Science Fiction and Fantasy: The Cosmic Players

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Comments
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Science Fiction and Fantasy: The Cosmic Players

Kristin Laughtin, MLIS
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Things to Know about SF/Fantasy Readers

・They are very technologically savvy and will often adopt new technologies before most of the public (e.g. e-readers).

・They are voracious readers who demand a lot of content and a wide selection.

・Many of their favorite books are published in series, and they will be upset if volumes are missing.

・They are very social and will often show up in support of authors, readings, etc. pertinent to things they love.
Hard vs. Soft Science Fiction

- Hard SF: Focus is on scientific detail and accuracy.
- Soft SF: Focus is on characters and their relationships.
- Social SF: Focus is on sociological speculation about human society.
The Forerunners

- Early writers of SF and fantasy:
  - Fantasy as a genre goes back nearly as far as human writing.
  - Some will argue that early religious writings belong in this category.
  - Some of the earliest conscious writers of fantasy include Homer, the writer of Beowulf, William Shakespeare, and John Milton.

- Science fiction: Mary Shelley, Jules Verne

- These are often shelved with classics or general fiction.
The Golden Age

. 1930s-1950s.
. Start is generally recognized as July 1939, when *Astounding Science Fiction* published the first stories of Isaac Asimov and A. E. van Vogt.

. The “ABCs” of science fiction:

. **Alfred Bester** (*The Stars My Destination*, *The Demolished Man*, *Who He?*/Rat Race)

Some list Ray Bradbury (*Fahrenheit 451*, *The Martian Chronicles*, *Dandelion Wine*) as the “B” instead of Bester.

BUT! More commonly referenced is “The Big Three”:
- Asimov
- Clarke
- Robert A. Heinlein (*Stranger in a Strange Land*, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*, *Time Enough for Love*, *Starship Troopers*)
The Golden Age

- Other notable authors:
  - Leigh Brackett (*The Starmen, The Long Tomorrow*)
  - Bertram Chandler (Rim World series, John Grimes novels)
  - Hal Clement (*Mission of Gravity, Close to Critical*)
  - Lester Del Rey (*Marooned on Mars, Tunnel Through Time*)
  - Fritz Leiber (Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser series, *Conjure Wife*)
  - C.L. Moore (*Shambleau and Others, Judgment Night*)
  - Frederik Pohl (*Jem, The Space Merchants, Gateway*)
  - Theodore Sturgeon (*More than Human; I, Libertine*)
  - A.E. Van Vogt (*Empire of the Atom, Slan, The Silkie*)
New Wave

• Late 1950s-1970s

• Characterized by a high degree of experimentation and a greater focus on soft SF and social issues.

• Authors saw themselves as modernists and very literary.

• Took on themes such as feminism and mocked the stodgy attitudes and focus on space of their predecessors.
New Wave

- Notable authors:
  - **Thomas Disch** (*The Genocides, The Prisoner, On Wings of Song*)
  - **Harlan Ellison** (“A Boy and His Dog”, *Web of the City*, “The Beast That Shouted Love at the Heart of the World”, “I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream”)
  - **Frank Herbert** (*Dune* and many sequels)
  - **Ursula K. LeGuin** (*The Left Hand of Darkness, Earthsea, The Dispossessed, The Word for World is Forest*)
  - **Walter M. Miller, Jr.** (*A Canticle for Liebowitz*)
  - **Michael Moorcock** (*Behold the Man*)
  - **Robert Silverberg** (*Downward to the Earth, To Live Again, Nightwings, Gilgamesh the King, Nightfall (with Isaac Asimov)*
Space Opera

- Emphasizes romance and melodrama, often featuring wars between various governments in space. Everything from the settings to the characters is very large in scale, i.e. soap operas in space.

