



SPACE AGE PREDICTIONS

1 Would you like to travel to a distant galaxy in a giant spaceship? Sounds like science fiction doesn't it? Well ... science fiction often becomes science fact.

In reality, humans first landed on the moon in 1969. But in science fiction stories they had been travelling there since Jules Verne wrote *From the Earth to the Moon* in 1865, more

than a hundred years earlier. When Verne wrote that story, most people thought that going to the moon was impossible, that it was just science fiction. Now it's a reality.

2 Of course, the predictions of science fiction haven't always been right. Although Jules Verne correctly predicted that people would go to the moon in a capsule, in his story they

were shot out of a giant gun. In the real world, the capsule was shot into space on a rocket.

3 Science fiction books and films have had humans travelling far beyond the moon for many years — to the other planets in our solar system and even to other galaxies. Will we soon be doing the same in reality? NASA is already planning a manned mission to Mars. But that's as far as we are planning to go for the time being.

4 In reality, we do not yet have the technology to travel too far from our home planet. Why? Well, one of the biggest problems is speed. We don't have spaceships that can travel fast enough. With current technology, it would take a space capsule over six months to get to Mars ... and that's our nearest neighbour. Even if we could travel at the speed of light, which we can't, it would take over four years to reach the closest star (Alpha Centauri).

5 Science fiction has solved the problems of space travel over great distances in a number of different ways. Lots of stories, films and television shows have spaceships travelling many times faster than the speed of light. These ships can travel from one solar system to another in a matter of hours, and from one galaxy to another in just a few days. One of the most famous faster-than-light forms of travel is the Warp Drive from *Star Trek*. The Starship Enterprise was always exploring strange new worlds in distant solar systems.

6 Some science fiction stories take a different approach to long distance space travel. Rather than having spaceships that can travel faster than light, they have passengers in

suspended animation. That is, they are frozen in time, sleeping but not ageing, until they reach their destination, when they are woken up. This idea was used in films such as *Alien* and television shows such as *Silver Sun*.

7 In science fiction, not only have humans travelled to other planets, but aliens from other planets have also come to Earth. Some have been friendly, like the gentle ET who visited Earth and befriended a young boy in the film *'ET: The Extra-Terrestrial'*. But unfriendly aliens have also tried to invade our planet in films such as *Independence Day*.

8 The first science fiction story of alien invasion was HG Wells's novel, *The War of the Worlds* (1898). In this story, Martians invade Earth. Several films have been based on this book and in 1978 there was even a musical version released on record.

The most famous adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* was a radio play broadcast in 1938 by Orson Welles. It was presented as a series of fictional news bulletins. But many people, who tuned in part way, thought the news bulletins were real and Martians really were invading the Earth.

9 Of course, we now know there are no Martians living on Mars ... but when the novel was written, people thought it might be possible. Even though we have no evidence of alien life yet, some scientists think there may indeed be life on other planets outside our solar system.

10 Sometimes science fiction makes predictions that turn out to be incorrect. But sometimes,

