

LOOKING AT STEM'S IMPACT ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN



THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION

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About Me and My Journey to AAR

Hello and welcome to the AAR Student Showcase! My name is Caroline Bailey, and I'm a senior at Palo Alto High School. My AAR project is in the field of English and creative writing.

I've been interested in creative writing for years, and I'm always looking for ways to pursue it at Paly through projects and course selections. I applied to AAR unsure if the program could accommodate a student interested in creative writing, and was thrilled when they found a mentor to work with me.

My project consists of planning, writing, and editing a young adult science fiction novella, entitled *RS8-02*. I've recently become interested in incorporating STEM fields into my fiction writing, which is why I chose to write a work of science fiction—this genre has the potential to explore how the advancements of science and technology affect who we are as people, and I've tried to weave that idea into my work throughout this process.

About My Novel, *RS8-02*

Setting

Centuries in the future, humans have colonized seventy-eight diverse planets, spreading themselves across the universe. As each of these new worlds becomes increasingly distinct, a common religion arises, binding them all together. Called Monoworldism, this religion emphasizes the importance of humanity's common origin on the planet Earth, instilling a sense of unity in people from all backgrounds.

My novel takes place on one of these new planets—a world known only as RS8-02, which was classified as a "junk planet" after its resources were used and then depleted. RS8-02 serves as a giant space dump, and living on the planet's surface is against Universal law.

The main characters in my novel are part of a tribe of "Junkies," who squat on RS8-02 illegally. Scavenging the garbage and ruined cities around them, they find hidden gems and valuable antiques to sell on neighboring planets.

Plot

Sam Wywonga, an employee of the Terraforma Corporation, expects her trip to the junk planet RS8-02 to be routine and uneventful. But then she stumbles upon the Junkies, a community of illicit space traders, who offer to adopt her into their way of life. As Sam becomes increasingly bound to the Junkies, she struggles with her conscience, wondering whether she can really turn this small but vibrant community into the authorities.

Teenagers Roach, Beetle, Tabitha and Thomas have lived largely uneventful lives amongst the Junkies for years. But Sam's arrival, in addition to the discovery of unexpectedly profitable antique jewelry, leads them deeper and deeper into the universe's expansive black market and a dangerous tangle with one of that market's most powerful groups—the Costerro drug cartel.

RS8-02 is a story of escaping the past, finding love and friendship, and above all, discovering the incredible blessing of being afforded a second chance.

Main Characters

RS8-02 is narrated in first person point of view, alternating between the novel's five main characters. A brief description of each character and an excerpt of their narration is included below.

Sam: A twenty-one year old Terraforma employee, who stumbles upon the Junkies by accident.

"I've lost count of the days since I've seen another human being, which is never a good sign. It keeps reminding me of a lecture from Jim, back when I was in training: *When you're alone, Samantha, you can't afford to lose track of anything. Check your food stores. Check your ammunition. And for Kritfa's sake, check the time!*"

Roach: An extroverted nineteen year old who has lived with the Junkies since he was born.

"Sam's eyes widen. 'You live on RS8-02? You expect me to believe that?'
'Yes,' I say, shrugging. 'Why else would we be here?'
Sam seems to consider that. Her eyes look slightly glazed, like she's thinking too fast, and (probably) like she's fabricating a lie. 'If you live here,' she starts again slowly, 'then you can help me. My ship crashed here a week ago...'"

Beetle: A girl struggling to cope with her traumatic past.

"The corridor seems to dead end into a wall, and Sam turns to Roach. 'Did we take a wrong turn somewhere?' she asks, pseudo-politely. Her disbelief reminds me of the first time I came here, almost 5 years ago. No. Slam door, throw away key. The past vanishes. I count to keep the memories at bay, noticing the 1, 2, 3, 4 light strips still visible behind me, the 1, 2, 3 people standing in a quiet corridor. This is present, this is now. I Roach. I Sam. I me. I'm still here. Inhale, exhale. Focus."

