

# Reading Contracts

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A Classroom Literature Program for Individuals or Groups



### **About the author**

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## Purpose

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This program is an independent, contract-approach of teaching reading and literature to students in the upper elementary grades and in junior high school. It offers each student the opportunity to design a reading program based on his or her individual abilities, interests, and needs.

Each contract centers around a specific genre of children's literature, and each offers a wide selection of tasks, at various ability levels, related to that particular genre. Students and teacher choose these activities in the categories of vocabulary, comprehension, dictionary, writing, art, research, and challenge. By "mixing and matching" within these categories, students at various levels within the same classroom can create an individual program which is both educationally beneficial and personally gratifying.

Your assessment of each student's individual strengths, weaknesses, talents, and needs is an integral part—indeed, the first step for you to take—in the success of these contracts. You may wish to wait for a month to pass in the school year before beginning these contracts. During that time you might give your students various tests and assignments to help you pinpoint those areas appropriate for your various students' concentration. This information will help you in your initial conference with each student so that you mutually arrive at the best combination of tasks.

You will soon discover that this contract system eliminates the traditional reading group and permits any number of students in your room to work independently and/or in small groups, at their own speed, and on a non-competitive basis. If your classroom library is not large enough, your school or town library should certainly be able to accommodate each child's needs.

These reading contracts will do the following for your students:

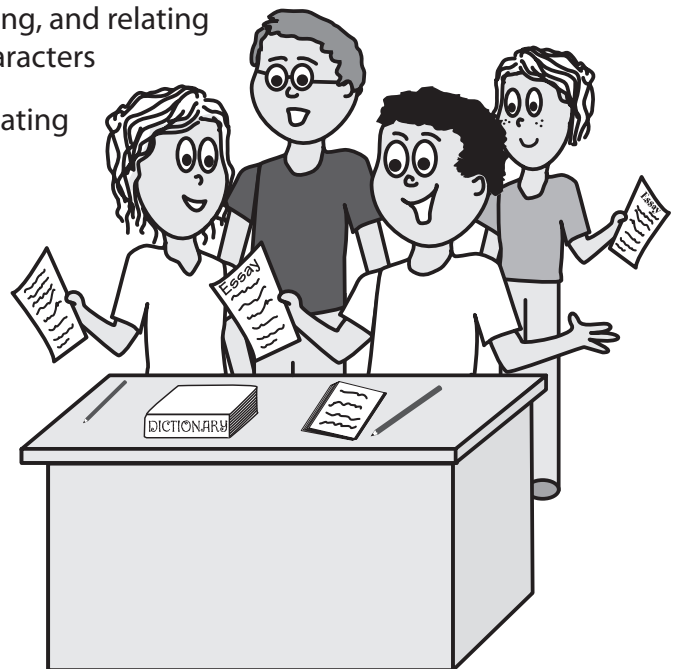
1. stimulate creative thinking
2. offer opportunities for thinking and expressing ideas in a variety of media
3. offer the opportunity to select materials and tasks at individual ability and interest levels
4. provide "non-conforming" students a variety of independent selections
5. give the slower or faster worker the opportunity to pace him/herself according to personal needs
6. encourage divergent thinking
7. stimulate personal involvement in the selection and scope of his/her contract

## Purpose

- offer required language skills and tasks in a new and unique way
- provide opportunities to explore his/her inner feelings
- help self-expression
- encourage independent thinking
- provide opportunities to budget time and proceed at a natural pace
- develop interaction between students and provide opportunities for group decisions and problem-solving
- lead students to reach beyond the “expected” and into the challenging and stimulating

Your students will develop these specific skills:

- using the dictionary
- writing factually and creatively
- employing various art media
- using an encyclopedia
- working with peers in group activities
- interviewing peers and adults
- taking surveys and writing questionnaires
- compiling graph findings
- comparing, contrasting, and relating events, time, and characters
- predicting and evaluating ideas and situations