- Notable authors:
  - **C.J. Cherryh** (Alliance-Union Universe series, The Foreigner universe, the Gene Wars universe, the Fortress series)
  - **Ray Cummings** (*Tarrano the Conquerer*)
  - **Edmond Hamilton** (*Across Space*)
  - **E.E. “Doc” Smith** (*The Skylark of Space, Lensman series*)
Space Opera

Popular authors working today:

- Iain M. Banks (The Culture novels)
- Stephen Baxter (Xeelee Sequence, NASA Trilogy, The Web series)
- Peter F. Hamilton (Greg Mandel trilogy, The Night’s Dawn trilogy, Misspent Youth, Fallen Dragon)
- Paul J. McAuley (Four Hundred Billion Stars, Red Dust, Pasquale’s Angel, Fairyland)
- Alastair Reynolds (Revelation Space series, Blue Remembered Earth, Century Rain, Terminal World)
- Justina Robson (Silver Screen, Quantum Gravity series)
- Dan Simmons (Hyperion)
Military

- Sometimes overlaps with space opera, but more focused on battles and strategy and politics.

Notable authors:

- **Lois McMaster Bujold** (*Vorkosigan Saga*)
- **Jack Campbell** (*Lost Fleet series*)
- **Orson Scott Card** (*Ender’s Game series*)
- **David Drake** (*Hammer’s Slammers*)
- **Joe Haldeman** (*The Forever War*)
- **Robert A. Heinlein** (*Starship Troopers*)
- **Elizabeth Moon** (*Vatta’s War series*)
- **Larry Niven** (*The Man-Kzin Wars*)
- **Jerry Pournelle** (*A Spaceship for the King*)
- **John Scalzi** (*Old Man’s War*)
Apocalyptic/Post-Apocalyptic

- Deals with life in a world that has suffered some cataclysm or is slowly dying out as a natural process.

- Includes the Dying Earth subgenre as well as stories where the world is ravaged by war, disease, nuclear holocaust, global warming, alien invasion, zombies, etc.

- Often used to serve as environmental or political warnings.
Apocalyptic/Post-Apocalyptic

Notable authors:

- **Margaret Atwood** (*The Handmaid’s Tale, Oryx and Crake, The Year of the Flood*)
- **Jeanne DuPrau** (*The City of Ember*)
- **Mira Grant** (*Feed*)
- **Stephen King** (*The Stand*)
- **Richard Matheson** (*I Am Legend*)
- **Cormac McCarthy** (*The Road*)
- **Walter M. Miller** (*A Canticle for Liebowitz*)
- **Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven** (*Lucifer’s Hammer*)
- **George R. Stewart** (*Earth Abides*)
- **Sheri S. Tepper** (*The Gates to Women’s Country*)
Dying Earth

- Often stated as starting with Jack Vance’s *Dying Earth*, although examples go back much farther (Verne’s *The Time Machine*, etc.).

- Deals with a world destroyed not in a disaster or war, but slowly exhausted or threatened by the expanding sun. The future is bleak and the Earth is sterile.
Dying Earth

- Notable authors:
  - Brian Aldiss (*Hot House*)
  - Greg Bear (*City at the End of Time*)
  - John Brunner (*Catch a Falling Star*)
  - C.J. Cherryh (*Sunfall*)
  - Arthur C. Clarke (*The City and the Stars*)
  - Philip Jose Farmer (*Dark is the Sun*)
  - Edmond Hamilton (*The City at World’s End*)
  - Michael Moorcock (*The Dancers at the End of Time*)
  - Gene Wolfe (*The Book of the New Sun*)
The Punks

“-punk” is often added to the end of technological terms to form a new subgenre with its own conventions, wherein all the books are centered around a certain form of technology being prevalent over our modern electricity/oil-based infrastructure.

It was, at first, related to punk culture and the idea of rebellion against society, but has lost much of that meaning over the years.
The Punks

- **Biopunk/Nanopunk:** Focuses on unintended consequences of biotechnology, especially nanotechnology.

- Not as organized a “movement” as some of the other – punks.

- **Notable authors:**
  - Paolo Bacigalupi (*The Wind-Up Girl, Ship Breaker*)
  - Octavia Butler (*Xenogenesis*)
  - Paul Di Filippo (*Ribofunk*)
The Punks

- **Cyberpunk:** Focuses on information technology and computers, often featuring hackers, evil corporations and governments, AI, and virtual reality.

