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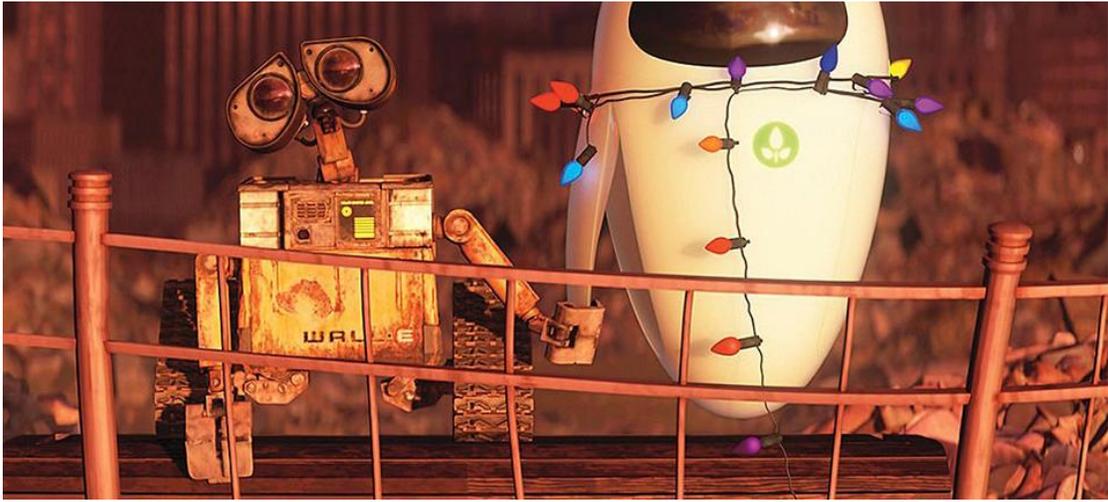


THE PALEY CENTER FOR MEDIA

PALEY EDUCATION

What We're Watching





Greetings from The Paley Center for Media's Education Department!

Welcome to the latest installment of our newsletter, "What We're Watching." During this unprecedented time, we thought we would reach out to our community with some tips and ideas for consuming media with your kids! It's inevitable that screen time is going to increase in the coming months and so we're here to help! In each newsletter we are highlighting a different theme that connects to two selected programs, one for younger kids and one for older kids, each with related activities.

Consuming media with your kids is a perfect jumping off point to making media literacy a part of your everyday lives. Familiarizing yourself with the basics is a great first step. In case you missed it, you can view [our first newsletter about media literacy best practices](#). We also recommend the [National Association for Media Literacy Education's Parents Guide](#)—it's a terrific introduction!

Weekly Zoom Meet-ups Thursdays, 3 to 3:30pm ET

You can join us at our weekly Zoom Meet-up, **Thursdays from 3 to 3:30pm ET**, to chat about the episodes we are watching this week or whatever else is on your mind regarding media literacy and at-home learning.

For connection details, please RSVP to eduny@paleycenter.org.

What We're Watching: Science Fiction

This week we thought it would be fun to focus on one of our favorite genres, science fiction! Many have tried to define the conventions of science fiction. Here's a straightforward definition from Isaac Asimov, "Science fiction can be defined as that branch of literature which deals with the reaction of human beings to changes in science and technology." Or try this more poetic statement from Ray Bradbury, "The one field that reached out and embraced every sector of the human imagination, every endeavor, every idea, every technological development, and every dream." And to round things out, here is Frederik Pohl, "Someone once said that a good science fiction story should be able to predict not the automobile but the traffic jam."

All of this is to say that the genre of science fiction has an incredible buy-in for many students—space travel, robots, aliens—what's not to love?! But with that buy-in comes an equal share of inventive storytelling techniques, social commentary, and creative inspiration for real-life STEM innovation. Oftentimes, it can feel like we are already living in the "near future" posited by so many classic works of science fiction, and especially in times of uncertainty and anxiety, it can be useful to consider how certain stories can simultaneously provide comfort and a call to action.

This Week's Recommendation for Younger Kids: WALL-E

WALL-E (2008)

Recommended for Grades 2+. Available to stream on Disney+

WALL-E follows the story of a trash compactor robot left alone on a future, uninhabited, and polluted Earth to clean up the mess left behind by humans. However, when the planet is visited by a state-of-the-art robot named EVE, everything changes for him (and humanity). All at once the film is a love story, a space adventure, and a wake up call. And while we are recommending the film for younger kids, this one will absolutely be enjoyed by the whole family—older kids and adults will find a great deal of nuance and beauty that may go over the heads of younger viewers.