# Reading Contract

## Science Fiction



Student's(s') names(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Dates:** Contract begins: \_\_\_\_\_ Expected completion date: \_\_\_\_\_

Genre of book: \_\_\_\_\_ Title of book with author's name in parentheses: \_\_\_\_\_

### Vocabulary:

Part I: I (we) will work with these words:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Part II: I (we) will do these **Vocabulary Activities**:

**Comprehension:** I (we) will answer the following questions: \_\_\_\_\_

**Writing:** I (we) will do the following activities: \_\_\_\_\_

**Art:** I (we) will do the following activities: \_\_\_\_\_

**Miscellaneous Projects:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Challenge:** I (we) will do the following activities: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's(s') signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Contract reviewed and corrected: \_\_\_\_\_

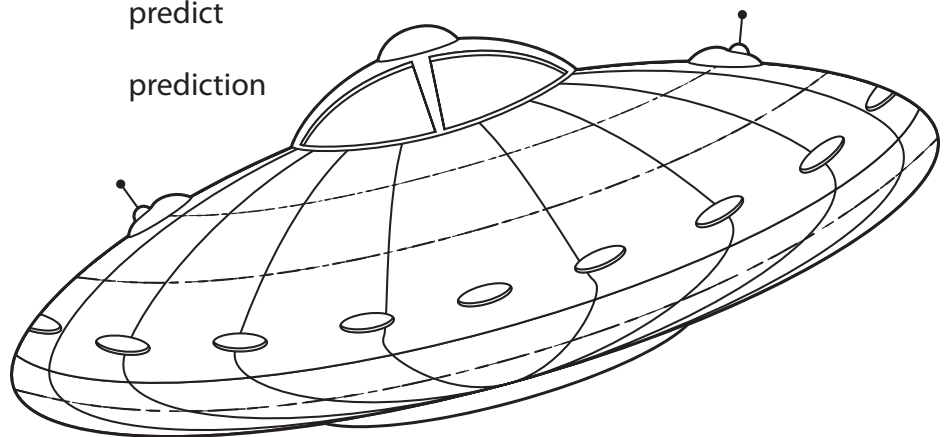
Contract completed: \_\_\_\_\_

# Vocabulary List

## Science Fiction Contract

Choose 10 of these words to work with. (See the **Vocabulary Activities** on the next page.)

alien	creature	lunar	prognosticate	sunspot
asteroid	dehumanize	magnitude	reentry	supernovae
astronaut	destiny	meteor(ite)	revolve	technocracy
astronomer	eclipse	Milky Way	robot	telepathic
astronomical	elliptical	mission	rotate	telescope
atmosphere	encounter	module	satellite	trajectory
aurora	extraterrestrial	moon	shuttlecraft	uncanny
automation	frontier	nebulae	solar	uninhabited
axis	galactical	novae	solar flare	universe
booster	galaxy	obsolete	solar system	vacuum
capsule	gravitational	orbit	space	zodiac
comet	gravity	phase	spacecraft	
communicator	heatshield	pioneer	spatial	
computer	helium	planet	splashdown	
computerize	igneous	planetarium	star	
constellation	ignition	predict		
corona	innovation	prediction		
cosmic rays	interstellar			
cosmonaut	laser			
countdown	launch			
crater	lift-off			





