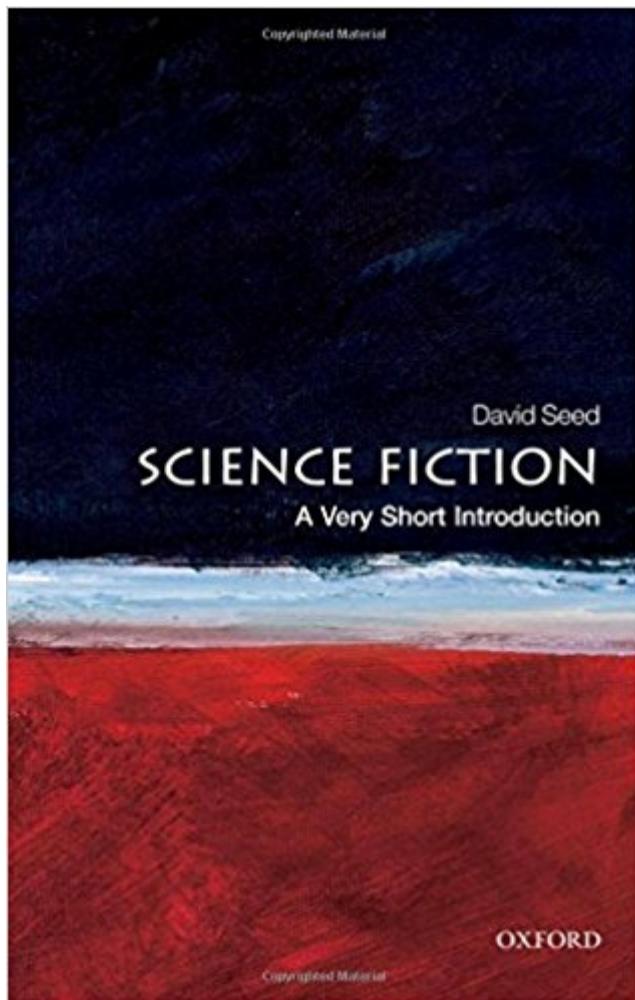


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# Science Fiction: A Very Short Introduction



## Synopsis

Frankenstein, The Time Machine, Star Trek, Dune, 1984, Blade Runner--science fiction has been explained as a combination of romance, science, and prophecy; as a genre based on an imagined alternative to the reader's environment; and as a form of fantastic fiction and historical literature. It has also been argued that science fiction narratives are the most engaged, socially relevant, and responsive to the modern technological environment. In this Very Short Introduction, David Seed doesn't offer a history of science fiction, but instead attempts to tie examples of science fiction to different historical moments, in order to demonstrate how science fiction has evolved over time, especially the emergence of science fiction as a popular genre in the 20th century. Seed looks not only at literature, but also at drama and poetry, as well as film. Examining recurrent themes in science fiction, he looks at voyages into space, the concept of the alien and alternative social identities, the role of technology in science fiction, and its relation to time--in the past, present, and future. *About the Series:* Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

## Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (July 14, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199557454

ISBN-13: 978-0199557455

Product Dimensions: 6.7 x 0.5 x 4.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #215,195 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #116 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Genres & Styles > Science Fiction & Fantasy #129 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > History & Criticism #1081 in Books > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction > Hard Science Fiction

## Customer Reviews

brief yet thorough \* The Guardian \*

David Seed is Professor in the School of English, University of Liverpool.

This outstanding brief introduction to science fiction (henceforth, SF) fills a real need for a short survey of the subject. There are many other excellent surveys of SF. I have in my library a number of very fine books on SF, all of which complement one another by looking at the subject from slightly different angles, including Brian Aldiss's "Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction," Darko Suvin's "Metamorphoses of Science Fiction," Adam Roberts's "The History of Science Fiction" (Palgrave Histories of Literature), Thomas M. Disch's "The DREAMS OUR STUFF IS MADE OF: How Science Fiction Conquered the World," and Edward James and Farah Menlesohn's "The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction" (Cambridge Companions to Literature), and a much older but classic survey, "New Maps of Hell." I also should mention Vivian Sobchack's "Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film," which provides the best overview of the SF film. No two of these surveys agree completely with another, and none entirely contradicts another. Seed's book is arranged around a few themes: space travel, alien encounters, technology, utopias/dystopias, time travel, and the field of science fiction studies. The book also contains, as most of the Very Short Introductions do, an excellent bibliography. While most of the books I referenced above focus exclusively on SF books - or with the case of Sobchack's book, film - Seed focuses on both. He will write about THE FOREVER WAR on one page and Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS a couple of pages later. And I think this is appropriate. Today the various media cross pollinate that keeping them apart is a tad artificial. My only complaint is Seed largely omitting television SF from his book. Granted he had only a small number of pages to work with, but in the past twenty-five years some of the best SF has come from TV in shows like BATTLESTAR GALACTICA and some of the STAR TREK series, not to mention SF lite like THE X-FILES. Still, I strongly recommend this for anyone who wants to get an excellent take on the history of SF. I do not recommend that anyone wanting to know more about the field read only one or even two books. There are many ways of looking at the subject and each brings something different to the table.

This is an excellent overview and introduction to print and film science fiction. The emphasis is on Anglo-American science fiction but also considers widely translated authors such as Stanislaw Lem and Jules Verne. The author shows that ideas, plots, and themes of science fiction go much further back in history than most people think. The author also considers a wider range of books from the past that would be considered as science fiction if they were written today such as The Purple Cloud. Toward the end of the book there is a discussion of black and women science fiction writers

who generally are not well covered in traditional discussions of science fiction. The book also discusses the peculiar sub-culture of science fiction fandom with its clubs, magazines, and conventions.

As a fan and teacher of Science Fiction, this is the best book to introduce my students to the field of SF. David Seed is an informative and clear writer who effortlessly gives the reader a wealth of knowledge without being boring. In less than 150 pages, Seed's *A Very Short Introduction* does what it is meant to do and more. It allows my students, many of whom are SF fans, to realize that they do not know as much as they thought they did. For those new to SF, Seed's knowledge, easy writing style and references to further reading and viewing convince the novices that this is a field worth exploring.

Well organised, terse overview of English Sci-fi seminal works and their study in Academia, but given its intentional brevity, it lacks the detail of more in-depth studies and leaves readers wanting more. This isn't a bad thing, if you are just wanting to get a general understanding of the genre. The Cambridge companion to Science Fiction is a good further read and covers many more topics/themes in more depth. Vivian Sobchak' screening science fiction is another good place to follow up on the American Sci-fi film.

This is a very wonderful introduction to the different themes in the genre. If you are looking for a general reference point on the different themes, and how each theme has changed/evolved, then I would recommend this book. Seed does a nice job of explaining deeper themes, and gives plenty of references to works throughout. This is a great read for anyone.

This is not fiction. It is a theoretical book. Your choices for my answers are not in agreement with the theme of book, dear friends at !

I enjoyed this more than I thought I would. Also, found some new books for my reading list from many of the books the author referenced.

I liked the discussion of 19th and early 20th Century works.

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