former, start with *The Long Way to a Small, Angry Planet*, and for the latter, *A Prayer for the Crown-Shy*.

If you like Becky Chambers:

- Martha Wells
- Mike Chen
- Cat Rambo
- Travis Baldree
- TJ Klune
- Mary Robinette Kowal

Octavia E. Butler

In many ways, Butler defied genre categorization. The first popular African American woman science fiction and fantasy writer, Butler often incorporated poignant and prescient reflections on race, social class, and gender into her work, whose settings spanned from outer space to futuristic dystopias to alternative history. Butler's compelling, thought-provoking books feature strong worldbuilding, evocative settings, elegant prose, and interesting characters. Start with *Kindred*.

If you like Octavia E. Butler:

- N. K. Jemisin
- Nnedi Okorafor
- George Orwell
- Margaret Atwood
- Ursula K. Le Guin
- Ray Bradbury
- Naomi Alderman
- Tananarive Due
- P. Djèlí Clark

Douglas Adams

Though he wrote in multiple genres, Adams remains best known for his comic science fiction. Adams's absurdist books are laugh-out-loud funny and star well-drawn characters as they skewer the conventions of the genre. He is best known for his zany *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* series, which chronicles the space misadventures of Arthur Dent, but he's also beloved for his comedic science fiction detective Dirk Gently series. Regardless of the series, Adams's work features witty prose, eccentric characters, and good-natured irreverence. Start with *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

If you like Douglas Adams:

- Jasper Fforde
- Kurt Vonnegut
- Terry Pratchett
- Tom Holt
- Christopher Moore
- Tom Robbins
- P. G. Wodehouse
- Ling Ma
- Emily Jane

Ursula K. Le Guin

Le Guin wrote both fantasy and science fiction and is considered an early pioneer of soft science fiction. Le Guin's thought-provoking, leisurely paced, elegantly written, character-driven science fiction involves space travel and features complex, interesting characters struggling with moral dilemmas. Her vivid worldbuilding is known for its detailed depictions, and her work often features strong feminist themes. Start with *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

If you like Ursula K. Le Guin:

- Madeleine L'Engle
- Ann Leckie
- Ray Bradbury
- Nancy Kress
- Sheri S. Tepper
- Sharon Shinn
- N. K. Jemisin
- A. S. Byatt
- Michael Cunningham
- Peter Hoeg
- Mary Shelley

Blast from the Past

An early founder of the genre, H.G. Wells considered his work “scientific romances” that delved into cautionary tales about contemporary sociological issues under the guise of the outlandish and fantastical. Wells himself didn’t particularly respect his own work in the genre, but his engaging, action-packed stories remain popular. His books are also a strong influence on the modern science fiction subgenre of steampunk. Start with *The Time Machine*.

Already like Wells’s work?

- Jules Verne
- Edgar Rice Burroughs
- William Gibson
- Octavia E. Butler
- Ray Bradbury
- Annalee Newitz
- Naomi Alderman

Branching out from Soft Science Fiction?

Enjoy this genre but looking to try another one with similarities to it?

- Dystopian science fiction (Pierce Brown, Paolo Bacigalupi, Waubgeshig Rice)
- Thought-provoking and/or philosophical hard science fiction (Isaac Asimov, Cixin Liu, Stephen Baxter, Ted Chiang, Kim Stanley Robinson, Neal Stephenson, Arthur C. Clarke)
- Science fiction-tinged literary fiction (Margaret Atwood, Kurt Vonnegut)
- Accessible and/or soft science fiction-tinged space operas (Frank Herbert, James S. A. Corey, C. J. Cherryh)
- Character-driven military science fiction (John Scalzi, Orson Scott Card)
- Science fantasy (Anne McCaffrey, N. K. Jemison, Nnedi Okorafor, Jo Walton)
- Alternate history/time travel science fiction (Harry Turtledove, Connie Willis)
- Science fiction-tinged romantic suspense (J. D. Robb)
- Alternate reality romance (Diana Gabaldon)
- Urban fantasy (Mercedes Lackey, Jim Butcher)

SPACE OPERAS

The term space opera was originally intended dismissively, though later science fiction writers have tended to embrace it. These stories feature epic adventures and dramatic stories in outer space settings. Depending on the individual author, space operas can veer more toward hard or soft science fiction, and they are sometimes also first contact stories, about initial human encounters with aliens.

