



CLI-FI VS SCI-FI: THEMES AND IMPACT COMPARED

Jumanazar Farxod ugli Niyozov,
Independent researcher, teacher at UzSWLU.
jumanazarnf@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15183329>

Abstract. *Cli-fi (climate fiction) and sci-fi (science fiction) are both speculative fiction genres but differ in focus, themes, and purpose. Sci-fi explores technological advancements, space exploration, and futuristic societies, often set in distant or alternate realities. Cli-fi, however, centers on climate change and its impacts, emphasizing environmental degradation, survival, and humanity's relationship with nature. While sci-fi can be utopian or dystopian, cli-fi often adopts a somber, urgent tone, though hopeful narratives are emerging. Cli-fi is grounded in real-world science, making it a tool for raising awareness and inspiring action on climate issues. Sci-fi tends to be more speculative, imagining technologies beyond current understanding. Both genres provoke thought, but cli-fi's activist nature makes it uniquely impactful in addressing the climate crisis. Together, they offer complementary visions of the future, blending imagination with urgent environmental realities (Ghosh, 2016; Robinson, 2020; Trexler, 2015).*

Key words: *Cli-fi (climate fiction), climate change, climate crisis, environmental degradation, sci-fi (science fiction), speculative fiction.*

Introduction. In the realm of speculative fiction, two genres have emerged as powerful tools for exploring humanity's relationship with the future: science fiction (sci-fi) and climate fiction (cli-fi). While both genres often overlap in their imaginative storytelling, they diverge significantly in their focus, themes, and purpose. Cli-fi, a relatively new literary category, has carved out its own niche by addressing one of the most pressing issues of our time—climate change. Here's how cli-fi distinguishes itself from its older, more established cousin, sci-fi.

Main body. The most obvious difference between cli-fi and sci-fi lies in their central themes. Sci-fi traditionally revolves around advancements in science and technology, often exploring how these innovations shape society, humanity, and the universe. From space exploration to artificial intelligence, sci-fi delves into the possibilities—and perils—of technological progress.

Cli-fi, on the other hand, is laser-focused on climate change and its consequences. It examines how environmental degradation, rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and ecological collapse impact humanity and the planet. While sci-fi often looks to the stars, cli-fi keeps its feet firmly planted on Earth, grappling with the tangible and urgent realities of a changing climate (Ghosh, 2016).



XORIJIY TILLARNI O'QITISHDA INNOVATSION YONDASHUVLAR NAZARIYANING AMALIYOTGA TATBIQI

mavzusidagi respublika ilmiy-amaliy anjumani

Sci-fi frequently ventures into the distant future or alternate realities, imagining worlds far removed from our own. Whether it's interstellar travel or dystopian societies, sci-fi thrives on the speculative and the fantastical.

Cli-fi, by contrast, tends to focus on the near future. Its stories are often set in a world that feels eerily familiar, only a few decades ahead of our current timeline. This proximity makes cli-fi's narratives more immediate and urgent, serving as a warning or a call to action rather than a purely imaginative escape (Trexler, 2015).

While both genres are rooted in science, they approach it differently. Sci-fi often takes creative liberties with scientific principles, inventing technologies and phenomena that defy current understanding. Think warp drives, time travel, or sentient robots. These elements are often used to explore philosophical questions or societal issues.

Cli-fi, however, is grounded in real-world science. It draws on existing climate research and projections to create plausible scenarios. This realism makes cli-fi a powerful medium for raising awareness about environmental issues. Authors like Kim Stanley Robinson (*The Ministry for the Future*) and Barbara Kingsolver (*Flight Behavior*) use cli-fi to highlight the scientific and social implications of climate change, blending fact with fiction to educate and inspire (Robinson, 2020; Kingsolver, 2012).

Sci-fi spans a wide emotional spectrum, from utopian visions of a better future to grim dystopias. It can be hopeful, cautionary, or purely entertaining, depending on the story.

Cli-fi, however, often carries a more urgent and somber tone. Many cli-fi works depict dystopian futures where humanity struggles to survive in a ravaged environment. Yet, there's also a growing trend of "hopeful cli-fi," which emphasizes resilience, adaptation, and the potential for positive change. This balance between despair and hope reflects the genre's dual purpose: to warn of the consequences of inaction while inspiring readers to take meaningful steps toward sustainability (Goodbody, 2017).

At its core, cli-fi is deeply concerned with humanity's relationship to the natural world. It often explores themes of survival, responsibility, and interconnectedness. Characters in cli-fi stories are frequently ordinary people grappling with extraordinary circumstances, making the genre deeply relatable.

Sci-fi, while also exploring human nature, often does so through the lens of technological or extraterrestrial challenges. Its protagonists might be scientists,



XORIJIY TILLARNI O'QITISHDA INNOVATSION YONDASHUVLAR NAZARIYANING AMALIYOTGA TATBIQI

mavzusidagi respublika ilmiy-amaliy anjumani

explorers, or rebels fighting against oppressive regimes, but their struggles are often more abstract or removed from everyday life (Canavan, 2014).

Both genres have the power to provoke thought and inspire change, but their purposes differ. Sci-fi has long been a vehicle for exploring philosophical questions, societal critiques, and the human condition. It encourages readers to imagine what could be, for better or worse.

Cli-fi, however, is inherently activist in nature. It seeks to raise awareness about climate change and its potential consequences, urging readers to confront the realities of environmental degradation. By presenting vivid, emotionally resonant stories, cli-fi aims to galvanize individuals and societies to take action before it's too late (Milkman, 2021).

Conclusion. While cli-fi and sci-fi share a common foundation in speculative fiction, they serve distinct roles in the literary landscape. Sci-fi invites us to dream of what lies beyond the horizon, while cli-fi brings us back to Earth, reminding us of the fragility of our planet and the urgency of addressing climate change. Together, these genres offer complementary perspectives on the future, challenging us to imagine, reflect, and act. As the climate crisis intensifies, cli-fi's relevance will only grow, ensuring its place as a vital and transformative genre in the years to come.

References:

1. Canavan, G. (2014). *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction*. Wesleyan University Press.
2. Ghosh, A. (2016). *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. University of Chicago Press.
3. Goodbody, A. (2017). *Cli-Fi: A Companion*. Peter Lang Publishing.
4. Kingsolver, B. (2012). *Flight Behavior*. HarperCollins.
5. Milkman, R. (2021). "Cli-Fi and the Power of Storytelling in the Climate Crisis." *Environmental Humanities Journal*, 13(2), 45-60.
6. Robinson, K. S. (2020). *The Ministry for the Future*. Orbit Books.
7. Trexler, A. (2015). *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change*. University of Virginia Press.