

CYCLOPAEDIA 6 – SPACE OPERA

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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

Source: *Time*, 2008 Feb 29.

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
Source: Nature, v491 n7424 (2012 11 15):
330-331

Space Opera for the 1990s

By Barrett, David V
Source: New scientist (1971) vol. 136 (10
Oct. 1992)

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

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

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

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

LOCATIONS

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

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
<http://www.hiddensf.com/430a-yoda-statue-lucasfilms-presidio-sf.html>

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