Adrian Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky is a versatile writer, working in many science fiction genres, including dystopian fiction and steampunk, as well as fantasy. However, he is also known for his hard science fiction-leaning space operas, which feature large casts of complex characters and ambitious, imaginative worldbuilding. Tchaikovsky is especially interested in non-human characters and aliens in his work. Start with *Children of Time*, the first in a series by the same name.

If you like Adrian Tchaikovsky:

- James S. A. Corey
- Cixin Liu
- Ann Leckie
- Martha Wells
- Alastair Reynolds
- Becky Chambers
- Arkady Martine
- Brandon Sanderson
- Cherie Priest

Frank Herbert

Herbert's action-packed, dramatic Dune series about Paul Atreides, who is left for dead and adopted by space nomads, remains perennially popular. Herbert's thought-provoking books include interesting characters, vivid worldbuilding, and deadly, complex political intrigue. Start with *Dune*.

If you like Frank Herbert:

- Brian Herbert
- Isaac Asimov
- Arthur C. Clarke
- Robert A. Heinlein
- Orson Scott Card
- Kim Stanley Robinson
- Ursula K. Le Guin
- Ian McDonald
- N. K. Jemisin
- Arkady Martine
- Seth Dickinson
- Cixin Liu
- China Mieville
- Ken Liu

James S. A. Corey

Corey is the pen name of a writing team, Ty Franck and Daniel Abraham. Together, they write compelling, suspenseful space operas that strive toward realism but also accessibility for non-science fiction readers. Their fast-paced work features detailed worldbuilding, intriguing characters, and sweeping, complex plots. Start with *Leviathan Wakes*, the first book in the Expanse series.

If you like James S. A. Corey:

- Martha Wells
- John Scalzi
- Ann Leckie
- Adrian Tchaikovsky
- Becky Chambers
- Brandon Sanderson
- Alastair Reynolds
- Andy Weir
- Arkady Martine
- Malka Older

Ann Leckie

Leckie's sweeping, action-packed, fast-paced work features strong, brave, complex characters who fight to survive outer space in the distant future. Leckie's work leans toward hard science fiction with her well-researched explorations of technology while also subverting expectations of the space opera subgenre. Start with *Ancillary Justice*, the first in her Imperial Radch series.

If you like Ann Leckie:

- Iain Banks
- Vernor Vinge
- Martha Wells
- James S. A. Corey
- Becky Chambers
- China Mieville
- N. K. Jemisin
- John Scalzi
- Arkady Martine
- Nnedi Okorafor

C. J. Cherryh

Cherryh's fast-paced, thoughtful epic space operas often star complex, traumatized, realistic outsiders who become heroes during epic adventures in space. Her books feature intricate, vivid worldbuilding and compelling storylines. Start with *Foreigner*, which starts her first contact series of the same name.

If you like C.J. Cherryh:

- David Drake
- James S. A. Corey
- Lois McMaster Bujold
- Julie E. Czerneda
- Ursula K. Le Guin

Blast from the Past

One of the earliest writers of space opera, Poul Anderson drew on his Danish heritage and often applied tropes from Scandinavian epics to his work. In his fast-paced, thoughtful space operas, heroic adventure blends seamlessly with hard science fiction and philosophical themes about society. His work usually stars intelligent protagonists who use their wits to stay alive. Start with *Starfarers*.

Already like Anderson's work?

