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Ms. Engelbert

Film As Literature

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The Portrayal of Robots in Literature and Film

Artificial intelligence is everywhere: robots, machines, space mechanisms. What used to be the novel musings of science fiction writers has now, in some cases, become commonplace in our lives, everything from a Rumba vacuum to Siri. The world of entertainment often projects the pros and cons, the ups and downs, and the moral and immoral implications of future possibilities. However, when is science and technology too much? As technology evolves, gray area continues to increase as science attempts to govern the rules of humanity. Science fiction explores whether or not robots may be deemed as human, and in doing so, causes us to consider the difference between man and machine.

ROBOT DREAMS

Prolific Science Fiction Writer Isaac Asminov’s short story “Robot Dreams” tells the story of a futuristic robot who develops the capacity to think and feel on its own. The scientists credited with creating it ultimately decide to destroy the robot out of fear because, although the robots created in this fictional world where they “must obey the orders given by human beings,” they will “protect their own existence”. In the story, robopsychologist Dr. Rash goes behind her superior’s back and gives the robot LVX-1 different positronic brain waves which give the robot the ability to dream. In doing so, the robot is able to process all the information it has been front loaded with and develop new, independent ideas. This story serves as a cautionary tale to prepare the world when machine can think independently from man.

# A-I and THE ISLAND

Hollywood’s booming movie industry has produced one “robots taking over humans” movie after another; yet, the movies that allow the audience to build pathos for the robots are particularly gripping. “Artificial Intelligence” is the story of a robot boy who wants to be a real boy so his mother will love him. “The Island” is a story about a group of clones purchased by people in the real world that can harvest their clones in the event of an emergency; however, these clones are created with feelings and emotions in order for their biological processes (although technologically manufactured) to work. Both robots in these movies develop human characteristics and capacities such as emotions, pain, and pleasure. Therefore, audience members view these machines as humanlike, thus forcing them to evaluate the degree to which they would willingly allow a robot with artificial intelligence to exist in the real world.

CONCLUSION

The future is filled with awesome possibilities, yet the threat of robots taking over the world or robots that can feel will always hold a place in the back on our minds. Thanks Hollywood. If technology can feel, is it still technology or is it a new breed of science fiction--no science REALITY--that deserves a permanent place in our world? Movies continue to explore the unknown until the unknown becomes commonplace as humanity and technology evolve.

**SCIENCE FICTION ESSAY DIRECTIONS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1st Paragraph** | **Introduce your topic (robots having feelings) and how this topic is present in both literature and film** |
| **2nd Paragraph** | * **Summarize robot dreams** * **Speak to the moral dilemmas presented in the story (questions raised, items to consider, etc.)** |
| **3rd Paragraph** | * **Summarize AI and THE ISLAND** * **Examine what it means if robots have feelings and when technology is going too far** |
| **4th Paragraph** | * **Conclude everything. Repeat the main points or extrapalations.** |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **10** | **8** | **6** | **4** |
| P1 | Introduces topics effectively and sets tone for essay | Introduces topics effectively and sets tone for essay (mostly) | Sort-of | unclear |
| P2 | Summarizes story and presents ethical questions expertly along with a direct quote from story | Summarizes story and presents ethical questions adequately along with a direct quote from the story | Sort-fo | Missing one or more elements or is unclear |
| P3 | Summarizes both movies and presents ethical questions expertly | Summarizes both movies and presents ethical questions adequately | Sort-of | Missing one or more elements or is unclear |
| P4 | Conclusion ties everything together by repeating ethical concerns/callbacks to previous points expressed | Mostly | Sort of | Conclusion is present but needs help wrapping up essay |
| Grammar/Format | Perfect spelling, grammar, and MLA format | 1-3 errors | 4-6 errors | More than 6 errors |