



PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

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Superintendent of Schools

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Speculation in Literature

Content Area: English
Grade Span: 12th grade
Revised by: Cathline Tanis
Presented by: Robert Coleman
Approval date: 2019

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COURSE OVERVIEW

Description

From Shakespeare's fairies to Stephen King's *The Stand*, the highly imaginative world of speculative fiction - a genre that includes science fiction, fantasy and urban fantasy, horror, utopian, and dystopian fiction, allows writers and readers to wrestle with complex social, political and psychological issues ranging from genetic engineering to predestination and personal freedom to forms of government. This course will help students develop discussion and critical thinking skills as they negotiate complex issues of government, change, alternate identities, fear of the unknown, climate change and imperialism as expressed by well-known literary works.

Goals

- * Develop reading, writing, research, communication and critical thinking skills
- * Consider the ethics of traditional and non-traditional writing and media.
- * Understand how speculative fiction uses hypothetical concepts to reflect on contemporary issues and ideologies present in the world.
- * Examine how the speculative world of wizards, robots, cyborgs, monsters and dystopias shed light on precarious issues such as sexism, homophobia, racism, poverty, and illness.

Scope and Sequence

Unit	Topic	Length
Unit 1	DNA, Eugenics, and Reproduction	5-6 weeks
Unit 2	Viruses and Antibacterial Resistance	5-6 weeks
Unit 3	Artificial Intelligence and Cyborgs	5-6 weeks
Unit 4	Time Travel and Space Travel	5-6 weeks
Unit 5	Hybrids and Shapeshifters	5-6 weeks
Unit 6	Climate Change and Ecology	5-6 weeks

Resources

Core Text: Titles include but are not limited to: *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to the Hunger Games*- Thomas; *V for Vendetta* - Moore; *Martian Chronicles* - Bradbury, *Kindred* - Butler, *Station Eleven* - St. John Mandel, *I, Robot* - Asimov

Additional Resources:

Short stories and supplemental readings may include portions from the works of: Octavia Butler, Stephen King, Ursula K. Le Guin, Margaret Atwood, Douglas Adams, academic articles, book chapters, newspaper articles, podcasts, commercials, television series and films will also be included in the course.

Unit 1: DNA, Eugenics, and Reproduction

Summary and Rational

This unit will focus on the role of reproduction and genetics in science fiction, including, but not limited to, gender roles, eugenics and overpopulation. Students will analyze the role of social constructs in defining societal roles and identities. They will consider the responsibility humanity has to that which it creates, the power of nature, and the repercussions of science. They will reflect on the ways that science fiction can mirror and provide foresight to the reality of medical research and experimentation.

Recommended Pacing

5-6 weeks

NJ State Student Learning Standards

Standard

NJSLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJSLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJSLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
NJSLSA W 11-12.6	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Instructional Focus

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Literature addresses universal themes of the human condition.
- Literature can reflect, clarify, and critique the time period it portrays as well as provide insight to the future.
- Writers often use literature as a means to uphold, critique, or rebel against society.
- Effective writers use techniques (style, diction, and organization) to better inform, persuade, and entertain.
- Speculative Fiction is a genre that uses metaphor to reflect the human experience and society.
- Speculative Fiction can be predictive and/or inspiring to medical, evolutionary, and/or technological change.
- Plausibility is crucial to understanding in Speculative Fiction.

Unit Essential Questions

- Are writers influenced by their personal reactions to the event of an era?
- What is our responsibility to what we create?
- What is the creation entitled to from its creator?
- What role do social constructs play in defining society?
- Can nature overcome science?
- Does nature outweigh or overcome nurture?
- In what ways can science fiction reflect the reality of medical research and overpopulation?
- Does literature reflect culture or shape it?

Objectives

Students will know:

- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics of the era.
- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period.
- The power of literature to influence moral and cultural decisions.
- Tropes of apocalyptic fiction.
- Sociological aspects of group behavior vs. individual behavior.
- Basic ethical principles.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
- Cite textual evidence to support research and analysis.
- Analyze social, political, and cultural developments of a given time period.
- Make connections and predictions about society.
- Incorporate a variety of media and communication tools in effective presentations.
- Interpret and analyze literary devices.
- Demonstrate command of Standard American English conventions.
- Apply sociological principles to fiction.
- Analyze the inherent dangers of potential world disasters.