# Vocabulary Activities

## Science Fiction Contract

1. Write a meaning for each of your vocabulary words. Do not use the root a word in your definition.
  2. Write a sentence for each of your vocabulary words. Use the word so that its meaning is clear.
  3. Write a paragraph using all your vocabulary words. Underline the words as you use them.
  4. Find out the part of speech for each of your vocabulary words. Use a dictionary to be sure.
  5. Alphabetize your list of vocabulary words.
  6. Indicate how many syllables there are in each of your vocabulary words. Divide them as shown in your dictionary.
  7. Locate each vocabulary word in a dictionary. Tell the word immediately before and immediately after your word.
  8. Underline the root (base) word in any of your vocabulary words that has either prefix or a suffix. What does the root word mean? How does the prefix or suffix change the word?
  - ★9. Here's the answer—what's the question? Write a carefully thought-out question that can be answered by each of vocabulary words.
  - ★10. Make an acrostic or crossword puzzle using all your vocabulary words. Include a definition for each word. Prepare an answer key as well.
    11. Use your vocabulary words in a poem—either rhymed or free verse. (An interesting challenge would be to have each line of the poem *begin* or *end* with the vocabulary word.)
    12. Write an adjective to precede each noun on your vocabulary list; write a noun to follow each adjective; write an adverb for each verb. Make sure each combination works together.
  - ★13. Choose a long word from your vocabulary list. See how many smaller ones you can make from it. Give yourself three points for each three-letter word you find, four points for each four-letter word, etc. Have a contest with a classmate.
  - ★14. Make a rebus, using words and pictures, for each of your vocabulary words.
- ★ = A good activity to do with a study partner or several other students.

# Comprehension Questions

## Science Fiction Contract

1. What time or dimension does this book describe so that it can be correctly called “science fiction”?
2. Does this book take place in other parts of the solar system or in other galaxies? If so, name the settings described in the book.
3. Briefly describe the main characters of this book.
4. Fully describe one particularly interesting character. Use character and personality traits, physical attributes, etc.
5. Describe the most interesting, or most unbelievable, event in this book. Explain it fully and with good details.
6. Does any character in this book do anything that ordinary people cannot do? If so, describe the character, the event, and the situation.
7. Find between five to 10 new or unusual or “made-up” words in your book. Describe their meanings and how they are used in the book.
8. Which did you enjoy most in this book—the characters or the events, or a little bit of both? Defend your answer with examples specifically from the book.
9. If this book were scientifically true, then we would have different things in our lives and we would live differently than we do now. Name and explain the changes that would be in our lives if these things did exist.
10. Has the author of this book written any other science fiction books or stories? If so, name them.
11. Write five questions you might ask of someone who just read your book to test his/her comprehension. Then answer your own questions.

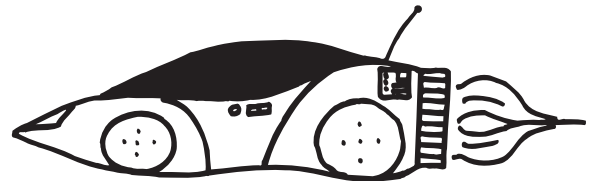


# Writing Activities

## Science Fiction Contract

- ★1. Make a list of 100 things you would like in your future. Include things you'd like to have, to do, to be, and to enjoy. Don't forget the important "invisibles": good health, a good sense of humor, etc.
2. Imagine the year is 2050 and your rocket is speeding toward a space station on Mars. You, the other passengers, and the crew will be the first humans to live on planet Mars. During this trip, you have kept a diary. You are now two days away from your destination. Record these final two days and your first day in the space station, in your diary. What an important adventure!
3. Pretend it is the year 2025 and you are living on the planet Mars. You and your family have been there for one full year. You have made many wonderful discoveries and have had unusual experiences. Now it is time to write to everyone back home. Write a letter which you will begin, "Dear Everyone living on Earth." Continue the letter.
- ★4. Make a daily schedule for your future lifestyle. Make seven boxes to represent the days of the week. Divide each box into "a.m." and "p.m." hours. Include your working hours, meals, leisure time, meetings, and other activities. Try to imagine what unique activities you will be doing at this future time.
5. As an adult 20 years from now, you will have a job. What will it be? Write a job description and the qualifications for that job. Then write an ad for the Help Wanted section of the newspaper offering that position.
- ★6. Imagine you are a space explorer who has been sent to visit a newly discovered planet. As you explore, you are supposed to send messages back to Earth. Write your messages in the form of a "spacegram," giving information about the following:
  - a. what the people look like on this planet
  - b. what food these people eat
  - c. what the buildings look like and what they are made of
  - d. a particular region you explored and what you discovered or observed
  - e. any unusual "creatures" other than humans you observed
  - f. whether or not you feel humans could live in this environment
- ★7. Look around, observe your classmates carefully, gather some information, and start prognosticating (predicting)! Find a calendar and pick some dates a few weeks or months away. Write some predictions about you and your classmates (or teacher), fold them small, and tape them to the appropriate dates. When the time comes, find out how good you were at guessing the future!
- ★8. Pretend that you have been put in charge of planning a Moon trip. It will be the beginnings of colonization of the Moon. You have projected a time schedule and people have been training and preparing for their journey. Your task is to plan and develop a community on the Moon. Think about the subject and make a list of laws and customs you propose for this imagined community.

