

**PREDICTING
THE FUTURE
LESSON PLAN**

FUTURESTATES



**[C] COMMUNITY
CLASSROOM**
ENGAGING STUDENTS AND EDUCATORS THROUGH FILM

PRESENTED BY:



FUTURESTATES.TV



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COMMUNITY CLASSROOM is an innovative education resource providing short documentary video content and accompanying curricular materials, lesson plans, and homework assignments to high school and community college instructors and youth-serving community-based organizations. Film modules are drawn from documentaries scheduled for broadcast on the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*. Content is grouped into subject specific segments that correspond to lesson plans and educational activities. All COMMUNITY CLASSROOM lesson plans are designed with key education standards in mind, and are available free of charge online, along with the film modules.

COMMUNITY CLASSROOM is a program of the Independent Television Service, created with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Lesson plans were developed with guidance from the American Association of Community Colleges, KQED Education Network, National Association for Media Literacy Education, National Council for the Social Studies, National State Teachers of the Year, and PBS Teachers.

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Introducing the Future

Lesson Plan Overview

The films that make up the FUTURESTATES series explore possible future scenarios through the lens of today's global realities. They are not, in a literal sense, science-fiction films, but they do make predictions based upon how they interpret the present. Each of the lessons that are a part of the curriculum for this site ask students to use a "Predict-O-Meter" to examine predictions about the future related to the films. Before engaging with the films, it might be worthwhile to explore the role of predictions and ask why humans always seem to want to project themselves into the future.

Target Audience

This lesson is designed for high school students of all ability levels.

Total Duration

This lesson should take 1-2 day, depending on the class.

Procedures

1. Put the word "prediction" on the board and ask students to freewrite about the word: what does it mean, when do you do it, why do you do it? As an extension, you could show students the trailer for one of the films from the FUTURESTATES series and ask students to make a prediction about the film's probable themes and plot.
2. Direct students to look over the Famously Wrong Predictions sheet. Ask them to choose two or three incorrect predictions and explain how they know the predictions were wrong. This might be best done in pairs or small groups. Be sure to ask students to consider the evidence that makes the predictions wrong.
3. Ask students to complete the Literary Predictions survey. (All of the examples except for the *Harry Potter* example are true.) At this point, take a couple of minutes to show students the short clip at the top of the FUTURESTATES homepage, which acts as an introduction to the film series and includes a series of rhetorical questions. Ask students to consider each rhetorical question presented in the film clip.
4. Next, ask students to make some of their own predictions, starting with personal ones and moving to political and world predictions, using the Your Predictions sheet. Then, working with a partner, students should evaluate one or more of each other's world predictions using the Predict-O-Meter sheet. The predictions that seem most likely to come true should be shared with the rest of the class. The class can discuss the evidence that makes the prediction seem likely to come true.
5. As a wrap up, ask students to return to their original freewrite on the word "prediction" to see what else they can add after considering the various topics explored in this lesson.



Famously Wrong Predictions

"Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons."
-- *Popular Mechanics*, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers."
-- Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943

"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."
-- Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us."
-- Western Union internal memo, 1876

"The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?"
-- David Sarnoff's associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920s.

"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out."
-- Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible."
-- Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, 1895

"Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try and find oil? You're crazy."
-- Drillers who Edwin L. Drake tried to enlist to his project to drill for oil in 1859

"Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value."
-- Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre

"Everything that can be invented has been invented."
-- Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, U.S. Office of Patents, 1899

"Louis Pasteur's theory of germs is ridiculous fiction."
-- Pierre Pachet, Professor of Physiology at Toulouse, 1872

"The abdomen, the chest, and the brain will forever be shut from the intrusion of the wise and humane surgeon."
-- Sir John Eric Ericksen, British surgeon, appointed Surgeon-Extraordinary to Queen Victoria 1873

"640K ought to be enough for anybody."
-- Bill Gates, 1981

"\$100 million dollars is way too much to pay for Microsoft."
-- IBM, 1982

"Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?"
-- H.M. Warner, Warner Brothers, 1927

(Quotes retrieved from: <http://wilk4.com/humor/humore10.htm>)



Literary Predictions

Sometimes a writer can envision something that eventually comes true in the future. Science fiction writers have long imagined things such as space travel, time machines, and lasers. Look over the following statements about some literary predictions and identify each as True or False.

- _____ The word robot was invented by Karel Capek, a Czechoslovakian playwright, in 1921.
- _____ Geostationary communications satellites were first proposed by science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke in 1945.
- _____ Author Philip K. Dick included the first computer touch screens in his short story "Minority Report" in 1956.
- _____ Flip phones were inspired by the Gene Roddenberry TV series *Star Trek*.
- _____ Department of Defense researchers liked the idea of an Invisibility Cloak in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, so they developed a prototype that was tested by the US military.
- _____ The word "cyberspace" was coined by science fiction novelist William Gibson in his 1982 story "Burning Chrome" and popularized by his 1984 novel *Neuromancer*.

What are some films, novels, stories, or TV shows that make predictions about the future? Identify one or two that seem to portray a realistic view of the future. Explain why.

In each of the examples above, creative writers were able to envision a technological development before scientists and engineers could make it happen. What technology would you like to see developed to address a current need?

Why do artists, including writers and filmmakers, like to envision the future?



Your Predictions

What are some of your predictions in the following categories? What evidence do you have to support these predictions? The first box in each section includes an example.

TYPE	PREDICTION	EVIDENCE/REASON FOR YOUR PREDICTION
PERSONAL	I think that I will graduate from high school and go to college.	I am getting good grades and my family is saving money for me to go to college.
LOCAL AND/ OR AMERICAN POLITICS	President Obama will not be reelected in 2012.	He is trailing in many polls and the economy shows few signs of improving anytime soon.
THE WORLD	Electric cars will become more common than gas-powered cars by 2015.	The price of oil is continuing to rise and the technology for long-lasting batteries is improving.



Predict-O-Meter

Name: _____ Partner: _____

Briefly describe one of your predictions: _____

Now, evaluate your partner's prediction using the following chart:

	No 1	Somewhat 2	Yes 3	Don't know 0
Is the prediction based on scientific possibilities?				
Do known events in the past support the prediction?				
Is this prediction plausible? (This is your opinion.)				
Total: (add column)				

Overall Total (all columns) = _____

So, is this a realistic prediction? What is best the evidence in its favor? What evidence works against it or is not yet known?

Imagine a movie or a book in which this prediction appears. Describe what the movie or film might be about.



LESSON PLAN CREDITS

CURRICULA WRITER

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John Golden is currently a curriculum specialist for high school Language Arts in Portland, Oregon. He is the author of *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom* (NCTE, 2001) and *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries and Other Nonfiction Texts* (NCTE, 2006). John has delivered presentations and led workshops around the country in order to help teachers use film actively in the classroom as a way for students to improve their reading, analytical and critical thinking skills.

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About FUTURESTATES:

Imagining tomorrow's America today, FUTURESTATES is a series of independent mini-features – short narrative films created by experienced filmmakers and emerging talents transforming today's complex social issues into visions about what life in America will be like in decades to come. The first season of FUTURESTATES debuted in March 2010, and is available online at futurestates.tv.

About ITVS:

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting itvs.org. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

