SCIENCE FICTION ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

Write an essay on any of the following topics, or suggest a topic of your own that relates to our Science Fiction stories/novels/unit. Your essay should follow standard format, with: an introduction, thesis, at least 3 body paragraphs, & a conclusion. Use specific examples & quotes from the texts in order to prove your argument, and be sure to explain what your examples mean and how they prove your thesis. Below are some suggestions for essay topics:

1. Discuss the theme of any one story, OR discuss the overall themes and/or connections any/all of the 4 stories have in common. What are the authors’ message(s)? We’ve discussed how science fiction comments on the society/time it was written in; explain what we now can learn from these stories.

2. Consider how several of these stories suggest futures that will be better in some ways and/or worse in some ways than the “real” world that produced them. What do the features of these various futures suggest about the historical contexts and times that produced them/in which they were written?

3. All literary texts are cultural artifacts. They are the products of their time/place/society and reflect their sociological and historical origins. Choose 2-3 stories and explain how they express the period in which they were written.

4. How does the setting of each story impact the characters and get across the author’s message? Explain why and how the setting is important. Why did the author choose that setting? How is it effective?

5. In your opinion, what does it mean to be equal? Does being equal mean that everyone must be the same? What do you feel are various authors’ views on equality? Explain using examples from the stories (esp. “Harrison Bergeron” & “Flowers for Algernon”)

6. What do these stories tell us about what it means to be “different” from others? What happens when people are “different”? In 3 of the stories, main characters are “different” in varying ways, but there are similarities in how they are viewed and treated. Using specific examples, explain what the messages are about being “different.”

7. Charlie Gordon is not a typical hero. He possesses many of the characteristics that heroes sometimes have, but what exactly makes Charlie a hero? Your thesis (and paper) would focus on explaining with quotations and examples what makes him a hero.

8. What are the advantages & disadvantages that “intelligence” or “lack thereof” has. There are good and bad elements to both. Then, apply your opinions both to Charlie and his situation. Charlie’s whole persona changes when his intelligence is altered. Were the changes good or bad for Charlie, ultimately? You could also explore (compare/contrast) ideas re: Charlie & intelligence with the same concept in “Harrison Bergeron.” In his story and society, extreme intelligence is not viewed in exactly the same way as in Charlie’s world.

9. Compare and contrast the characters of Charlie Gordon and Harrison Bergeron. What makes these 2 characters similar? Their differences are more obvious; you should discuss those, but also dig deeper and consider how these characters and/or their stories/struggles have connections and are similar.

10. How does the element of fear come into play in these stories? In each “world/situation, fear is a part of what motivates and affects different characters. How does fear affect them? How can we relate this to our own world and time — what can we learn from these stories’ examples?

11. Compare/contrast one or more of the stories to the science fiction novel you read on your own. In what ways is this society like the one in the novel you read? Try to go beyond the surface and think about the values of each society.

12. Write about the theme(s) in “There Will Come Soft Rains.” What is Ray Bradbury’s message re: nature & technology? How does the Sara Teasdale poem included reflect a similar message?

13. Make any other important connections between stories, or between your novel and story(ies). Let me know if you have another idea or suggestion that you’d rather write about!
SCIENCE FICTION ESSAY GRADING RUBRIC

5/5 Planning/Notes/Rough Draft: You spent time thinking about & planning your writing before starting your essay; notes, outline, drafts, etc. are included to show this has been a process that involved some sort of revision.

5/5 Introduction:
- You have an interesting beginning that helps reader become interested in your piece (a lead & title).
- You provide background info about the stories or novels (title, author, context).
- You define concepts that you are writing about (theme, science fiction, characters, setting, etc.)
- You provide a clear, focused, and easy-to-prove thesis that is in direct response to one of the given topics (or has been approved by teacher).

5/5 Body Paragraph 1:
- You have a clear and defined topic sentence that refers back to your thesis statement
- You include at least 2-3 pieces of evidence from the text to support your topic sentence with quotes, specific examples & page numbers
- You explain why/how each piece of evidence supports & proves your topic sentence & thesis
- You transition smoothly to the next paragraph

5/5 Body Paragraph 2: See above

5/5 Body Paragraph 3: See above

5/5 ENDING:
- You restate your thesis statement
- You summarize each of your body paragraphs and how they support your thesis
- You end with a strong statement about the overall purpose of your piece

5/5 CLARITY: Your explanations of your ideas are clear, well-explained, & easy to understand.

5/5 LENGTH: Your piece is a reasonable length given the amount of time you’ve been given.

10/10 MECHANICS: You have edited your piece and use correct spelling, punctuation, capitalization, complete sentences, etc.

/100 TOTAL