- **Notable authors:**
  - **William Gibson** (*Neuromancer, Count Zero*)
  - **Neal Stephenson** (*Snow Crash, The Diamond Age*)
  - **Bruce Sterling** (*Schismatrix, Islands in the Net*)
  - **Charles Stross** (*Accelerando*)
  - **David J. Williams** (*The Mirrored Heavens*)
The Punks

**Steampunk:**
Speculates about what would have happened if oil and electricity had not overtaken steam as the primary sources of energy. Often set in Victorian England, but not always.

• Harkens back to early SF writers like Verne and Wells.

• Notable authors:
  • **James Blaylock** (*Homonculus*)
  • **Gail Carriger** (Parasol Protectorate series, starting with *Soulless*)
  • **William Gibson and Bruce Sterling** (*The Difference Engine*)
  • **K.W. Jeter** (*Infernal Devices*)
  • **Jay Lake** (*Mainspring* (sometimes called clockpunk))
  • **China Miéville** (*Perdido Street Station*)
  • **Tim Powers** (*The Anubis Gates*)
  • **Cherie Priest** (*Boneshaker*)
Alternate History

Imagines how history and life would have differed if a particular event had not happened.
Often, this will be the outcome of a military battle, but not always.

Notable authors:

Michael Chabon (*The Yiddish Policeman’s Union*)

Philip K. Dick (*The Man in the High Castle*)

Stephen Fry (*Making History*)

Guy Gavriel Kay (*Ysabel, Under Heaven, The Lions of Al-Rassan*)

Kim Stanley Robinson (*The Years of Rice and Salt*)

Philip Roth (*The Plot Against America*)

Harry Turtledove (Southern Victory series)

Robert Charles Wilson (*Darwinia*)
It is very common for popular movies and TV shows to have a tie-in novel, or a whole series of novels expanding on the universe which may or may not feature original characters.

Popular franchises include:
- Star Wars
- Star Trek
- Doctor Who
- Warhammer/Warhammer 40K
- Most anything by Joss Whedon, usually in graphic novel form (Firefly, Buffy)
Many, many authors will write the occasional science fiction novel without calling it that.

These are often shelved in general or literary fiction.

Some authors will protest that their work is not science fiction because of a perceived stigma against it and their work’s focus on characters, themes, etc.
“Literary” SF

Examples:

- **Michael Crichton**’s work is usually regarded as more commercial than literary, but *Jurassic Park* and *Congo* are shelved in general fiction, not SF.

- **Kazuo Ishiguro** (*Never Let Me Go*)

- **Jonathan Lethem** (*Gun, with Occasional Music; Girl in Landscape*)

- **Cormac McCarthy** (*The Road*)

- **Audrey Niffenegger** (*The Time Traveller’s Wife*)

- **Kurt Vonnegut** (*Slaughterhouse-Five, Cat’s Cradle*)
Science Fantasy

- Lots of debate over how to define this, or where to draw the line.
  - How many fantastical elements does a SF story need to have before becoming science fantasy?
  - How correct and prevalent does the science have to be in a fantasy story before it becomes science fantasy?

- Can apply to books that “feel” more like one genre or the other, for example SF books that feel like a fantasy.

- Much more common in film and television. The most well-known example is Star Wars, with its blend of spaceships and the Force.
Science Fantasy

- Notable authors:
  - Leigh Brackett (*Mars* stories)
  - Anne McCaffrey (*Dragonriders of Pern* series, leans more to the SF side)
  - Tim Powers (*The Anubis Gates*)
  - Gene Wolfe (*The Book of the New Sun*)
Other Important/Popular Authors of the Day

- Kage Baker (*The Company* series)
- Tobias S. Buckell (*Xenowealth* series)
- Jeff Carlson (*Plague Year*)
- Kay Kenyon (*Bright of the Sky*)
- Jay Lake (*Mainspring, Green*)
- Ian McDonald (*The Dervish House*)
- Larry Niven (*Ringworld* series)
- Kim Stanley Robinson (*Red Mars* trilogy)
- Robert J. Sawyer (*The Terminal Experiment, Flashforward*)
- Connie Willis (*To Say Nothing of the Dog, Blackout*)
- Robert Charles Wilson (*Spin, Blind Lake, Julian Comstock*)
High and Epic Fantasy

Set in parallel worlds, often analogous to some time in Earth’s past, especially the medieval era.

