



Weekly Newsletter February 16, 2005

The Science in "Science Fiction"

In a recent article in Popular Science (February 2005) James Cameron, the director of such blockbuster movies as Terminator and Titanic, suggests that "science fiction movies have actually hurt real-world scientific explorations by infecting the public with unrealistic expectations". Take for example the images recently transmitted from the surface of Mars - amazing landscapes, but no funny little green men! For some students real science is a let down from the wide screen version they've been promised at their local cinema. How can we gain student's interest in real science once they have experienced the exciting world of science fiction? **Check out some of the links below for commentaries and activities to share with your students concerning the debate on science vs. science fiction.**



Nanotechnology

One of the hottest fields in science today is nanotechnology - an experimental technology which uses individual atoms or molecules as the components of minute machines, measured by the nanometer, or a millionth of a millimeter. Michael Crichton brought it to the attention of the general public with his novel Prey in which nanobots swarm and attack humans.

<http://www.theithacajournal.com/news/stories/20041002/localnews/1343829.html>

Recently, a Japanese scientist applied nanotechnology to a project that even Harry Potter would admire - an invisibility cloak!

<http://projects.star.t.u-tokyo.ac.jp/projects/MEDIA/xv/oc.html>

The potential for misuse of this technology has some people concerned.

http://crnano.typepad.com/crnblog/2004/06/thats_what_im_t.html

What do your students think about the ethics of scientific research?



Links

http://www.stf.sk.ca/teaching_res/library/teach_mat_centre/tmc/s10617/s10617.htm

Science fiction: the application of scientific fact

http://www.knowledgenetwork.ca/know_tool/space/articles/k-4_movies.pdf

Science or science fiction?

http://media.nasaexplores.com/lessons/01-036/9-12_1.pdf

Science fiction or tomorrow's technology?

<http://www.abc.net.au/science/slab/willis/story.htm>

Does good science fiction make good science?

<http://www.csicop.org/scienceandmedia/blockbuster/>

Can a blockbuster film shape the public's understanding of a science controversy?