- Gordon R. Dickson
- Robert A. Heinlein
- Isaac Asimov
- Larry Niven
- Greg Bear

Branching out from Space Operas

Enjoy this genre but looking to try another one with similarities to it?

- Space-themed hard science fiction (Andy Weir, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, Stephen Baxter)
- Space-themed soft science fiction (Martha Wells, Becky Chambers, Douglas Adams)
- Military science fiction (John Scalzi, Orson Scott Card, David Weber, David Drake)
- Technothrillers (Michael Crichton)
- Horror (Stephen King, Dan Simmons)

MILITARY SCIENCE FICTION

There can be a considerable amount of overlap between space opera and military science fiction. The main difference is the strong emphasis on military tactics, strategy, and conflicts (often using space technology) in military science fiction. Protagonists are usually military members, and storylines focus on wars and armed conflicts, often but not always set in outer space. Space opera, meanwhile, usually emphasizes adventure and dramatic storylines that are not inherently tied to the military.

John Scalzi

Scalzi's fast-paced, action-packed, suspenseful military science fiction provides new twists on traditional tropes about both science fiction and military fiction. His books include lots of exciting action and well-drawn combat scenes, as well as intriguing, well-rounded characters and amusing humor. Amidst all the action are also thoughtful examinations of the true cost of war. Start with *Old Man's War*.

If you like John Scalzi:

- David Drake
- James S. A. Corey
- Ann Leckie
- Martha Wells
- Mary Robinette Kowal
- Becky Chambers

Orson Scott Card

Card wrote in numerous genres but is best known for his dynamic, fast-paced, character-driven military science fiction, including the *Ender's Game* series. Often focusing on child protagonists, Card's compelling, thoughtful work features complex characters battling evil and grappling with moral dilemmas. Card is especially interested in the philosophical quandaries these characters encounter and their personal growth from these challenges. Start with *Ender's Game*.

If you like Orson Scott Card:

- John Scalzi
- Frank Herbert
- Robert A. Heinlein
- Isaac Asimov
- Larry Niven
- Robert Jordan
- Anne McCaffrey
- Brandon Sanderson
- Nancy Kress
- J. R. Pournelle

David Weber

Weber's fast-paced, compelling, dramatic military science fiction is highly influenced by historical naval fiction. His work features immersive, realistic military details; strong female characters; vivid worldbuilding; and intriguing political machinations. There can be an element of fantasy magic in Weber's work as well. Start with *On Basilisk Station*, the first in his series about heroic but disgraced space commander Honor Harrington and her space ship, the *Fearless*.

If you like David Weber:

- David Drake
- John Ringo
- E. E. Knight
- John C. Wright
- Lois McMaster Bujold

Blast from the Past

A Vietnam veteran, David Drake was an immensely popular military science fiction in the 1980s and 1990s, and his work still holds up well. He balances fast-paced action with authentic, vivid military details. Drake's work also features strong worldbuilding, well-rounded characters, and a sense of humor. He also wrote fantasy. Start with *Hammer's Slammers*, his work about futuristic tank commanders.

Already like Drake's work?

- John Scalzi
- David Weber
- John Ringo
- C. J. Cherryh

Branching out from Military Science Fiction

Enjoy this genre but looking to try another one with similarities to it?

- Space operas (Adrian Tchaikovsky, C. J. Cherryh)
- Hard science fiction (Andy Weir, Robert A. Heinlein, Stephen Baxter)
- Space-themed dystopian science fiction (Pierce Brown)
- Science fantasy (Anne McCaffrey, Roger Zelazny)
- Military-themed alternate history science fiction (Harry Turtledove)
- Historical military fiction (Patrick O'Brian, Bernard Cornwell, C. S. Forester)

SCIENCE FANTASY

Science fantasy combines science fiction and fantasy elements together. Often, magic is present but based on scientific concepts. Other times, fantasy elements can be present in outer space settings or science fiction is combined with fantastical elements in our own world or an original fantasy world. Science fantasy, for some, is a dated term, reserved for work from the 1970s/1980s, when this subgenre was at its peak. However, contemporary writers still blend science fiction and fantasy in their work to such a degree that the concept is an apt one for discussing their books.