These include sword and sorcery novels and often feature a hero on a quest for understanding, a magical amulet, etc.

Common tropes of this subgenre are dragons, wizards, magic, warring kingdoms, etc. This is the stereotype most people think of when they hear “fantasy”.

Major themes are good vs. evil, honor, sacrifice, loyalty, fate vs. free will, and so on.

Very often these books come as series, ranging from as short as a trilogy to as long as ten books or more.

Includes many, many subgenres depending on the setting, level of technology, etc. Examples are sword-and-sorcery, sword-and-sandal, sword-and-planet, Arthurian, Celtic, Wuxia, etc.
High and Epic Fantasy

- Notable authors:
  - **J.R.R. Tolkien** is one of the earliest and most influential writers of the genre for *The Lords of the Rings* trilogy.
  - **C.S. Lewis** (*The Chronicles of Narnia*)
  - **Terry Pratchett** (*Discworld* series)
  - **R.A. Salvatore** (*Forgotten Realms* books, *DemonWars* saga)
  - **Marion Zimmer Bradley** (*The Mists of Avalon* series, *Darkover* series)
  - **Terry Brooks** (*The Sword of Shannara* and many others)
  - **Robert Jordan** (*The Wheel of Time* series)
  - **Stephen King** (*The Dark Tower* series)
  - **Mercedes Lackey** (*Valdemar* novels)
High and Epic Fantasy

Popular high/epic fantasists of today:

- **Kevin J. Anderson** (*Gamearth Trilogy, Saga of Seven Suns series, Terra Incognita series*)
- **David Anthony Durham** (*Acacia series*)
- **Terry Goodkind** (*Sword of Truth series*)
- **George R.R. Martin** (*A Song of Ice and Fire series, starting with A Game of Thrones*)
- **Philip Pullman** (*His Dark Materials series, starting with The Golden Compass*)
- **Patrick Rothfuss** (*The Kingkiller Chronicle, starting with The Name of the Wind*)
- **Brandon Sanderson** (*Mistborn series, finishing Robert Jordan’s Wheel of Time series*)
- **Ken Scholes** (*Psalms of Isaak series, starting with Lamentation*)
- **Kim Vandervort** (*The Song and the Sorceress*)
Urban Fantasy/Paranormal Romance

- Two of the best-selling genres today. Hugely popular with women, although readership is not limited to one gender.

- As implied by the title, urban fantasy generally takes place in urban settings, and often in contemporary times.
  - Contains supernatural elements and creatures such as werewolves, vampires, demons, angels, and so on.

- Paranormal romance has its roots in Gothic fiction and often features a romance between a human and a supernatural creature.
  - Often they start as unwilling allies against a greater threat, with unresolved sexual tension finally boiling over and leading to a romantic relationship.
Urban Fantasy/Paranormal Romance

- There is a lot of overlap between urban fantasy and paranormal romance.
- The genre for individual titles and where each book is shelved (fantasy or romance) is usually dependent on which element is more prevalent.

- These books have a reputation for being very commercial and are stereotyped for featuring sexy, tattooed, leather-clad warrior women on their covers.
Urban Fantasy/Paranormal Romance

- Notable authors:
  - L.A. Banks (*Vampire Huntress* series and *Crimson Moon* novels)
  - Jim Butcher (*Dresden Files* series)
  - Gail Carriger (*Parasol Protectorate* series—also steampunk)
  - Jocelynne Drake (*Dark Days* novels)
  - Kelly Gay (Charlie Madigan series)
  - Laurell K. Hamilton (Anita Blake series)
  - Kim Harrison (Rachel Morgan series)
  - Marjorie M. Liu (*Hunter Kiss* series)
  - Richelle Mead (*Vampire Academy* series)
  - C.E. Murphy (*Walker Papers* series)
  - Lilith Saintcrow (*Watcher* series, *Society* series, *Dante Valentine* series, and more)
  - Linnea Sinclair (*Gabriel’s Ghost*)
Dark Fantasy

- Fantasy that includes a horror element.
- Often overlaps with urban fantasy, especially given the supernatural elements popular in both.