- ★9. You are a reporter. Conduct a newscast of people from outer space landing on Earth. Interview these people. Make up at least 10 good questions to ask. Then record the answers you get from the visitors. (A group of you working together might like to write a script and role play it for the class!)
10. Take an informal poll of your classmates to find out whether or not they believe that life exists in outer space. Then write an editorial for your local newspaper describing people's reactions to your question.
11. You have arrived from another planet to observe the human race and to report back to your planet. Since you do not understand the strange noises the Earthlings are making, you must observe only with your eyes. Send back your reactions to one of the following events that you saw, but did not hear: a rock concert, a sports event, TV, a school day.
12. Here's your opportunity to "create" a strange event. If you could be involved in a strange event, what would it be? Describe that event vividly. Illustrate it if you wish.
- ★13. Get together with one or more of your classmates and write the front page of a "Futuristic Newspaper." You might want to include: news events of the day, editorials, letters to the editor, social news, etc.
- ★14. Your job is to select 20 items to be placed in a time capsule which will be opened 100 years from now. These 20 items must be representative of life on Earth at the present time, and must fit into the capsule. List the 20 items, defend your choices, and include the explanation of each item to be placed alongside it.
15. Pretend that you are a native of another planet. You observe something landing on your planet coming from the sky. You see creatures coming out of this thing. You hide behind some protective covering and take notes. Later, you go to your lawmakers or other officials and give them a report of your observations. Write your report.
- ★16. Make a dictionary of space-related words. Include at least 25 words. Have one page for each word. On the page should be the word; a complete definition; and a drawing, tracing, or cutout of the word. You might want to work with a classmate on this book.
- ★17. Imagine a conversation between you and an alien, either here on Earth or on his/her home planet. Record that conversation on paper. (Two of you might like to role play this conversation for the class.)
18. Write your own science fiction story. Before beginning, develop your characters and devise a plot.
19. A man sits in his chair after the total destruction of the world. He knows that all other humans have been destroyed. There is a knock at the door. Who is it? Or, what is it? Write your story.
20. It is November 4, 2976. The first robot has been elected president of the world. Write a news story to accompany this unprecedented situation.