Resources

Novels: *Brave New World*, Huxley; *Frankenstein*, Shelley; *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood; *Good Bones*, Atwood

Short Stories: "Bloodchild," Butler; "The Ones Who Walked Away From Omelas," LeGuin

Non-Fiction: "It's 2059 and the Rich Kids are Still Winning," Chiang; "We Live in the Reproductive Days of The Handmaid's Tale," Weiger; "The Terrifying Discoveries that are SciFi Fact," Tucker

Film/Media: *Gattaca*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, "An Entire History of You" (Black Mirror)

UNIT 2: Viruses and Antibacterial Resistance

Summary and Rationale	
<p>This unit will focus on the nature of a post-apocalyptic society following the emergence of a deadly virus. Students will analyze issues of race, privilege, morality, and classism in the wake of the demise of the majority of the human race. They will reflect on the ways that science fiction can mirror and provide foresight to the reality of medical research and experimentation.</p>	
Recommended Pacing	
5-6 weeks	
State Standards	
Standard	
NJSLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJSLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJSLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
NJSLSA W 11-12.6	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
Instructional Focus	
Unit Enduring Understandings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature addresses universal themes of the human condition. • Literature can reflect, clarify, and critique the time period it portrays. • Writers often use literature as a means to uphold, critique, or rebel against society. • Effective writers use techniques (style, diction, and organization) to better inform, persuade, and entertain. • Speculative Fiction is a genre that uses metaphor to reflect the human experience and society. • Speculative Fiction can be predictive and/or inspiring to medical, evolutionary and/or technological change. • Plausibility is crucial to understanding in Speculative Fiction. 	
Unit Essential Questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are writers influenced by their personal reactions to the events of the era? • What is our responsibility to what we create? • In what ways can science fiction reflect the reality of medical research? • How do roles change when extreme situations occur? • When pushed to extremes, how is the perception of right and wrong altered? • What are ways we identify and deal with crime and/or other issues of morality during a disaster situation? • How can fiction provide instruction for potential futuristic societal, governmental and societal changes. 	
Objectives	

Students will know:

- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period.
- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics and medical breakthroughs of the era.
- Tropes of apocalyptic fiction.
- Sociological aspects of group behavior vs. individual behavior.
- Basic ethical principles.
- The purposes and pitfalls of medical advancement.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
- Analyze social, political, and cultural developments of a given time period.
- Make connections and predictions about society.
- Incorporate a variety of media and communication tools in effective presentations.
- Interpret and analyze literary devices.
- Demonstrate command of Standard American English conventions.
- Apply sociological principles to fiction.
- Analyze the inherent dangers of potential world disasters.

Resources

Novels: *V for Vendetta*, Moore; *The Stand*, King; *Station Eleven*, St. John Mandal; *Andromeda Strain*, Crichton

Short Stories: Short stories from *Wasteland: The New Apocalypse*, John Joseph Adams

Non-Fiction: “Peer into the Post-apocalyptic Future of Antimicrobial Resistance,” Olshater & Osterholm;

Film/Media: “What Causes Antibiotic Resistance,” Wu (TedTalk); *V for Vendetta*, *Outbreak*

UNIT 3: Artificial Intelligence and Cyborgs

Summary and Rationale	
<p>This unit will address identity and the ontological questions which emerge in literature about artificial intelligence. Students will analyze human elements, such as emotion, and the positive and negative effects the elements of humanity have on progress and purpose. Students reflect on the responsibility creators have to their creations and what creations should expect from their creators. They will research how science fiction inspired scientific technology and research.</p>	
Recommended Pacing	
5-6 weeks	
State Standards	
Standard	
NJLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
NJLSA W11-12.6	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
Instructional Focus	
Unit Enduring Understandings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provocative literature stems from complex characters that can be interpreted in different ways. • Timeless and enduring literature contains universal themes about life, death, love, power, and fate. • Speculative Fiction is a genre that uses metaphor to reflect the human experience and society. • Speculative Fiction can be predictive and/or inspiring to medical and/or technological change. • Plausibility is crucial to understanding in Speculative Fiction. 	
Unit Essential Questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is identity and how is it formed? • Is ambition a positive or negative thing? • What is our responsibility to what we create? • What is the creation entitled to from its creator? • Does efficiency trump human emotion? • Can artificial intelligence develop emotion? • What defines reality? • What drives humanity's technological advancement? • What are the costs of technological advancement? 	
Objectives	

