

Science Fiction Writing

Science Fiction writing is usually set in a world essentially similar to ours but which has been altered in believable ways by technological advances. The most frequently used of these advances is space or time travel but the relevant technological advance could be anything, for example genetic mutation (*X-Men*), robotics (*I-Robot*) or new crime detection methods (*Minority Report*).

As the ornithopters glided out of the night above them, Paul grabbed his mother's arm and snapped: 'Don't move!'

Then he saw the lead craft in the moonlight, the way its wings cupped to brake for landing, the reckless dash of the hands at the controls.

It's Idaho,' he breathed.

The craft and its companions settled into the basin like a covey of birds coming to nest. Idaho was out of his thopter and running toward them before the dust settled. Two figures in Fremmen robes followed him. Paul recognized one: the tall, sandy-bearded Kynes.

'This way!' Kynes called and he veered left.

Behind Kynes, other Fremmen were throwing fabric covers over their ornithopters. The craft became a row of shallow dunes.

Idaho skidded to a stop in front of Paul, saluted. 'M'Lord, the Fremmen have a temporary hiding place nearby where we –'

'What about that back there?'

Paul pointed to the violence above the distant cliff – the jetflares, the purple beams of lasguns lacing the desert.

A rare smile touched Idaho's round, placid face. 'M'Lord ... Sire, I've left them a little sur-'

Glaring white light filled the desert – bright as a sun, etching their shadows onto the rock floor of the ledge. In one sweeping motion, Idaho had Paul's arm in one hand, Jessica's shoulder in the other, hurling them down off the ledge into the basin. They sprawled together in the sand as the roar of an explosion thundered over them. Its shock wave tumbled chips off the rock ledge they had vacated.

Idaho sat up, brushed sand from himself.

'Not the family atomics!' Jessica said. 'I thought –'

'You planted a shield back there,' Paul said.

'A big one turned to full force,' Idaho said. 'a lasgun beam touched it and ...' He shrugged.

'Subatomic fusion,' Jessica said. 'That's a dangerous weapon.'

'Not weapon, m'Lady, defence. That scum will think twice before using lasguns another time.'

Comment [K1]: New terms, often to do with technology, are introduced. This technology often resembles aspects of the world today, the ornithopter is obviously some kind of flying machine, and the names are often combinations of existing words. In this case 'orni' suggest ornithology (the study of birds) and 'opter' has obvious echoes of helicopter.

Comment [K2]: Trying to create a visual image of the craft

Comment [K3]: Names are often odd sounding and either really long or unusually short. Sci-fi names also usual include letters in odd places or unpronounceable combinations of letters

Comment [K4]: To add realism to the Sci-fi world new words that the characters use frequently are often shortened as they would be in the real world

Comment [K5]: Again – short names with the 'y' in an odd place

Comment [K6]: Other new words are clear combinations of currently existing words

Comment [K7]: The destructive force of this weapon is clearly influenced by modern warfare – this massive atomic explosion is an echo of Hiroshima

Comment [K8]: In all other ways the writing is no different to how you would write about the our world

Comment [K9]: Clearly influenced by modern weaponry – the actual physics is only implied but by using just enough words that sound right Herbert manages to create a realistic impression of believable scientific advances.

Comment [K10]: Even the characters are recognizable stereotypes from our world. Idaho, is the battle hardened military man. Jessica is the more sensitive female

Taken from Dune by Frank Herbert