

**Save Ancient Studies Alliance**

**Summer 2023 Texts-in-Translation Reading Group**

# **Classical Sci-Fi and Fantasy**

This Reading Group primarily, we will be reading [\*The True Story by Lucian of Samosta\*](#). This novel, composed in the 2nd century CE, is widely considered the oldest work of science fiction (or fantasy, or speculative fiction depending on who you ask). I hope that you all leave this class with new perspectives on speculative fiction, a greater appreciation for the ancient world, and some book/TV/ movie recommendations.

I wish to leave a reminder that, while I am professionally knowledgeable about the Roman World, I am merely an enthusiast with speculative fiction. The commentary texts and essays I provide are not necessarily an absolute truth. Everyone's got something to contribute here, everyone brings their own geek expertise to this table. Use this forum to share and compare.

**Your SASA Educational Ambassador:**

Molly Anderson Stevens

M.A. at UGA (and applying for PhD in the fall! Wish me luck)

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**Week 1 (Is this Science Fiction?):** [slides](#)

Main Reading:

[Robots in Homer](#)

[Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction by Ursula K Le Guin](#)

[Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 3, 1-4](#) (A canonical Mormon text. Part of this might ring a bell for fans of *Battlestar Galactica*)

**[Reflection Worksheet: What makes something Mythology/ Sci Fi/ Fantasy?](#)**

Suggested Companion Reading/ Watching/ Gaming: *Frankenstein*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Star Wars*.

Optional Reading:

[“Did the Greeks Believe In Their Robots?” Martin Devecka The Cambridge Classical Journal](#)

[Hero of Alexandria's Automata: a critical edition and translation ...](#) Greek text, commentary, and English translation of a 1st c. CE treatise on making Automata  
[Someone made one of Hero's Atomatae. Watch it in action here!](#)

## **Week 2 (Aliens and other Strangers) [Slides](#)**

Main Reading:

[Pomponius Mela, Diodorus Siculus, and Pliny the Elder on the inhabitants of the edge of the world.](#) I've included maps!!!

Optional Readings:

[Story of Your Life - Ted Chiang](#) This is the novella/long short story that *Arrival* is based on. For all of you that have had to slog through learning dead languages, I would highly recommend this.

Rieber, Robert W., and Robert J. Kelly. [“The Aliens in Us and the Aliens Out There: Science Fiction in the Movies.”](#) *Film, Television and the Psychology of the Social Dream* 31–44. 17 Nov. 2013

[Larry Niven "The Alien in Our Minds"](#) N.B. This one contains insensitive, dated language. However, I am trying to have the majority of commentary on science fiction I offer be the sort written by published Sci-Fi authors.

[Race and Ethnicity in the Classical World: An Anthology of Primary Sources in Translation](#) : If you really liked the reading and want to learn more about the subject, here is the whole book.

Suggested Reading/ Watching/ Gaming: anything from *Star Trek* or *Halo*, *Arrival*, *ET*, *Alien*, *Aliens*, *Contact*

## **Week 3 (To the Moon) [Reflection Activity: Comparative Moon Voyages](#)**

Main Reading:

[The True Story by Lucian of Samosta](#) Book 1 (pp. 55-97 in this edition. Please note this is a bilingual Greek-and-English text, so it's only about 20 pages of reading. If you want to read in Greek, have fun!)

[Somnium, seu opus posthumum De astronomia lunari](#) - Johannes Kepler

A bit of Latin. Kepler is not as long as the blog makes it look. Yes, this is the same Kepler who came up with the laws of planetary motion. The story is semi autobiographical as well.

Optional Readings:(Not required but these are fun!)

[Le Voyage dans la Lune - Georges Méliès](#) - an early (1902!!) Sci Fi film.

[The Other World: or the States and Empires of the Moon \(L'Autre Monde: ou les États et Empires de la Lune\)](#) - Cyrano de Bergerac (Yes he was a real person. He also apparently thinks Canadians are aliens.)

[The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall](#) -Edgar Allen Poe

[The Origins of Science Fiction Criticism: From Kepler to Wells \(JSTOR\)](#)

[The Best Banter from the Apollo 11 Transcript](#)

**Aldrin:** Yes, there's a big mother over here, too.

**Collins:** Come on now, Buzz, don't refer to them as big mothers. Give them some scientific name.

Suggested Reading/ Watching/ Gaming: *Annihilation*, *Event Horizon*, *Prometheus*, *The Right Stuff* (for actual going to the moon), *A Grand Day Out with Wallace and Gromit*, *Hitchhiker's Guide*

#### **Week 4 (Space Emperors)**

##### **Main Reading:**

[The True Story by Lucian of Samosta](#) Book 2, pp. 99-145

Companion Reading: [Development and Imperialism in Space - Alan Marshall](#)

Suggested Companion Reading/Watching/Gaming: Anything from the *Star Wars*, *Warhammer 40k*, *The Expanse*, or *Dune* universe. *The Locked Tomb Series* by Tamsyn Muir. *The Foundation Series* by Issac Asimov. *Stellaris*, *Starship Troopers*, either the book (Robert A Heinlein) or film. [Carboniferous](#)

#### **Week 5 (Free Space) [Add Things You Want To Talk About To This List](#)**

This week I am reserving for whatever you, my dear co-readers, want to talk about. We can return to previous themes, continue unfinished discussions, or get really into the weeds about lore. It's up to yall. If you want to talk about being inside a whale, I'm here for it!

[The True Story by Lucian of Samosta](#)

**Recommendations Repository:** Use this space to put your recommendations for Speculative Fiction that has Classical vibes.