Purdy

Time Travel Ideas

Plots for Consideration

Here are some ideas that will inspire you to write your own short story. Remember, a good outline will help you come up with the final online project for your ‘choose your own fate’ story. A good story goes beyond the average ‘gimmick’ story.

1. FUTURE WAR

A future dictator invades the past. He sends giant war machines into 19th Century London, Paris and Washington, and he demands that all world leaders surrender to him. It’s up to a team of time traveling heroes to stop him.

2. AS TIME GOES BY

A scientist discovers that he can slow down time in a localized area. He can use this to visit the future (and stop off anywhere along the way), but he can never go back. At first, he uses the device to prolong his own life, spending a day inside the time-bubble as a month passes outside. Later, curiosity compels him to travel into the distant future in search of new wonders and a fresh start.

Our protagonist finds a future world full of wonders, and he begins to build a new life for himself. But when things start to go wrong, he finds himself traveling forward yet again. Eventually, the urge to travel forward becomes irresistible as he searches for perfection. Is he really searching for something, or just running from his own past?

As our traveler comes to the end of his life he realizes that, while he has seen more than most people, he hasn’t really lived at all. He’s spent his whole life running.

3. DOING TIME

Using a time machine, a penal colony is established in Earths distant future – a future in which humanity is extinct and the sun is approaching the end of its natural life-cycle. When the end finally comes, do the guards evacuate the prisoners or leave them to their fate?

4. THE MAN YOU USED TO BE

After his wife leaves him, a scientist travels back in time to be with her again. He’s determined to get it right the second time around, and thinks he knows what to do to keep her happy. But when he travels into the past he comes across an obstacle he hadn’t counted on – the past version of himself.

Desperate to be with his wife again, he plots to do the unthinkable – he plans to murder his past self and take his place.

There are two obvious ways in which this story could end, each equally as ironic. 1) He kills his former self and is happily reunited with his wife, but after spending one perfect day together the time paradox begins to kick in and he vanishes into oblivion. 2) He kills his former self, but his wife recognizes that he is not the man he used to be. Because of what he’s been through and what he’s done, he’s changed, and his wife can see it in his eyes. She leaves him again.

5. FUTURE TENSE

Fearing the extinction of humanity is on the horizon, a large group of humans travel into Earths distant future to avoid the catastrophe. They arrive in a time in which the Earth has recovered from the disaster, and in which all traces of human civilization have disappeared. Many animal species have evolved beyond recognition. In this new wilderness, they attempt to build a home.

Knowing that the end of human civilization is near, people are desperate to travel to the future colony. With a limited number of places available, people fight for the last remaining passes. Eventually, the future colony finds itself with too many mouths to feed.

6. PAST PARTICIPANTS

With the destruction of Earth imminent, humanity begins colonizing the distant past. The colonization effort slowly begins to interfere with the timeline. Each group of colonists that arrives from the future has experienced a different version of history, with increasingly interesting results.

One group of time travel colonists is from a fascist timeline in which the Nazis won the Second World War, and they try to take over the colony. Another group reports having found the remains of the colony during a future archaeological dig, indicating that the colonization effort will eventually fail.

7. POPULATING ZION

A team of scientists rescue Jews from Nazi extermination camps by transporting them forward in time just before the moment of their deaths. Nazis are confounded when they open the doors to gas chambers and find that their victims have mysteriously vanished. In the future, thousands of rescued Jews struggle to understand what has happened to them, and they begin to hail the lead scientist as their Messiah.

8. TIME ME UP, TIME ME DOWN

After inventing a time machine, a scientist travels into his own future where he meets his beautiful future wife. Back in his own time, he meets his future wife for the first time (for her at least), but she isn’t interested in him. He tries his hardest to impress her but fails. How can this be when they are meant to be together?

Determined to win her heart, he travels back to their first meeting over and over again, trying something different each time. He even visits her past in an attempt to learn more about her, but nothing works. Becoming increasingly obsessed, he eventually resorts to kidnapping her. He takes her forward in time to show her their future life, but his actions have drastically changed the timeline.

9. FINAL INTERVIEW

A time travel agency sends a man to interview famous historic figures just hours before they die. The interviews are not only important to historians, they have also become a form of popular entertainment. After interviewing countless historic figures over a long and distinguished career, our protagonist has become something of a celebrity himself. One day, a younger man arrives at his home insisting that he be allowed to interview the protagonist. The protagonist realizes that the younger man is his future replacement, and that he himself is soon to die.

10. JESUS VS THE TIME POLICE

The technology needed for time travel exists, but it has been outlawed by most of the world’s governments. A special police unit or federal agency uses specialist equipment to track down illegal time travelers and prevent them from damaging the timeline.

Some of the time travelers are attempting to alter their own past for personal gain, others are rich tourists seeking a thrilling but illegal encounter with the past. One day, however, they track down a time traveler who has managed to evade them for several years. He has been living in the past for all this time, and he claims to have become an important historical figure. Doing a little research, they determine his claims to be true. The time traveler has had a profound effect on the timeline, and undoing his actions might have profoundly negative consequences. He has written himself into history – a history that the time-police have always accepted to be true.

The illegal time traveler might be a famous general, monarch, or president. He might even be a religious figure, such as Jesus (as such, he may not have had an entirely positive effect on history, but a profound one nonetheless). If the illegal time-traveler is Jesus, might his ascension to heaven actually be his forced return to his own time, staged by the time-police? The time-police are faced with a dilemma – set the timeline straight and undo his actions without knowing what the result might be, or allow him to continue living in the past.