

Brooklyn

Speculative Fiction Writers

Presents BSFW University: The Core Curriculum Part 1

There are tons of great speculative fiction stories out there, and more are being published every year. But, how many of them would you say are truly cornerstone texts? What are the stories that have made such an indelible mark on the genre that what comes after is at least in some part an imitation?

Within BSFW group there is a wealth of knowledge in our writers. So here I am putting some of that knowledge base to work. This is a list of cornerstone texts, as suggested by our members. They are representative of their respective sub-genre.

THIS IS NOT A BEST OF. This list is already subjective enough. I'm looking just at those stories that have stood the test of time and have even possibly earned the title of *classic*.

This list is flexible and will be modified. To make it a bit more manageable, I'll be introducing this list in sections. The primary source for this list is from our BSFW member Ted (Thanks Ted!). The rest are from input from our group and my own research.

A couple things to remember:

- This list is restricted to novels and short stories. While there are going to be movies and TV shows (Twilight Zone for example) that would match the criteria for each sub-genre, our focus is on the **text** and how each genre is written; the words that are pieced together. The style of the seminal writers in each genre also had as much to do with the archetype as the subjects that are represented.
- Some stories cross into different subjects. A post apocalypse story could also be time travel as well as steampunk for example. For simplicity's sake in this 1.0 version of the list, there is no cross listing.
- You do **not** have to read all these books or a tenth of these books to write well, but you should know your genre. Great reading leads to better writing.
- Graphic Novels (comics!) most definitely *do* count.

- * mark books or stories that, as far as I know, are undisputed in their dominance of a particular genre.
- Finally, this list is subjective, arguable, and hyperlinked for easy use. So, by all means, go at it.

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[Alien Invasion](#)

- War of the Worlds*/ H.G. Wells/
- Invasion of the Body Snatchers/ Jack Finney

[Apocalypse / Post Apocalypse](#)

- Planet of the Apes / Pierre Boulle/ Some significant differences from the movie
- The Stand* / Stephen King / 'nuff said

[First Contact](#)

- First Contact/ Murray Leinster/ a novelette

- The Mote in God's Eye / Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle*
- The Hercules Text / Jack McDevitt

Swords & Sorcery

- Conan the Barbarian* / Robert E. Howard / brought the
- Lord of the Rings* / J.R.R. Tolkein / this the definition of a corner stone text. Tolkein even created his own language.
- Chronicles of Prydain /Lloyd Alexander / also qualifies as young adult
- Beowulf / traditional
- A Wizard of Earthsea* / Ursula K. Le Guin

Angels & Demons

- Old Testament Book of Jobb
- Hellblazer / Alan Moore, Jamie Delano, John Ridgway
- Paradise Lost* / John Milton
- Rosemary's Baby* / Ira Levin

Ghost stories

- It* / Stephen King/ 'nuff said.
- The Ghost Pirates / William Hope Hodgson

Space Opera

- The Lensmen Series / E.E. Smith
- Star Wars * / George Lucas/ The one and only exception that I've made for a novel list. It's affect is so long lasting it deserves to be in a category all by itself.
- Dune* / Frank Herbert

Steampunk

- The Difference Engine / William Gibson & Bruce Sterling
- Infernal Devices and Morlock Night / KW Jeter
- The Parasol Protectorate / Gail Carriger

Time Travel

- The Time Machine* / H.G. Wells
- A Sound of Thunder / Ray Bradbury /

Urban Fantasy/ Contemporary

- Mythago Wood / Robert Holstock
- The Dresden Files / Jim Butcher
- Harry Potter/ J.K. Rowling
- God Loves, Man Kills: X-Men / Chris Claremont

Vampires

- Dracula* / Bram Stoker
- I am Legend* / Richard Matheson
- Interview with a Vampire / Ann Rice

Werewolves

- Darker Than You Think/ Jack Williams
- Twilight in the Towers / Scott Bradfield
- The Werewolf of Paris / Guy Endore
- The Undying Monster / Jessie Kerruish

The End