Students will know:

- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period.
- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics of the era.
- The influence literature has on the scientific field.
- Basic ethical principles.
- The sociological aspects of group behavior vs. individual behavior.
- The purposes and pitfalls of technological advancement.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze and define elements of humanity
- Identify elements of dystopian fiction.
- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
- Cite textual evidence to support research and analysis.
- Analyze social, political, and cultural developments of a given time period.
- Make connections and predictions about society.
- Incorporate a variety of media and communication tools in effective presentations.
- Interpret and analyze literary devices.
- Demonstrate command of Standard American English conventions.
- Apply sociological principles to fiction.
- Analyze the inherent dangers of potential world disasters.

Resources

Novels: *I, Robot*, Asimov; *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, Dick;

Short Stories: “Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway; “Johnny Mnemonic,” Gibson;

Non-Fiction: “Striking Down the Queen Won’t Save You From the Swarm,” Sokol; “Moral and Ethical Questions for Robotics,” (Howlader); “Your Phone is Listening and It’s Not Paranoia” (Nichols);

Film/Media: “The AI Revolution,” Urban (lecture); Making Sense, Harris (podcast); Yale Lecture Series “Death,” Kagan; “Metal Head,” Black Mirror; “Shut Up and Dance,” Black Mirror; *Matrix*; *Bladerunner*; *Terminator*; *AI*

UNIT 4: Time Travel and Space Travel

Summary and Rationale

This unit will focus on both the hopes and fears that inspire time and space travel in literature. Students will analyze the moral and ethical implications of both the butterfly effect and colonization. They will research colonization and the roles and responsibilities of previous colonizers as well as different forms of government formed through this process. They will develop a working description of what defines a culture and the importance of diversity.

Recommended Pacing

5-6 weeks

State Standards

Standard

NJSLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJSLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJSLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
NJSLSA W 11-12.6	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Instructional Focus

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Provocative literature stems from complex characters that can be interpreted in different ways.
- Timeless and enduring literature contains universal themes about life, death, love, power, and fate.
- Speculative Fiction is a genre that uses metaphor to reflect the human experience and society.
- Speculative Fiction can be predictive and/or inspiring to medical and/or technological change.
- Plausibility is crucial to understanding in Speculative Fiction.

Unit Essential Questions

- What is our moral obligation to our fellow human beings?
- What is our moral responsibility to other species and/or lands being conquered?
- How does the system of colonization affect the colonized and the colonizer?
- What are the moral and ethical responsibilities to time and space travel?
- How can fiction inspire science?
- How do roles change when extreme situations occur?
- To what degree is it possible to know or understand people and cultures that are different than our own?
- What methods or processes would be required for deep understanding?
- What does it take to achieve understanding between two different cultures?
- Does literature reflect culture or shape it?

Objectives

Students will know:

- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period
- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics of the era.
- Sociological aspects of group behavior vs. individual behavior.
- Basic ethical principles
- Basic rules of multiple types of governing bodies

Students will be able to:

- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
- Cite textual evidence to support research and analysis.
- Analyze social, political, and cultural developments of a given time period.
- Make connections and predictions about society.
- Incorporate a variety of media and communication tools in effective presentations.
- Interpret and analyze literary devices.
- Demonstrate command of Standard American English conventions.
- Apply sociological principles to fiction.
- Analyze the inherent dangers of potential world disasters.

Resources

Novels: *Kindred*, Butler; *The Martian Chronicles*, Bradbury; *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Adams; *The Time Machine*, Wells;

Short Stories: "A Sound of Thunder," Bradbury; "A Little Something for Us Tempunauts" Dick

Non-Fiction: articles outline The Butterfly Effect, scientific articles on different views of time as a construct

Film/Media: "War of the Worlds," Wells (radio); Dr. Who (series); "How Centuries of SciFi Sparked Spaceflight" (TedTalk); The Umbrella Academy (series); "Your Name" (film)