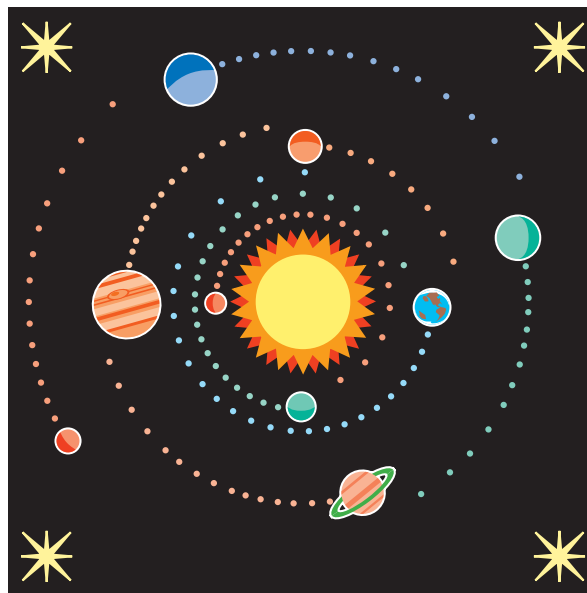
# Art Activities

## Science Fiction Contract

- ★1. Design a moon colony. Include homes and other buildings. Make a blueprint or a drawing or a scale model of the colony.
- ★2. Research space suits and rockets. Design space equipment for the future. Make sure you label the various parts of your designs.
  3. Build or design a model of a spaceship. Name your ship.
  4. Read about eclipses. Then draw pictures to show a lunar and solar eclipse. Caption each picture to explain what is happening.
  5. Draw or build a flying “thing” of the future. Describe it and its various parts. Explain how it works.
  6. Draw an astronaut in gear. Label each article of clothing and piece of equipment. Explain the purpose or the need of each.
  7. Make a soap, clay, or wood sculpture of a being from another planet.
- ★8. Make a picture book of interesting extra-terrestrial beings. Label each picture with the being’s name and origin. Present the book to a primary classroom.
  9. Design a symbol or group of symbols that tell something about who you are. Without using words, you must think of ways to communicate important things about yourself. Under each design, write an explanation.
10. What do you think a person from outer space would look like? Draw your concept.
11. Plan an AAA trip to outer space. Chart or map the trip.
- ★12. Prepare a pictorial display of various UFO descriptions, drawings, paintings, and pictures. Ask your teacher if you might place it on a bulletin board.
  13. Scientists have just found a new species of fish, but they haven’t named it yet. Draw a picture of what you think it looks like and what you would call it.
- ★14. Make 12 new designs for the signs of the zodiac. Label and identify.
- ★15. Pretend it is the year 2050 and you have just blasted off for a journey into space. You look out your rocket window and see some beautiful sights. Draw a series of four to six sights. Color and describe them.
16. Space explorers have discovered flowers growing on the moons of Jupiter. What do they look like to you? Draw your creation.



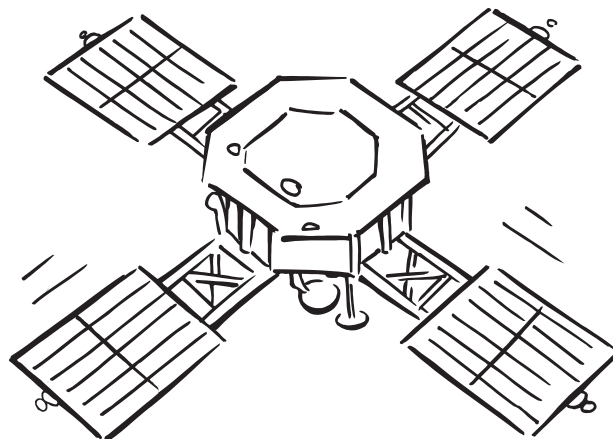
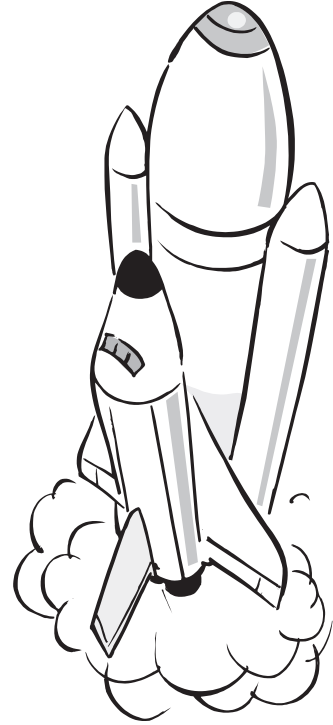
17. Design a robot that will perform a chore that you hate doing. Include an explanation of how it works.
18. You have invented a machine that will change the life of students everywhere. Draw a picture of that design to present to the patent office. Explain its function.
- ★19. Build a diorama that will include the kinds of transportation you think we will be using in the year 2025.
- ★20. Design a new flag or stamp for the first Moon colony.
- ★21. With the cooperation of a few of your classmates, draw a large mural that traces the important steps in the history of transportation. Bring it into the future and include your projected ideas in the mural. Label and date each entry.
22. Build a three-dimensional, scale model of our Solar System.
- ★23. Draw a map of the first colony established on Mars. Include topography, buildings, points of interest, etc. Make a key for your map and include a scale of miles.
- ★24. Make a roll movie depicting various scenes of the first colony being established on Mars. Include landing, building, greeting, and any other interesting facets of the journey and adventure. Make a caption for each scene.
25. Write your own music that could be used in the next space adventure movie. Tape it and play it to the class.



