

Three Tomorrows

Aims

- To give students a taste of all three futuristic stories.
- To explore students' ideas about the future of mankind, and compare them to those presented in the stories.

1 Tell students that they're going to find out about a book called *Three Tomorrows* which contains three short stories. Ask them what kind of story they think they are with a title like that.

Answers: open/science fiction/futuristic.

Elicit or tell them that they are stories about the future, and ask them to get into pairs and make a list of the kinds of things they expect in stories about the future. You may want to ask them to think about films and TV programmes they've seen, or books and newspaper/magazine articles they've read recently on the topic. Call back suggestions from the whole class and list them on the board.

Possible answers: space travel; special electronic inventions; robots to help humans; different ways of working and travelling; medical technology; computer advances.

2 Story 1: "Spam" (England 5 years from now)

a Elicit or explain the meaning of 'spam'. (Spam is all the unwanted emails you get trying to sell things, saying you'll get rich, asking for your bank details, etc.)

Ask them to give you examples of different types of computer spam and list them on the board.

b Ask students to read Extract 1 and say what happens about spam in the story.

Answer: Some free software stops the problem with spam.

c Ask students if they know what a computer 'virus' is – help them if they're not sure.

Answer: It's a program which gets into your computer via emails or the Internet, and which can stop your computer working well, or make you lose information.

Ask them to read Extract 2 and tell you what happens after the free program has removed the spam.

Answer: They get emails from an internet shopping company and start buying things they don't want.

Ask students what they think has happened. Ask if they can make a connection between the first extract and the second.

Answer: The free software has included a virus that affects people and makes them buy things.

Ask them what they think happens next.

d The word 'virus' is an everyday word being used in a computer context. Ask students if they can think of other words used in computing which have a different meaning in general English (e.g. *bug, crash, memory, menu, mouse, window*, etc.). Ask students to work in pairs to make up sentences using each of these words in both its everyday and its computing context. Teach extra vocabulary as necessary or ask students to use their dictionaries to help.

e Ask students to get into groups of four and decide what other problems – apart from 'spam' – the technological revolution brings to people. Call back answers from the whole class.

3 Story 2: "A Flower for Lumus" (Paris in 2106)

a Ask students to read Extract 3. Ask them to tell you what they find out about the world in 2106.

Answer: open; the waiters are not real people – they are some kind of clone or robot.

b Ask students to think about why Fleur feels the situation in the restaurant is difficult. Ask them what is problematic about working with machines rather than people.

c Ask them to read Extract 4. What else do they learn about the world in 2106?

Answers: people live inside; computers create the outside environments people want.

d Ask students why they think people in 2106 can't live outside. Ask them whether they think the kind of artificial life of the Sun Room is better than real outside life. Why?/Why not?

e Tell students that science fiction authors write their stories based on what they observe happening around them, and how they imagine things could change in the future. In our world we know there are problems with the environment, so maybe in the future we will have to live in a 'virtual' outside world. Ask students to think about other issues/problems in the world that concern us today (e.g. terrorism, nuclear war, pandemics, global warming). How might these problems change the way we live in the future?

4 Story 3: "Zima's Last Dream" (Our world 1500 years from now)

a Ask students to think about how the world has changed in the last 1500 years, and to give you some examples.

Answers: open; but changes in health, housing, transport, communication are obvious areas to discuss.

b Ask them how they imagine the world will be in 1500 years' time.

c Ask students to read Extracts 5 and find out how the world has changed in the story. Why do they think it is so important for the Machines to find out what is in the brains of Old Ones like Zima?

d Ask them whether they think that such a world is possible in the future. How do they feel about the world which is described?

5 Ask students what kind of impression of the future the author gives us in these extracts. Ask them if they feel the same way about the future. Ask students what other possible futures they can envisage. Then they should write a brief outline of their ideas for their own version of "Three Tomorrows".

Three Tomorrows

Extract 1

Two weeks later, Joe looked at the news on the internet and ate his breakfast. His wife, Inez, was there with his fourteen-year-old daughter Louise.

‘Yes!’ he shouted. ‘They did it! This is what we need!’

‘What did they do, Joe?’ [Inez asked].

‘Computer experts can stop spam!’ laughed Joe. ‘That’s what they say in the news. And the good thing is – it isn’t going to cost us anything!’ . . .

Millions . . . got the free software and used it to stop spam. It worked. People only got the emails that they wanted. Everybody was happy. Spam was gone.

Extract 2

When Louise was on holiday, her parents heard some news about a new internet shopping company . . . That evening, Joe and Inez read the emails from the company. Lots of people from all over England read the emails. Everyone wanted the cheap prices . . .

Three weeks later

Inez looked at her new salad bowl and put it on the kitchen table. There were four more bowls on the table. They were all the same . . .

‘What, more things for the garden, Dad?’ laughed Louise . . . ‘Our flat’s on the fourth floor, remember? There’s no garden here!’

‘I just forget when I see them,’ said Joe. ‘I can’t stop. I want to buy them all the time!’

Extract 3

Fleur is in a restaurant with her husband Lumus Chevalier.

A waiter came to their table. ‘More coffee?’ he asked them. The waiter was one of many waiters at the hotel. He wasn’t tall or short, and he had dark hair. All the waiters were just like him. They all looked the same . . .

‘Why don’t they have fat waiters?’ she asked. ‘Or thin waiters? Why do they all look the same? . . . I don’t like looking at them at all. They look like real people. They speak like real people . . . They eat and drink like you and me. But it’s not the same. They’re not real people at all. I don’t like that.’

Extract 4

People had nowhere to walk outside now. It was too expensive. Everybody lived in buildings of some kind . . .

Sun Rooms were big rooms where you went for a walk. Computers made everything. Trees, animals, birds – everything . . . You bought a ticket at the door and asked for the things you wanted to see.

Extracts 5

- a Water everywhere. That’s all Zima can see from the window. She’s high up in a tall building, and all she can see is water. But you can’t drink it. There are too many bad things in it.
- b A thousand years ago the Machines came. The Machines walked and talked. The Machines thought and had ideas. They didn’t like what the Old Ones did.
- c The Machines wanted to know what the Old Ones knew. They needed ideas. Computers didn’t tell them everything. The brains of the Old Ones had many ideas inside them. The Machines wanted their ideas.
- d The Machines do everything they can to make Zima think. They want the pictures in her brain. They want her to dream.