UNIT 5: Hybrids and Shapeshifters

Summary and Rationale	
<p>This unit will focus on the integration of natural selection and evolution in literature. They will research the process of evolution and predict the possibilities of change to adapt to an ever-changing environment for sustainability of our species. Students will analyze how society’s fear of change and nonconformity are metaphorically represented as monsters and hybrids in literature.</p>	
Recommended Pacing	
5-6 weeks	
State Standards	
Standard	
NJSLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJSLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJSLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
NJSLSA W11-12.6	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
Instructional Focus	
Unit Enduring Understandings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provocative literature stems from complex characters that can be interpreted in different ways. • Timeless and enduring literature contains universal themes about life, death, love, power, and fate. • Speculative Fiction is a genre that uses metaphor to reflect the human experience and society. • Speculative Fiction can be predictive and/or inspiring to medical, evolutionary, and/or technological change. • Plausibility is crucial to understanding in Speculative Fiction. 	
Unit Essential Questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is ambition a positive or negative thing? • Is mutation a natural form of evolution? • Is mutation or collaboration with another species a requirement for sustaining humanity in the future? • Does survival of the fittest play a role in mutation? • How are monsters used as metaphors in modern society? • When pushed to extremes, how is the perception of right and wrong altered? • How are issues of morality altered during widespread disaster? 	
Objectives	

Students will know:

- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period
- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics of the era.
- The influence literature has on the scientific field.
- Basic scientific principles of evolution.
- How metaphor is used to reflect the human experience and society.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
- Cite textual evidence to support research and analysis.
- Analyze social, political, and cultural developments of a given time period.
- Make connections and predictions about society.
- Incorporate a variety of media and communication tools in effective presentations.
- Interpret and analyze literary devices.
- Demonstrate command of Standard American English conventions.
- Apply sociological principles to fiction.
- Analyze the inherent dangers of potential world disasters.

Resources

Novels: *Origin*, Jenkins; *Dracula*, Stoker; *Interview with a Vampire*, Rice;

Short Stories: “Dark They Were and Golden-Eyed,” Bradbury

Non-Fiction: Scientific articles on evolution

Film/Media: *The Walking Dead* (series); *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (series); *Supernatural* (series); *Altered Carbon* (series); *Blade*, *X-Men*; *Spiderverse*

UNIT 6: Climate Change and Ecology

Summary and Rationale

This unit will focus on global warming, environmental changes, overpopulation and the powerful conflict of science versus nature. Students will research the history of global warming, genetically engineered/modified foods, and natural disasters in both fiction and non-fiction and predict the possibility of adaptation and survival of the human race.

Recommended Pacing

5-6 weeks

State Standards

Standard

NJSLSA. R1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences and relevant connections from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
NJSLSA. R2	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
NJSLSA W 11-12.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
NJSLSA W11-12.6	Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

Instructional Focus

Unit Enduring Understandings

- Provocative literature stems from complex characters that can be interpreted in different ways.
- Timeless and enduring literature contains universal themes about life, death, love, power, and fate.
- Speculative Fiction is a genre that uses metaphor to reflect the human experience and society.
- Speculative Fiction can be predictive and/or inspiring to medical, evolutionary, and/or technological change.
- Plausibility is crucial to understanding in Speculative Fiction.

Unit Essential Questions

- How can a tragic situation be optimistic?
- Is ambition a positive or negative thing?
- What is our responsibility to our environment?
- Can science overcome nature?
- How do roles change when extreme situations occur?
- How does the dystopian framework help you make connections and/or predictions about society?

Objectives

Students will know:

- The social, political, and cultural developments of the time period
- The degree to which literature is influenced by culture and politics of the era.
- The influence literature has on the scientific field.
- Basic principles of global warming.
- Basic ethical principles.
- Tropes of apocalyptic science fiction focusing on environmental changes.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze connections between literature and the culture in which it was produced.
- Cite textual evidence to support research and analysis.
- Analyze social, political, and cultural developments of a given time period.
- Make connections and predictions about society.
- Incorporate a variety of media and communication tools in effective presentations.
- Interpret and analyze literary devices.
- Demonstrate command of Standard American English conventions.
- Apply sociological principles to fiction.
- Analyze the inherent dangers of potential world disasters.

Resources

Novels: *New York 2140*, Robinson; *Borne*, Vandermeer; *Practice of the Wild*, Snyder;

Short Stories: “All Summer in a Day,” Bradbury; “Superfrog Saves Tokyo,” Murakami

Non-Fiction: Scientific articles on global warming, natural disasters, genetically modified foods

Film/Media: *Wall-E*; *Children of Men*; *Waterworld*; *Planet of the Apes*; *Zoo* (series)