Anne McCaffrey

Anne McCaffrey was the reigning queen of science fantasy for decades, and her work remains popular. Her Dragonriders of Pern series features dragons and dragon riders, which would be right at home in a fantasy, but they are in outer space and genetically engineered by science rather than magic. Her fast-paced books feature interesting, well-rounded characters; detailed science; vivid worldbuilding; exciting action; and substantial elements of romance. Start with *Dragonflight*, the first in her series about Pern.

If you like Anne McCaffrey:

- Mercedes Lackey
- Elizabeth Bear
- Andre Norton
- Elizabeth Moon

N. K. Jemisin

Jemisin's thoughtful, highly acclaimed work blends fantasy and science fiction seamlessly. Her fast-paced, suspenseful, gritty work features thought-provoking social and political commentary; inventive, detailed worldbuilding; ample political intrigue; and elegant, evocative prose. Start with *The Fifth Season*, the first in her The Broken Earth series, which incorporates detailed geological science into an apocalyptic setting.

If you like N. K. Jemisin:

- Octavia E. Butler
- Nnedi Okorafor
- Ursula K. Le Guin
- Kameron Hurley
- Karen Lord
- Ann Leckie
- Becky Chambers
- Martha Wells
- Rebecca Roanhorse
- Frank Herbert
- Kate Elliott
- P. Djèlí Clark
- S. A. Chakraborty
- Arkady Martine

Nnedi Okorafor

Okorafor writes thought-provoking, compelling, fast-paced books about race and identity within futuristic and post-apocalyptic settings. Speculative fiction by Black authors is often billed Afrofuturism, but the Nigerian-born Okorafor prefers to instead call her work Africanfuturism. Her work features exciting action and vivid worldbuilding alongside insightful social and political commentary and complex, brave characters. Start with *Binti*, the first book in a series by the same name.

If you like Nnedi Okorafor:

- Octavia E. Butler
- N. K. Jemisin
- Karen Lord
- Isaac Asimov
- Robert A. Heinlein
- Marlon James
- Larry Niven

Roger Zelazny

Zelazny's witty science fantasy was immensely popular in the 20th century and still holds up well now. His work blends epic fantasy with hard science fiction, with a special interest in mythology and trickster figures. His books feature complex, interesting characters; vivid worldbuilding; and ample adventure and humor. Start with *The Nine Princes of Amber*, the first in his Chronicles of Amber series.

If you like Roger Zelazny:

- Gene Wolfe
- Edgar Rice Burroughs
- Harlan Ellison
- Philip José Farmer

Jo Walton

Walton's unusual books combine fantasy and science fiction with other genres, including mysteries and historical fiction. Her work features elegant, lyrical prose; complex storylines; and thoughtful examinations of interesting, complex characters. Start with *The Just City*, the first in her Thessaly series, which blends Greek mythology with time travel and utopian fiction.

If you like Jo Walton:

- Connie Willis
- Lois McMaster Bujold
- Sarah Monette
- Elizabeth Bear
- Ann Leckie
- Naomi Novik
- Mary Robinette Kowal
- Seanan McGuire

Blast from the Past

Edgar Rice Burroughs is probably better known for creating Tarzan, but he is also widely considered a significant early science fantasy writer for his John Carter series, which feature a 19th-century American's adventures in Mars. Burroughs's action-packed, plot-driven, pulpy books seamlessly blend sweeping, swashbuckling adventure with imaginative and detailed fantasy and science fiction elements. Start with *A Princess of Mars*, the first of the Carter books.

Already like Burroughs's work?

- H. G. Wells
- Jules Verne
- Roger Zelazny
- Isaac Asimov
- Jack Vance

Branching out from Science Fantasy

Enjoy this genre but looking to try another one with similarities to it?