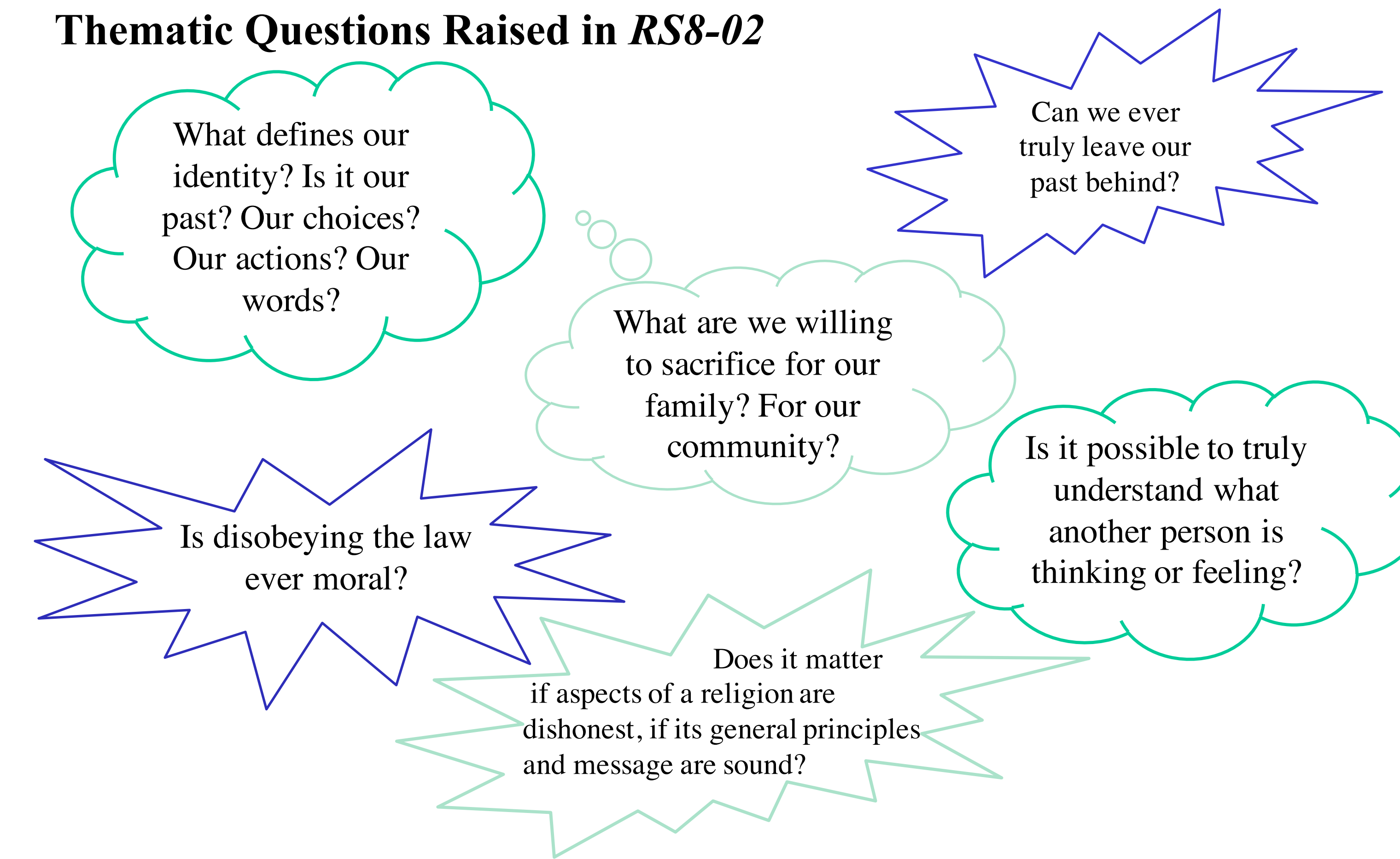
Tabitha: An independent-minded eighteen year old girl who ran away from home at age nine with her brother.

"If this whole save-the-pretty-girl thing blows up in all of our Kritfa-cursed faces, I am not taking the fall for it. Any of it. I swear, if Pete sentences me to trash-collecting duty again, Roach will pay. I'll eat his entrails for breakfast. And judging by the envy plastered all over her face, Beetle is going to help me do it. Which is no surprise—this Sam girl is gorgeous. Mind-numbingly beautiful. I'm trying pretty hard not think about it, actually, an act of human decency which Roach is clearly not joining me in."

Thomas: Tabitha's twin brother, who suffers from lingering effects of a brain enhancement surgery gone wrong.

"I can feel myself dissolving like skin in acid. It's always this way, when a crowd starts forming. When there are too many people standing around, their Energy jittery and on edge, fizzling like mixed chemicals.
The Junkies start to gather around Roach, Pete, and Sam, and Tabitha pulls me deeper into their Energy. It seethes.
What are you doing? I sign to her, as she steers us behind Mary Anne and Kawal. The feeling of my hands is reassuring. Dissolved people don't have limbs."

Thematic Questions Raised in *RS8-02*



Why AAR is Valuable for the Arts

- Motivates students to focus on one longer project
- Teaches students to receive critical feedback about artistry and craft
- Provides more individualized feedback
- Creates a great mentor/student relationship
- Provides more opportunities at PAUSD for students interested in the arts and humanities
- Teaches time management and intrinsic motivation skills

My Experiences Working With a Mentor

My mentor's name is Margaret Cain, and she is a literacy expert and retired English teacher from Chicago, IL. I've loved getting to work with her—not only is she witty and encouraging, but she's been hugely helpful with grammar, style, characterization and other advice!



"Real writers write the way all of us breathe—as a reflexive imperative."
-Margaret Cain

References

- Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. London: Penguin, 2003. Print.
Middlemarch is a phenomenal, classic example of discrete characterizations, which was recommended to me by my mentor.
- Gardner, John. *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*. New York: A. Knopf, 1984. Print.
Gardner's *The Art of Writing Fiction* is a detailed book about the craft of writing long works of fiction. I used it as the basis for several of my objectives.
- Gilbert, Elizabeth. *Big Magic: Creative Living beyond Fear*. Print.
This is an inspirational book, which I enjoyed reading as a struggled through drafts of my novella.
- Hacker, Diana, Nancy I. Sommers, Thomas Robert. Jehn, Jane Rosenzweig, and Marcy Carbajal Van Horn. *A Writer's Reference*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2007. Print.
This book is an excellent grammar and style reference.
- Kingsolver, Barbara. *The Poisonwood Bible: A Novel*. New York: HarperFlamingo, 1998. Print.
I used *The Poisonwood Bible* as an example of skillfully alternating first person point of views.
- Mandel, Emily St. John. *Station Eleven: A Novel*. Print.
My mentor also recommended this novel to me—it's an excellent work of apocalyptic science fiction.

Objectives...