Viewing Questions

- Who is the main character?

- What is WALL-E's job? Why does he have to do it? What does the name WALL-E stand for?
- What is the setting at the beginning of the film? Describe it. Be specific!
- Who is EVE? What is her job? Why does she have to do it? What does the name EVE stand for?
- Once WALL-E follows EVE into space, how does the setting change? What is it like now? Be specific.
- Who are the other characters we meet on the Axiom spaceship? How do they behave? What do they want? How do they go about getting what they want?
- What does the captain realize when he says "you just needed someone to look after you" to the plant? What does this tell us about the film's message?
- How does the film, especially the ending, make you feel? Does it inspire you? Does it motivate you? Does it worry you?

Extension Activity: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, REGROW!

In the spirit of *WALL-E*, make sustainable, environmental practices a part of your everyday life! Instead of throwing food waste into your garbage can, try composting it or take it a step further and use veggie scraps to start your own kitchen windowsill garden. It's easier than you think!

Using nifty illustrations and helpful photos, [this BuzzFeed article](#) shows you how it's done!

Additional Resources

[Marketplace: "Ten Years Later, What We Learned from WALL-E"](#)

[Bookriot: 25 Universe-Expanding Science Fiction Books for Kids](#)





This Week's Recommendation for Older Kids: The X-Files

The X-Files: "Rm9sbG93ZXJz" (Season 11, Episode 7; 2018)

Recommended for Grades 9+. Available to stream on Hulu

The X-Files is a classic series for sci-fi fans and the recent re-booted seasons brought the story into the present day. This episode is a great place to start because it doesn't rely heavily on the show's considerable mythology. Instead it tells a simple, relatable story—what happens when the technology you rely on stops working for you and, in fact, conspires against you. A quick note for older kids: it would be a good idea to watch *WALL-E* and this episode to engage in a compare/contrast viewing exercise.

Viewing Questions

- What do you learn in the cold open of the episode? How does this information connect to the rest of the story?
- What is the setting at the beginning of the episode? Describe it.
- What are the two main characters, Mulder and Scully, doing? How are they behaving? What are they focused on?
- "Who" is running the restaurant?
- What happens once the characters leave the restaurant? What are the problems that occur? What is the solution?
- How do the events of the episode emotionally impact the viewer?
- How does the episode end? What does Mulder mean when he says, "We have to be better teachers." How is this connected to the cold open?
- Compare and contrast this episode with *WALL-E*. Is there anything that these two stories have in common? What are the differences? How do you explain the similarities and differences (i.e. - science fiction narrative conventions, artificial intelligence, use of silence/space, target audience, message, etc.).

Extension Activity: Creative Writing

Flex your creative muscles to write a sci-fi story of your own! If you feel artistically inclined, add illustrations or graphic novel-style storyboards.

Here are [fifteen writing prompts](#) to help you get started.

For an in-depth look on how to read, interpret, and ultimately create comic books and graphic novels, check out [Scott McCloud's Understanding Comics](#).

Additional Resources

[Vox: "The X-Files Season 11 is Better at Being Black Mirror Than Black Mirror is"](#)

[Studio 360: American Icons 2001: A Space Odyssey](#)

Even though we're not talking about *2001* specifically in this newsletter, we had to include this wonderful deep dive into, arguably, the pinnacle in science-fiction filmmaking. Both *WALL-E* and "Rm9sbG93ZXJz" owe it a huge debt, both in style and substance.

More from Paley Education

We have also introduced several new online learning opportunities to our website. Follow these links for more details!

[Tooned In to Animation](#)

[The Fine Art of Persuasion: Television and Advertising](#)

[The Thirty-Second Candidate: Political Advertising on Television](#)

[Red Scare: The Cold War & Television](#)

As always, if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, don't hesitate to reach out to us at eduny@paleycenter.org.

Happy viewing,

Rebekah Fisk, Director of Education

Caroline Quigley, Senior Manager of School & Family Programs

Support the Paley Center

We hope this inspires you to watch and learn together in a new way at home! The Paley Center is here for you and, now more than ever before, we would deeply appreciate your support.

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