

Writers who predicted the modern world

There are brilliant scientists who come up with new ideas every day. However, a lot of our modern world was first imagined by writers. Here are some of the things we first read about in books, and then saw in real life.



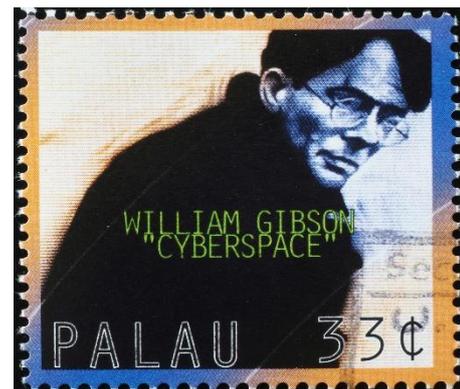
Jules Verne (1828-1905) described how three people will go to the moon almost a hundred years before it happened. He also wrote a novel about an electrical submarine. Another thing he was right about is that people will listen to the news, and not just read them. One guess he got wrong was that we will travel to the centre of the Earth – it is really too hot there.



H G Wells (1866-1946) had the education of a scientist, and became one of the most important early science fiction writers. In his books, he described emails and television, as well as genetic engineering, lasers, and the atomic bomb. He believed people can predict the future. He was wrong about one thing, though: we never got attacked by Martians!



Arthur C Clarke (1917-2008) was a British SF writer, futurist, inventor, and undersea explorer. He thought of many things before they happened, such as the communication satellite, building space ships in orbit, and finding liquid water on one of Jupiter's moons. Unfortunately, his flying houses are probably not going to happen in the 21st century.



William Gibson (1948-) is one of the first people to imagine the internet. He even came up with the word "cyberspace". He described reality shows years before they were on TV, and also predicted virtual reality (VR) and how to use it. He wrote about nanotechnology, viral marketing and drones. He doesn't believe he can tell the future – after all, his books didn't predict mobile phones.

Questions and tasks:

- 1 In your opinion, which of these writers gave the most fascinating predictions?
- 2 What did they get wrong?
- 3 Which writers could your parents meet, and which not?
- 4 Read further about one of these writers, or another one you are interested in.
- 5 Find out more about one of the scientific inventions they predicted.
- 6 What do modern writers imagine the future to be like?