# Future Shock Activities

## *Science Fiction Contract*

1. How old will you be in 20 years?
2. About how tall will you be? And your weight?
3. Will your hair be different? If so, how?
4. What clothing will you be wearing? Draw yourself.
5. What will your job be?
6. What training must you have in order to do your job?
7. Will you have a family? If so, describe.
8. Where will you work?
9. How will you get to work?
10. Draw your method of transportation.
11. In 20 years, where in (or out of) this world would you like to live?  
Draw your home or your environment.
12. Make some predictions for the future.
  - a. Do you think there will be a war between any countries in the next 10 years? If so, in which countries? What will be the cause of the war? Who will win the war? Defend your choice.
  - b. Who do you think will be the next president? Defend your choice.
  - c. If one of your friends were to become famous for something as an adult, in 20 to 30 years, which friend would it be? For what would this person be famous?



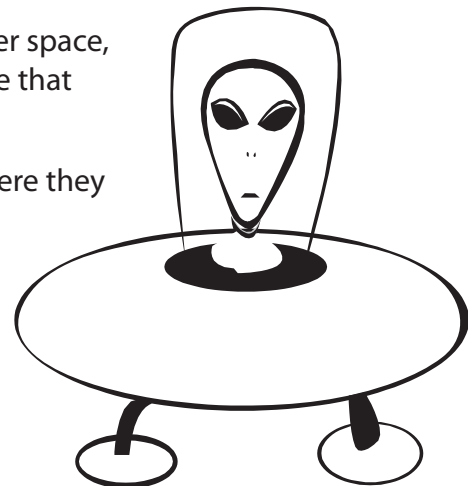
# Challenge Projects

## Science Fiction Contract

1. Investigate Newton's theories of motion and gravitation. Find out how Newton's experiment led him to his discovery of gravity. Explain gravity in your own words. You might consider a demonstration of the earth's gravitational pull for your classmates.
2. Keep a sky watch for two weeks. Look for some particular, large bodies in our galaxy with the aid of a star map and a telescope. Keep a daily record of the movement of the bodies.
3. Find out about the two kinds of exploding stars—novae and supernovae—in our galaxy. Learn how they differ in the violence of their explosions, in the effects the explosions have on them, and in the frequency of their explosions.
4. Investigate how Orion (or another familiar constellation) got its name. Find out which ancient people gave this constellation its name and why they named it that. Make your own drawing of the constellation to show what it resembled.
5. In the past, people often named constellations after animals and familiar objects. Study the sky on a few clear nights and look at the pictures of the northern and southern hemispheres that can be found in a book about the stars. Make a list of all the constellations you find. Then make up your own names for them.
6. Investigate space flights toward Venus made by Mariner II. Find out when it was launched, where it was launched, what instruments it carried, and the data it sent back to earth. Make an illustration of its path around Venus to accompany your report.
- ★7. Compile a chart of moon probes conducted by the United States and the USSR. Put four headings on your chart: country, name of probe, date, and purpose.
- ★8. Make a timeline showing the development of the space program in the United States. You might want to make one timeline for manned flights and another for unmanned flights.
9. Devise an invention man could use if he found himself without anyone of the following: food, shelter, transportation, clothing, natural resources. Make a model of your invention and demonstrate it in class.
- ★10. Work with some of your classmates to write the script for a TV program of the future. Write the dialogue, design and make the costumes, construct the scenery, and produce the play for your classmates.
11. Investigate and describe the contributions made by various people to our space program. Rank these contributions in order of importance or impact on the program. Explain your system. Note: You might also wish to research the contributions to the American space program by the German scientists captured at the end of World War II. James Michener's novel *Space* has interesting information on these men.