Notable authors:
- C.S. Friedman (Coldfire Trilogy)
- Charlaine Harris (Southern Vampire Mysteries, aka Sookie Stackhouse, aka True Blood)
- Justine Musk (BloodAngel, Lord of Bones)
- Garth Nix (Sabriel, Liriel, Seventh Tower series)
- Anne Rice (The Vampire Chronicles)
- Brent Weeks (Night Angel trilogy)
New Weird

. Goal is to move fantasy away from Tolkein’s influence.

. Heavily influenced by writers such as H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allen Poe, etc.

. Most popular authors:
  . China Miéville (*Perdido Street Station*, *The Scar*, *Iron Council*, *Un Lun Dun*, *The City & The City*, *Kraken*)
  . Jeff VanderMeer (*City of Saints and Madmen*, *Finch*)
Other Popular Fantasy Authors of the Day

- **Joe Abercrombie** (*First Law* trilogy)
- **Elizabeth Bear** (*Hammered, All the Windwracked Stars, Blood and Iron, Dust*)
- **James Blaylock** (Balumnia trilogy, *The Last Coin, The Knights of the Cornerstone*)
- **Susanna Clarke** (*Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norell*)
- **Robin Hobb** (*Farseer trilogies*)
- **Guy Gavriel Kay** (*Tigana, The Fionavar Tapestry, The Last Light of the Sun, Ysabel*)
- **Elizabeth Kostova** (*The Historian*)
- **Scott Lynch** (*The Lies of Locke Lamora*)
- **Naomi Novik** (*Temeraire series*)
- **Tim Powers** (*On Stranger Tides, The Drawing of the Dusk, Three Days to Never*)
- **Ekaterina Sedia** (*The Alchemy of Stone, According to Crow*)
- **Catherynne M. Valente** (*Palimpsest, The Labyrinth*)
Comic Books and Graphic Novels

A huge amount of SF and fantasy is put out in comic or graphic novel form. This includes everything from superhero comics to standalone novels, and graphic novels are produced for all age ranges.

Some notable standouts and popular series:
- *Watchmen* (Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons)
- *Sandman* series (Neil Gaiman)
- *Fables* series (Bill Willingham)
- *Flight* and *Amulet* series (Kazu Kibuishi)
- *The Walking Dead* (Robert Kirkman, Tony Moore, & Charlie Adlard)
- *Scott Pilgrim* series (Bryan Lee O’Malley)

And many, many more
Young Adult (SF and Fantasy)

Notable authors:

- **Douglas Adams** (*Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* series)
- **Orson Scott Card** (*Ender’s Game*)
- **Cassandra Clare** (*City of Bones*)
- **Suzanne Collins** (*The Hunger Games* series)
- **Cory Doctorow** (*Little Brother, For the Win*)
- **Janice Hardy** (*The Shifter*)
- **Justine Larbalestier** (*Liar, Magic or Madness* trilogy)
- **Madeleine L’Engle** (*A Wrinkle in Time, A Ring of Endless Light*)
- **Robin McKinley** (*Beauty, Rose Daughter, Spindle’s End*)
- **Stephenie Meyer** (*Twilight* series)
- **Christopher Paolini** (*Inheritance Cycle (Eragon)*)
- **Veronica Roth** (*Divergent*)
- **J.K. Rowling** (*Harry Potter* series)
- **Carrie Ryan** (*The Forest of Hands and Teeth*)
- **Maggie Stiefvater** (*Shiver*)
- **Scott Westerfield** (*Uglies* series)
Religious Bent

In the US, this usually means “Christian SF”, although it is rarely evangelical. It is usually more the writer incorporating aspects of their faith rather than outright preaching.

