Overview

Space Opera is a subgenre of science fiction with an emphasis on adventure, chivalry, heroism, inter-planetary travel, melodrama, romance, and especially space battles. Most of the stories are set in the far future during outer space travels. The term “space opera” comes from a hybridization of space travel and “soap opera.” The term was coined in 1941 by Wilson Tucker as the science fiction equivalent of a soap opera because the stories were “tacky, grinding, stinking, outworn, spaceship yarn” as he called them.

In The Space Opera Renaissance, Hartwell and Cramer define space opera as "colorful, dramatic, large-scale science fiction adventure, competently and sometimes beautifully written, usually focused on a sympathetic, heroic central character and plot action, and usually set in the relatively distant future, and in space or on other worlds, characteristically optimistic in tone. It often deals with war, piracy, military virtues, and very large-scale action, large stakes." (pp. 10-18)

These space opera stories were extremely popular in the late 1920s and early 1930s in science fiction magazines such as Amazing Stories.

It was during this time that the genre found its founding father in Doc E.E. Smith. His work, The Skylark of Space, is sighted by many sources as the first great space opera. His Lensman series would go on to become the most famous and referenced space opera series of all time. In the 1970s, the movie Star Wars redefined the space opera for new generations spawning many other movies and TV shows utilizing the conventions of space opera storytelling.

Space Opera Contrasts

Critics and fans often struggle to properly define and categorize space opera within science fiction. Just because a story occurs in space does not make it space opera. The four most common other science fiction subgenres that are confused with Space Opera include

- Cyberpunk
- Hard Science Fiction
- Military Science Fiction
- Planetary Romance

Following are sources of information pertaining to Space Opera to assist prospective game masters, game designers, writers, and storytellers in knowing where to start their research.

Articles

A Night at the Space Opera
By Grossman, Lev

The Hardships of Being a Sith Lord: Implications of the Biopsychosocial Model in a Space Opera.
By Berg, RM
Source: Advances in physiology education, 2016 Jun; 40(2): 234-6
Of Silver Ships, Space Exploration, and Science Fiction: A Conversation With Scott H. Jucha
By Papadopoulos, Leonidas
Source: AmericaSpace, (2015-08-26T02:00:19.000Z)

Science Fiction: Curtains for Space Opera?
By Phillips, Leigh

Space Opera for the 1990s
By Barrett, David V

Books

Armada
By Cline, Ernest

Bill, the Galactic Hero
By Harrison, Harry

Buck Rogers comic
By Nowlan, Philip Francis

The Centauri Device
By Harrison, M. John

Consider Phlebas
By Banks, Iain M.

Constitution
By Webb, Nick

Crest of the Stars
By Morioka, Hirojyki

Downbelow Station
By Cherryh, C.J.

Dune
By Herbert, Frank

Ender’s Game
By Card, Orson Scott

Flash Gordon comic
By Raymon, Alex

Fluency
By Wells, Jennifer

Foundation
By Asimov, Isaac

The Gap Cycle
By Donaldson, Stephen R.

Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy
By Adams, Douglas

Hyperion
By Simmons, Dan

Legends of the Galactic Heroes
By Tanaka, Yoshiki

Projecting Tomorrow: Science Fiction and Popular Cinema
By Chapman, James and Cull, Nicholas John

Rendezvous with Rama
By Clarke, Arthur C.

Saga comic
By Vaughn, Brian K.

The Skylark of Space
By Smith, E.E. “Doc”
Space and Beyond: The Frontier Theme in Science Fiction
By Westfahl, Gary

The Space Opera Renaissance
By Hartwell, David G and Cramer, Kathryn

Starship Troopers
By Heinlein, Robert A.

Star Wars: Heir to the Empire
By Zahn, Timothy

Triplanetary
By Smith, E.E. “Doc”

Universes of E.E. Smith
By Ellik, Ron and Evans, Bill

Vorkosigan Saga
By Bujold, Lois McMaster

What Mad Universe
By Brown, Fredric

Games

Alternity - RPG
Babylon 5 RPG - RPG
Dune - Tabletop Game
Eclipse - Tabletop Game
Eclipse Phase - RPG
EVE Online - Computer Game
Firefly - RPG
Firefly The Board Game - Tabletop Game
Forbidden Stars - Tabletop Game
Freespace - Computer Game
GURPS: Lensmen - RPG
Jovian Chronicles - RPG
Mass Effect - video game
Master of Orion - Computer Game
Otherspace - Computer Game
Race for the Galaxy - Tabletop Game
Ratchet & Clank - Computer Game
Serenity – RPG
Space Empires - Tabletop Game
Space Opera - RPG
Star Frontiers - RPG
Starlancer - Computer Game
Star Trek - RPG
Star Trek CCG - Tabletop Game
Star War Imperial Assault - Tabletop Game
Star Wars (WEG) - RPG
Star Wars Armada - Tabletop Game
Star Wars CCG - Tabletop Game
Star Wars Queen’s Gambit - Tabletop Game
Star Wars Rebellion - Tabletop Game
Star Wars Risk - Tabletop Game
Star Wars: Edge of the Empire, Age of Rebellion, & Force and Destiny - RPG
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic - Computer Game
Starblazer Adventures - RPG
StarCraft - Computer Game
Starfleet Battles - Tabletop Game
Stellar Conquest - Tabletop Game
Traveller - RPG
Twilight Imperium - Tabletop Game
Warhammer 40K - Tabletop Game
Wing Commander - Computer Game
Xia: Legends of a Drift System - Tabletop Game

Cinema

Andromeda - TV
Avatar
Babylon 5 - TV
Battle Beyond the Stars
Battlestar Galactica - TV
Blake’s 7 - TV
The Black Hole
Buck Rogers - TV
Chronicles of Roddick
Cowboy Bebop - Anime
Duck Dodgers - TV
Ender’s Game
Farscape - TV
The Fifth Element
Firefly - TV
Flash Gordon - Movie and TV
Galaxy Quest
Guardians of the Galaxy
Gundam - Anime
Himmelskibet
Ice Pirates
Jupiter Ascending
The Last Starfighter
Lexx – TV
Lost in Space - Movie and TV
Macross/Robotech - Anime
Red Dwarf -TV
Serenity
Spaceballs
Space Battleship Yamato/Starblazers – Anime
Space: 1999 - TV
Space Truckers
Star Trek - Movies and TV
Star Wars
Stargate
Stargate SG1 - TV
Starship Troopers
The Last Straighter
Titans A.E.
WALL-E
Wing Commander

Museum of Science Fiction
http://www.museumofsciencefiction.org/

Star Trek Events
http://www.startrek.com/upcoming_events

Star Wars at Walt Disney World
https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/attractions/hollywood-studios/star-wars/

Star Wars Conventions
http://www.starwars.com/events/conventions

Tatooine in Tunisia
http://www.tunisiaonline.com/star-wars-tunisia/

Yoda Fountain

**People**

Douglas Adams
Brian Aldiss
Isaac Asimov
Orson Scott Card
Arthur C. Clarke
Frank Herbert
Flash Gordon
Robert Heinlein
George Lucas
Philip Francis Nowlan
Alex Raymon
Buck Rogers
E.E. “Doc” Smith
J. Michael Straczynski
Wilson Tucker
John Williams

**Locations**

EMP Museum
http://www.empmuseum.org/