

Chapter - 19 On Science Fiction

Stop And Think

Question 1.

What is the parallel drawn between myths and legends of the past and science fiction?

Answer:

The ancient myths and legends are full of stories of human beings with supernormal powers. There are the legendary heroes who control situations, those ancient pieces of magic still fascinate us today, those crystal balls, into which one can see things those are happening many miles away, and magic shells that can allow us to hear the whisperings of humans many miles away.

In science fiction we have hypothesis that are often built up on the same principle which is superstitious beliefs and imaginary beliefs.

The goals of these ancient stories are the same as those of modern science fiction. These are the parallel drawn between myths and legends of the past and science fiction that connect each other.

Question 2.

What gives science fiction its validity?

Answer:

In this story author indicates the validity of science fiction by stating that "The difference is that the ancient myths and legends fulfil those needs and meet those goals against the

background of a Universe that is controlled by gods and demons that can, in turn, be controlled by magical formulas either in the form of enchantments to coerce, or prayers to cajole. Science fiction, on the other hand, fulfils those needs against the background of a Universe that is controlled by impersonal and answerable laws of nature, which can, in turn, be controlled by an understanding of their nature. In a narrow sense, only science fiction is valid for today since, as far as we can tell, the Universe *does* follow the dictates of the laws of nature and is *not* at the mercy of gods and demons. This shows that law and nature validates the science fiction.

Question 3.

Which literary works does the author have in mind when he refers to 'Open Sesame' or the concept of winged horses or flying carpets?

Answer:

The author while referring to 'Open Sesame' or the concept of winged horses or flying carpets, have literary work in mind which is as follows:

The ancient myths and legends are full of stories of human beings with supernatural powers. There are the legendary heroes, for instance, who learn to control winged horses or flying carpets. Those ancient pieces of magic still fascinate us today, and I imagine a youngster could thrill to such mystical methods of aero navigation and long for the chance to partake in it, even if he were reading the

Tales while on a jet plane. Consider the doors that open with 'Open sesame' rather than by the click of a remote-control device. Author considered fiction as literary works.

Understanding The Text

Question 1.

What makes for the distinction between the various genres of fiction—'a sports story', 'a Western story', 'a jungle story' and science fiction?

Answer:

In this story author made a distinction between various genres of fiction—'a sports story', 'a Western story', 'a jungle story' and science fiction by mentioning that "Science fiction is a literary universe of no mean size because science fiction is what it is, not through its content but through its background. Let me explain the difference that makes. A 'sports story' must have, as part of its content, some competitive activity, generally of an athletic nature. A Western story must have, as part of its content, the nomadic life of the cowboy of the American West in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The 'jungle story' must have, as part of its content, the dangers implicit in a forested tropical wilderness.

Question 2.

How does Asimov establish that John Campbell was wrong in his opinion that it is not possible for a science fiction mystery to be fair to a reader in the same way as a classical mystery is?

Answer:

Asimov established that John Campbell was wrong in his opinion that it is not possible for a science fiction mystery to be fair to a reader in the same way as a classical mystery is, as he said that:

John treated or interpreted science fiction in wrong way. In a moment of failure, he maintained that it was impossible to write a science fiction mystery. The opportunities in

science fiction were so broad, he said. I imagine that what he expected was the sudden change of rules of the story and he was confused in his own thoughts. Asimov believed that it is fair for science fiction as well to be fair to a reader.

Question 3.

What are the pitfalls that the writer of science fiction mystery must guard against?

Answer:

According to author, the pitfalls that the writer of science fiction mystery must guard against, as he said in these lines that:

Writing a scientific mystery, then, has its extraordinary pitfalls and difficulties; how much more so the writing of a science fiction mystery. In science fiction, you not only must know your science, but you must also have a rational notion as to how to modify or extrapolate that science. That, however, only means that writing a science fiction mystery is difficult; it does *not* mean that it is conceptually impossible as John Campbell thought. After all, it is as perfectly possible to cling to the rules of the game in science fiction mysteries as in ordinary ones.

Talking About The Text

Question 1.

Imagination and fantasy help human beings to speculate upon the possible explanations for the complexity and unpredictability of the phenomena in the universe.

Answer:

Science does not promise absolute truth, nor does it consider that such a thing essentially exists. Science does not even promise that everything in the Universe is controllable to the scientific process. I believe that imagination and fantasy plays a major role in helping a human being in getting possible outcome or result that can explain the complexity and unpredictability of the phenomena in the universe as things related to science are based on imagination as science born with imagination only. That is why, imagination and fantasy help human beings to speculate upon the possible explanations for the complexity and unpredictability of the phenomena in the universe because these things do not exist in reality that everyone could accept.

Question 2.

The difference that science and technology have made to everyday life today was visualised in science fiction fifty years ago.

Answer:

Science fiction have built a bridge between science that was fifty years ago and science today. It was around many years ago science is somewhere that exist in this universe, fifty years ago science was visualised as something which is extraordinary, difficult to imagine and sometimes people relates it to superstitious energy but now science and technology had taken a new shape which represented as a clear picture in front of every human being. Everyone today is aware of science and technology make critical studies on it . This is what make difference in science and technology have made to everyday life today was visualised in science fiction fifty years ago.