- Dystopian fiction (Pierce Brown, Ray Bradbury, Paolo Bacigalupi)
- Soft science fiction (Martha Wells, Becky Chambers, Octavia E. Butler, Ursula K. Le Guin)
- Space operas (Adrian Tchaikovsky, Frank Herbert, C. J. Cherryh)
- Military science fiction (Orson Scott Card, David Weber, David Drake)
- Fantasy (Brandon Sanderson)
- Alternate history/time travel science fiction (Harry Turtledove, Mary Robinette Kowal, Connie Willis)
- Alternate reality romance (Diana Gabaldon)
- Paranormal romance (Christine Feehan, Sherrilyn Kenyon)
- Urban fantasy (Patricia Briggs, Jim Butcher, Mercedes Lackey)
- Supernatural thrillers (Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, James Rollins)

ALTERNATE HISTORY/TIME TRAVEL SCIENCE FICTION

A popular subgenre of science fiction involves alternate histories or time travel stories (and sometimes both at the same time). These books combine real historical events and time periods with strong elements of science fiction. They can appeal to readers of both science fiction and historical fiction.

Harry Turtledove

Turtledove is the reigning king of alternate history. His fast-paced, plot-driven work blends realistic historical detail with authentic science to tell sprawling, original stories that revolve around intriguing historical “what-ifs.” His work often features large casts of characters and several settings, adding to their epic atmosphere, and can overlap with military science fiction and fantasy. World War II is a recurring setting, and his multiple series can overlap with each other. He also writes historical fiction without science fiction elements. Start with *Ruled Britannia*, which imagines what if the Spanish Armada had actually succeeded and conquered Elizabethan England.

If you like Harry Turtledove:

- S. M. Stirling
- Eric Flint
- David Weber
- L. Sprague De Camp
- Naomi Novik
- John Jakes

Mary Robinette Kowal

Kowal started her career writing alternate history romances but is best known for her Lady Astronaut series, which blends hard science fiction with alternate history. In this series, an asteroid takes out the Eastern Seaboard in 1952, and humanity must leave Earth. Mathematician Emma York helps lead the way. The series features strong female protagonists, thought-provoking alternate history, and well-researched scientific detail. Start with *The Calculating Stars*, the first in the series.

If you like Mary Robinette Kowal:

- Connie Willis
- Martha Wells
- Becky Chambers
- Ann Leckie
- Elizabeth Bear
- John Scalzi
- Naomi Novik
- Sylvain Neuvel

Blast from the Past

Connie Willis has written in a wide range of science fiction throughout her long career, but she is best loved for her Oxford Time Travel series. Her thoughtful, entertaining work blends philosophical themes with a sharp sense of humor, vivid settings, elegant prose, and intriguing characters. There is often a fantasy and romance element in her books as well. Start with *Doomsday Book*, which follows a modern academic time-traveling to 14th century medieval England, right in time for the bubonic plague.

Already like Willis's work?

- Jasper Fforde
- Lois McMaster Bujold
- Jo Walton
- Mary Robinette Kowal
- Martha Wells
- Jack Finney
- Kate Atkinson
- John Scalzi

Branching out from Alternate History/Time Travel Science Fiction

Enjoy this genre but looking to try another one with similarities to it?

- Historical fiction (John Jakes)
- Time travel romance (Diana Gabaldon)
- Historical horror (Dan Simmons)
- Supernatural thrillers (James Rollins)
- Fantasy (Brandon Sanderson)
- Literary fiction with time travel/alternate history (Emily St. John Mandel)

Looking for more suggestions on what to read?

- Fill out our online Berryville Library's What Should I Read Next? form.
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf7VfQV7xaYIoTACTX7kX_TdTPHwQ1i9UnqBwVDs3gGrYcpcg/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=116325047873771509704
- Request a reader's advisory consultation at the library. You can call, email, or stop by the library to learn more.



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