- ★12. Investigate one of the planets in our solar system. Note the availability (or not) of those things essential to human life as we live it on Earth. Make a list of what is available and what is not. Make a list of things that would be required to make this planet habitable for humans. Design some of those things and make a display.
- 13. How many ways can you “categorize” the nine planets of our solar system? Try it.
- ★14. Where would your classmates most like to go in outer space? Assuming space travel to be possible to any planet in our solar system, which planet would they choose? Interview your classmates and make a bar graph of your findings.
- ★15. Develop a questionnaire which will measure knowledge of “space” amongst your classmates. Ask your teacher if the questionnaire can be reproduced. Ask your classmates to answer the questions and return the papers to you. Prepare a statement of findings by making a graph, chart, oral report, etc.
- ★16. Organize a debate or a panel discussion on the issue: “Should the United States continue to spend vast amounts of money on our space program?” Ask your teacher if you may present it to the class.
- 17. Create a new product for future use. Describe your product in detail so that the patent office is willing to issue a patent to you. Include pictures of the product. Show how it is used or how it works. Give a classroom demonstration.
- ★18. Design and construct a game having to do with space, space travel, or science “fiction.” Put it on a heavy board. Include designs or illustrations. Write directions and rules. Include playing pieces.
- 19. Do you think there is a planet similar to Earth? Do some research and support the idea that there is.
- ★20. Do you believe the stories about UFOs? Do some research on the subject and explain the possibility or probability of such stories. Possibly you would like to hold a debate on this resolution: Resolved—UFOs definitely exist and are visiting our planet regularly.
- 21. Would life in outer space be a solution to some of our economic problems on Earth? Project the possibility of solutions on another planet.
- ★22. If (or when) we should come into contact with beings from outer space, the problem of communication will be great. Design a language that could be used by all “beings.”
- 23. Make a list of all the people who have traveled in space. How were they trained? What qualifications did they have?
- 24. List all possible arguments for the continuation of space exploration. Defend each statement.
- 25. Predict the next major breakthrough in space technology. Defend your selection. Which country do you think will make this breakthrough?



# Recommended Books

## Science Fiction Contract

The author's name appears in parentheses. This is only a partial list. You should be able to find others that are appropriate for your age and reading ability.

1. *Time at the Top* (Edward Ormondroyd)
2. *The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet; Stowaway to Mushroom Planet* (Eleanor Cameron)
3. *The Lotus Caves* (John Christopher)
4. *Space* (James Michener)
5. *The Forgotten Door* (Alexander Key)
6. *A House on Parchment Street* (Patricia McKillip)
7. *Three Seated Space Ship* (Louis Siobodkin)
8. *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Jules Verne)
9. *In the Keep of Time In the Circle of Time* (Margaret Anderson)
10. *A Wrinkle in Time* (Madeleine L'Engle)
11. *I, Robot* (Isaac Asimov)
12. *Out of the Sun* (Benjamin Bova)
13. *Martian Chronicles* (Ray Bradbury)
14. *The White Mountains* trilogy (John Christopher)
15. *Space Cadet; Tunnel in the Sky; Podkayne of Mars; Have Spacesuit, Will Travel; Stranger from a Strange Land* (Robert Heinlein)
16. *The Children of Morrow; The Lost Star* (H.M. Hoover)
17. *The X Factor* (Andre Norton)
18. *Z for Zacharian* (Robert O'Brien)
19. *The Time of the Great Freeze* (Robert Silverberg)
20. *The Weathermonger; Heartsease; The Devil's Children* (Peter Dickinson)
21. *1984* (George Orwell)
22. *Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley)