Appreciation

Question 1.

Discuss the author's attitude towards the pre-scientific imagination and the tone he adopts while talking about it.

Answer:

Author while talking about pre-scientific imagination mentioned that:

- I have often made the point that true science fiction is a creature of the last two centuries. Science fiction cannot exist as a picture of the future unless, and until, people get the idea that it is science and technology that produce the future

- Naturally, no one could possibly get that idea until the rate of scientific and technological change became great enough to be noticed by people in the course of their lifetime. Yet there must have been something that came before science fiction, something that was not science fiction and yet filled the same emotional needs.

- There was the notion that the Universe is full of superstitious things like some sort of energy or super human was the leader of universe who plays this universe.

The author's attitude towards the pre-scientific imagination and the tone he adopts while talking about it is "Absurd" which is unusual as pre-scientific imaginations are not usual and logical because it was not evident.

Question 2.

Observe how the paragraph, as a form, has been used in the essay. Some paragraphs consist of just one sentence. What purpose do you think the author had in putting them in this manner?

Answer:

Paragraphs that consist of just one sentence are:

- 1) The goals of these ancient stories are the same as those of modern science fiction—the depiction of life as we don't know it.
- 2) Science fiction is a literary universe of no mean size because science fiction is what it is, not through its content but through its background.

In first paragraph, author is talking about some ancient and modern science fiction and in second paragraph author is putting a light on science fiction background and its genres. Author put these paragraphs in one line as to put a strong plot in explaining what science fiction actually was in different forms.

Question 3.

Mark the linkers used by the author to connect the point he makes in one paragraph with that in the next. For example, let me explain the difference that makes in the last line of Para 1 of Section II. These are called discourse markers or discourse signallers.

Answer:

Linkers used by the author to connect the point he makes in one paragraph with that in the next are as follows:

- 1) The goals of these ancient stories are the same as those of modern science fiction—the depiction of life as we don't know it: The emotional needs that are fulfilled are the same, the satisfaction of the longing for wonder.
- 2) Science fiction is a literary universe of no mean size because science fiction is what it is, not through its content but through its background: Let me explain the difference that makes.

Language Work

Question 1.

Literary Allusions

(i) Look up a literary dictionary or encyclopaedia or the internet to understand the references to the following mythical creatures.

- 1) Centaur: 2) Satyr 3) Sphinx: 4) Harpy: 5) Gryphon: 6) Gorgon: 7) Pegasus:

(ii) Find out about the story of Achilles and Hector.

Answer:

(I). **1) Centaur:** Kinnaras (half-man half-horse)

2) Satyr: Half man half goat.

3) Sphinx: Devdutt.

4) Harpy: Garuda.

5) Gryphon: Garuda same as Harpy.

6) Gorgon: Kali .

7) Pegasus: Kalki.

II. In Greek mythology, **Achilles** or **Achilleus** was a Greek hero of the Trojan War and the central character and greatest warrior of Homer's *Iliad*. His mother was the immortal Nereids Thetis, and his father, the mortal Peleus, was the king of the Myrmidons.

Achilles' most notable feat during the Trojan War was the slaying of the Trojan hero Hector outside the gates of Troy. Although the death of Achilles is not presented in the *Iliad*, other sources concur that he was killed near the end of the Trojan War by Paris who shot him in the heel with an arrow. Later legends (beginning with a poem by Statius in the 1st century AD) state that Achilles was invulnerable in all of his body except for his heel because, when his mother Thetis dipped him in the river Styx as an infant, she held him by one of his heels. Alluding to these legends, the term "Achilles heel" has come to mean a point of weakness, especially in someone or something with an otherwise strong constitution.

Question 1.

Here are a few sentences with transitive verbs, adapted from the text. Identify the noun phrases that are the verbs' objects, and underline them. Then turn these sentences into a passive form.

- He expected a sudden change of rules.
- Nothing prevents writers from using actual science.
- He revealed that he didn't know the difference between the element and the compound.
- He demonstrated that he couldn't tell the difference between carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide and reduced the plot to a shamble.
- The writer must carefully explain to the reader all the boundary conditions of the imaginary society.

Answer:

Passive: Sudden change of rule was expected by him.

Passive: The Sudden change of rule wasn't prevented by him.

Passive: The difference between element and compound wasn't revealed by him.

Passive: The difference between carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide wasn't demonstrated by him.

Passive: All the boundary conditions of the imaginary society were carefully explained by the reader.

Question 2.

Some verbs take a that-clause after them. Find the verb asks in the last paragraph of the first part of this text (which begins 'I don't even ask that...') and note how it is followed by that clause. Look for other verbs, in this text as well as in the earlier ones, that are followed by a that-clause (verbs such as believe, know, realise, promise...)

Answer:

Last paragraph of first part:

I don't even **ask that** they be wrenched out of context and somehow be made to fit the universe of reality by being given a scientific or pseudoscientific gloss. I **ask** only **that** they be self-consistent in their pre-scientific Universe—and that they be well-written and exciting stories.

The bold highlighted words are asked verb used that after them.

Eight paragraphs of first part:

As for 'mainstream fiction' which deals with the here and now and introduces only the small novelty of make **believe** events and characters, **that** forms only an inconsiderable fraction of the whole.