Notable authors:
- **Madeleine L’Engle** (*A Wrinkle in Time, Troubling a Star*)
- **C.S. Lewis** (*The Chronicles of Narnia, Out of the Silent Planet/Perelandra/That Hideous Strength*)
- **Mary Doria Russell** (*The Sparrow, Children of God*)
- **J.R.R. Tolkein** (*The Lord of the Rings*)
- **Gene Wolfe** (*The Book of the New Sun, The Book of the Long Sun*)
Other faiths:

Kameron Hurley recently published *God’s War*, which deals with a planet colonized by Muslims.

Orson Scott Card (Ender’s Game series) is very outspoken about his Mormon beliefs.

L. Ron Hubbard is more well-known for founding Scientology than any of his SF novels.

Kim Stanley Robinson’s Buddhist leanings show up in *The Years of Rice and Salt* and *Blue Mars*.

David Brin incorporates Jewish tradition and thought into books like *Startide Rising* and *The Uplift War*.

So does Michael Chabon in books like *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union*. 
Feminist Speculative Fiction

- The first wave of feminist SF came about during the utopian movements of the early 20th centuries, but it was not until the 1970s that feminist writers really began to gain attention.
- BUT Mary Shelley was one of the first SF writers with *Frankenstein*, which looked at the idea of asexual reproduction.
- They explored not only women’s roles in society, but the construction of gender roles, questions of reproduction and gender, the political relations of the sexes, and often alternate sexualities.
- Many of them also explore issues of race or LGBT issues.
Feminist Speculative Fiction

- Notable writers:
  - Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid’s Tale*)
  - Elizabeth Bear (*All the Windwracked Stars, Dust*)
  - Octavia Butler (*Kindred, Xenogenesis* trilogy)
  - Ursula K. LeGuin (*The Left Hand of Darkness*)
  - Joanna Russ (*The Female Man*)
  - Sheri S. Tepper (*Grass, The Gate to Women’s Country*)
Race in Science Fiction & Fantasy

Science fiction and fantasy are known for being predominantly “white” genres. However, a few recent events have brought issues of race to the forefront of discussion within the community.

● #racefail
An extended discussion of race in SF books, culture, and fandom that began after a blog post by Elizabeth Bear in January 2009 on writing “the other”. Comments and blog posts written in response questioned her white privilege, cultural appropriation, and the invisibility often experienced by speculative fiction readers of color.

● Mammoth Book of Mindblowing SF
The table of contents for this anthology was posted on SF Signal in August 2009, and readers noticed that the only authors included were men, and then later that none of them were people of color. Controversy continued to grow as editor Paul Di Filippo defended the selection by arguing that not everything can reflect census numbers and making straw man comparisons to potato fields, restaurants, pine forests, and The Beatles.
Race in Science Fiction & Fantasy

*Liar* and *Magic Under Glass* cover controversies

In July 2009, author Justine Larbalestier was asked why the girl depicted on the cover of advance copies of her book *Liar* did not match the description of the girl within the novel. Larbalestier explained the lack of authorial control, her behind-the-scenes campaigning for a different cover, and her disappointment with their final selection. Enough awareness and outrage was raised that Bloomsbury changed the cover.

In January 2010, Bloomsbury again came under fire for whitewashing the cover to Jaclyn Dolamore’s *Magic Under Glass*, as did DAW for *The Dragon and the Stars*, which featured a western dragon on the cover of an anthology written by ethnic Chinese writers. Bloomsbury changed their cover. DAW did not.
## Notable writers of color

### African and/or Caribbean ancestry:
- L.A. Banks
- Stephen Barnes
- Tobias Buckell
- Octavia Butler
- Samuel R. Delany
- Tananarive Due
- David Anthony Durham
- Nalo Hopkinson
- N.K. Jemisin
- Alaya Dawn Johnson
- Karen Lord
- Nnedi Okorafor
- Helen Oyeyemi
- Charles Saunders
- Nisi Shawl
- Sheree R. Thomas

### Asian ancestry:
- Aliette de Bodard
- Ted Chiang
- Hiromi Goto
- Kazuo Ishiguro
- Marjorie M. Liu
- Haruki Murakami

### Indian ancestry:
- Salman Rushdie
- Nalini Singh
- Vandana Singh

### Middle Eastern ancestry:
- Saladin Ahmed
- Mahtab Narsimhan

### Native American ancestry:
- Sherman Alexie
- Daniel Heath Justice
- Gerald Vizenor
Additional writers who break beyond the “white norm”

Note: Some of these authors may be people of color as well. I do not know their ethnic background, ancestry, etc.

