SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTIONS
THE CONVENTIONS OF SCIENCE FICTION

Setting - Time: The future, an alternative timeline, or an historical past that contradicts historical records.

Setting - Place: Outer space, other worlds, or alternative versions of earth.

Narrative Elements: The development and/or application of:
  a) new technology (e.g. nanotechnology, robots, spaceships)
  b) new scientific principles (e.g. time-travel)
  c) new political systems (e.g. dystopian/utopian societies)

Science Fiction Conventions

Symbolism: Futuristic props, costume and setting that represent the scientific advancement at the centre of the film.

Narrative Elements: Conflict between good and evil.

Film Techniques: Special effects

Film Techniques: Close Ups of futuristic technologies/ scientific elements.
SETTING – TIME/PLACE

TIME - The future, an alternative timeline, or an historical past that contradicts historical records.

PLACE - Outer space, other worlds, or alternative versions of earth.

WHY IS IT USED?

It gives a different setting to the present, allowing viewers to see the narrative from a more neutral perspective. “It places the unfamiliar and alien in the context of the familiar”
NARRATIVE CONTENT

The development and/or application of:

• a) new technology (e.g. nanotechnology, robots, spaceships)
• b) new scientific principles (e.g. time-travel)
• c) new political systems (e.g. dystopian/utopian societies)

WHY IS IT USED?

It is used to create a dialogue between these new ideas (technology, scientific principles, and political systems) and the technological/scientific imagination of the viewers.
Conflict between good and evil.

WHY IS IT USED?

This is a technique that is often used to comment on conflicts within society, in particular to comment on the relationships either between different countries or cultures within a nation.
SYMBOLISM OF FUTURISTIC ELEMENTS

Futuristic props, costume and setting that represent the scientific advancement at the centre of the film.

WHY IS IT USED?

- SciFi films seek to make us believe in the images we are viewing. They use somewhat familiar elements of technology in a fictional way that helps to make the connection between fiction and reality.
- The use of fictional science elements are used to enable pivotal developments in the plot, in particular they generally enable the protagonist to obtain the “MacGuffin”.
FILM TECHNIQUES

Close Ups of futuristic technologies/ scientific elements.

WHY IS IT USED?

Emphasises the importance of the technology/science to the plot.

Special effects

WHY IS IT USED?

Helps to make the film-world more realistic and continue the dialogue between the new ideas these special effects enhance and the technological/scientific imagination of the viewers.
COMPARE THESE CONVENTIONS...

You will be creating a chart that compares how each of these conventions are used in the following films:

• 2001: A Space Odyssey
• Star Wars: A New Hope
• Terminator 2: Judgement Day
• In Time
• another science fiction film of your choice
CONVENTIONS DATA

For each convention, answer the following questions:

• Compare how the conventions are used in each film.

• Does its use change over time? How? Give examples.