

# Writers You'd Be Surprised Wrote Science Fiction

*“Individual science fiction stories may seem as trivial as ever to the blinder critics and philosophers of today- but the core of science fiction, its essence, the concept about which it revolves, has become crucial to our salvation if we are to be saved at all.” – Isaac Asimov*

Yes, the great Mr. Asimov is correct, science fiction and its authors have a long history of sustaining black eyes from literary critics, even today some still don't take the genre seriously, considering it juvenile fantasies for the juvenile. Mr. Ray Bradbury, one of the true giants in the science fiction field, often spoke of parties he'd go to where elitist literary snobs would spend the entire evening ridiculing science fiction. Apparently, to them, science fiction is unable to tackle the deep, heavy and important human themes their precious and pretentious literary fiction claims to have a monopoly on. As Mr. Bradbury countered famously in an essay many years ago – “They don't know what they're talking about!”

I've had first-hand experience with this. I used to go to a creative writing night class at our local college, we were allowed to hand in three short stories for workshopping by the other writers in the class. I would always sneak in a science fiction themed story just to see what the reaction would be and it was as predictable as the sun coming up in the morning – a few condescending comments here, a few patronizing jabs there. One man in the class was so put-out with having to say anything about my story that he talked about the gray paper I used to print the copies of the story on rather than deal with the actual text (I'd run out of white paper to use – all I had at the time was a ream of gray paper).

Look, I understand, good science fiction is hard to find but it's just like any other genre, when it's good, it addresses the human condition honestly and without fear. Sure, I put gadgets, aliens and exotic worlds in my stories, but they are rarely ever about just those things. For example, I wrote a story called “Moontide” that was published in “The Martian Wave – 2012.” It concerned an aging pilot who'd captained a space shuttle (the Moontide) that ran between the Earth and Moon for twenty years and he was being replaced by a younger pilot with a faster, larger, more beautiful ship. But the story wasn't about space ships or moon colonies or space travel, it was about a man's relationship with the ship he'd had the misfortune to grow old with - it was about mortality.

But, as long as there are gadgets, aliens and exotic worlds in my work, I'll never get the respect a writer of straight literary fiction will get.

So, this got me wondering if there were any established writers of literary fiction who'd ever dabbled in science fiction. The list of ten authors below is what I found and many of them genuinely surprised me. Have a look...

**Don DeLillo** (1936 - ) – An American novelist and playwright who has twice been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, won the PEN/Faulkner award for a book called *Mau II* in 1992, and won the Library of Congress Prize for American Fiction in 2013, wrote a book called *Ratner's Star* (1976), about a child genius who is called upon by eccentric scientists to decipher an alien communication.

**Vladimir Nabokov** (1899 – 1977) – The great Russian/American novelist wrote a science fiction novel titled, *Ada or Ardor – A Family Chronicle*, and is about two incestuous lovers set in an alternate timeline where the Americas were settled by Russia and the planet Earth is known as Antiterra.

**F. Scott Fitzgerald** (1896 – 1940) – One of the original 1920's "Lost Generation" writers and Hemingway's BF, Scott wasn't above dirtying his hands in the science fiction genre with his 1921 short story "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," a satirical story about a man who is born old and gets younger as he lives his life of adventure.

**H.P. Lovecraft** (1890 – 1937) – Known for his atmospheric, mesmerizing short stories of horror in New England, many don't realize he was equally adept at science fiction. Many of his *horror* stories involve alien beings or extinct alien civilizations. One of my favorites is "In the Walls of Eryx," which takes place on the jungle planet, Venus. Two other stories, "From Beyond" and "Cool Air" also detail scientific inventions.

**Virginia Woolf** (1882 - 1941) – One of the great female English authors of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Woolf experimented with stream of conscious writing in her classic novels *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. But, few people know she used a pen name to sell her science fiction stories, E.V. Odle! One of her most influential works as E.V. Odle, was a 1923 novel titled *The Clockwork Man* and is widely considered the first instance of a cyborg in fiction.

**Rudyard Kipling** (1865 – 1936) – The first English writer to win the Nobel Prize for Literature and author of *The Jungle Book* and *Gunga Din*, Kipling wrote ten science fiction short stories that dealt with time travel, sentient machines and alternate history. Recently, these ten stories have been collected into one volume as *The Science Fiction Stories of Rudyard Kipling*.

**Mark Twain** (1835 – 1910) – Author of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer* and inventor of the great American novel, Twain was fascinated with machines and technology his whole life. His literary dabbling into science fiction includes works such as “Captain Stormfield’s Visit To Heaven,” “The Mysterious Stranger” and “The Great Dark.” *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* is widely recognized as a pioneering time travel story.

**Cyrano de Bergerac** (1619 – 1655) – Famous French writer and keeper of the huge nose that scared off women. Two years after his death, his satirical science fiction novel, *The Other World: Comical History of States and Empires of the Moon*, was published. It’s credited with being the first example of rocket-powered spaceflight and for inventing the ramjet.

**Johannes Kepler** (1571 – 1630) – German mathematician, astronomer and astrologer, Kepler is best known for his laws of planetary motion that are still relevant today. His narrative, “The Dream,” wasn’t published until four years after his death and details an imaginative description of what the Earth may look like when viewed from the Moon. It’s considered the first serious scientific treatise on lunar astronomy.

**Francis Bacon** (1561 – 1626) – Bacon was a philosopher, statesman, scientist, jurist, orator and author (some say he wrote all of Shakespeare’s plays). His 1624 novel, *The New Atlantis*, is claimed by many to be the first honest-to-God science fiction novel. The story details the adventures of a group of European sailors who stumble across a Utopian-like island in the Pacific. Subjects such as biotechnology and the very first scientific description of a laser beam were explored.

There you have it! I implore you to read the above referenced works when you get a chance so you can see how far ahead of their times these authors were. Then, if you should run across one of those snot-nosed literary critics making themselves look smarter by demeaning an entire genre, remind him/her of these authors and see what they say.

On a closing note, try to imagine what a science fiction work from Shakespeare or Hemingway would sound like. The possibility makes me drool!

Thanks for your time,  
GC Rosenquist