- Lauren Beukes (*Zoo City*)
- Paolo Bacigalupi (*The Wind-Up Girl*)
- Daniel Fox (*Hidden Cities*)
- Neil Gaiman (*American Gods, Anansi Boys*)
- Kameron Hurley (*God’s War*)
- Guy Gavriel Kay (*The Lions of Al-Rassan, The Sarantine Mosaic, Under Heaven*)
- Justine Larbalestier (*Liar*)
- Ursula K. LeGuin (*A Wizard of Earthsea, The Left Hand of Darkness*)
- Mary Doria Russell (*The Sparrow, Children of God*)
- Neal Stephenson (*Snow Crash*)
- Liz Williams (*Detective Inspector Chen series*)
Getting Started: Best Books for New Readers

Here is a list of books and authors that are often popular with new readers of speculative fiction.

1. *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card
2. *The Sparrow* by Mary Doria Russell
3. *Spin* by Robert Charles Wilson
4. *Dune* by Frank Herbert
5. *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
7. *The Stars My Destination* by Alfred Bester
8. *Slaughterhouse-Five* or *Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut
9. *Fledgling* by Octavia Butler
10. *Stranger in a Strange Land* or *Starship Troopers* by Robert A. Heinlein
11. *Snow Crash* by Neal Stephenson
12. *The Man in the High Castle* or *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* by Philip K. Dick
13. *Feed* by Mira Grant
14. *Soulless* by Gail Carriger
Major Awards

- The **Hugo** is generally recognized as the biggest award for SF/F works and is given for novels, short stories, and other categories. Voted on and given by the World Science Fiction Society (WSFS) at WorldCon each year.

- The **John W. Campbell Award for the Best New Writer** is voted upon and given at the same time, but is not formally a Hugo.

- The **Nebula** is another prestigious award given by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers (SFWA) of America.

- The **World Fantasy Award** is given at the World Fantasy Convention by a panel of judges from the field.
Other Major Awards

- **Locus Award** (given by Locus magazine)
- **Arthur C. Clarke Award** (given by the British Science Fiction Association)
- **Philip K. Dick Award** (given by the Philadelphia Science Fiction Society)
- **James Tiptree, Jr. Literary Award** (given at WisCon to SF/F that expands or explores notions of gender)
- **Lambda Literary Awards** (for books that explore LGBT themes, many of which are SF/fantasy)

Additionally, many organizations such as the **American Library Association** will award books of outstanding quality regardless of genre.
Major Publishers and Imprints

Publisher websites and blogs can be a great place to keep up with the latest releases and hot trends:

- **Big 6:**
  - Tor (imprint of Macmillan)
  - Orbit (imprint of Hachette)
  - Ace (imprint of Penguin)
  - Bantam Spectra (SF division of Bantam/Random House)
  - Del Rey (imprint of Ballantine/Random House)
  - Eos (imprint of HarperCollins)
  - Firebird (imprint of Penguin)
  - Knopf (imprint of Random House)
  - Simon & Schuster

- **Others:**
  - Apex Book Company
  - Baen
  - DAW
  - Dragon Moon Press
  - Night Shade Books
  - Phoenix Pick
  - Pyr (imprint of Prometheus)
  - Subterranean Press
Good Resources to Keep up with SF/Fantasy News

- These blogs aggregate news and articles related to SF/F novels, movies, TV shows, etc.
  - SF Signal
  - SF Site
  - Suvudu
  - io9
  - Big Dumb Object

- There are many, many blogs out there that aggregate this news. A good list can be found here. Try to find one that has the right mixture of stuff you care about and stuff you can easily ignore.

- A very good series on How to Start Reading Science Fiction is here on the Kirkus Reviews site.

- The Internet Speculative Fiction Database is a great resource!

- This presentation is available at https://sites.google.com/site/klaughtinsfandfantasy/