

## **Episode Title:** Take Me to Your Writer | Part 2, Writing the Otherworldly

### **Synopsis:**

In Alchemy's 25th episode, "Take Me to Your Writer | Part 2, Writing the Otherworldly," Tim and LeeAnna explore the intricacies of creating aliens that go beyond the typical sci-fi tropes. With their signature humor and philosophical reflections, they discuss how to craft extraterrestrial characters that can challenge human nature, evoke moral dread, and maybe even make us laugh. From the terrifying Xir aliens to the passive-aggressive, snack-obsessed Snark's Xir, the episode delves into the role aliens can play as mirrors to humanity—whether they're pushing our existential buttons or just offering unsolicited advice. Along the way, Tim reflects on his own creative process, reading excerpts from his novel *The Theory of My Wonders*, where animatronic aliens serve as a strange, otherworldly backdrop to very human drama.

### **Podcasts:**

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The Snark's Review: [here](#)

### **Discussion Questions**

*Use these questions to spark conversation and reflection in the classroom:*

- **The Alien as a Mirror:** How do the Xir, as described in the episode, reflect humanity's own flaws and fears? What do their characteristics tell us about our potential self-destructive tendencies?
- **Humor in Sci-Fi:** Contrast the terrifying Xir with the more comical, snack-loving Snark's Xir. How does humor shape the way we view aliens in fiction? What is the importance of creating funny or light-hearted extraterrestrials?
- **Alien Dread and Self-Reflection:** The Xir invoke deep moral dread and force humans to confront their darkest impulses. How can you use an alien species in your own writing to bring out similar psychological or moral conflicts in your characters?
- **The Role of the Alien in the Narrative:** In *The Theory of My Wonders*, Tim weaves aliens into the backdrop of human-driven drama. How can the presence of an alien—whether real or imagined—affect the tone and direction of a story? Can the alien be a subtle force in a narrative, or should it take center stage?
- **Aliens as Catalysts for Change:** Do you think encountering an alien species would cause humanity to change its course, for better or worse? What kinds of societal or individual transformations might occur after such a first contact?

### **Writer's Prompts**

*Creative exercises to help students apply the themes of the topic:*

- **Prompt 1:** Channel Your Inner Snark. Write a story where the main character encounters a funny, quirky alien. Channel the humor of the Snark's Xir—maybe they're passive-aggressive, overly tired, or just here for the snacks. Is your alien mocking human foibles, or is it something else entirely? Make it light-hearted and humorous!
- **Prompt 2:** Aliens in the Background. In Tim's *The Theory of My Wonders*, aliens serve as a backdrop to otherwise very human scenes. For this prompt, imagine a scene between two human characters—whether it's an argument, a love scene, or a romantic dinner. Weave in aliens in the background. How do they reflect or contrast what's going on between the humans? Use their presence to amplify the human drama or to create an absurd distraction.
- **Prompt 3:** Funny Aliens + Human Drama. Take the previous prompt and add some humor: Imagine a romantic dinner scene where aliens are lurking in the background, just doing their own thing. Maybe they're clueless, causing chaos, or simply amusing. How does this funny alien element shift the tone of the scene? What do the humans think about these absurd extraterrestrials crashing their evening?

### **Class Activities**

These activities will help expand on the themes of the episode:

- **Group Discussion:** The Role of Aliens in Storytelling. Split the class into small groups and assign each group a different role for aliens in storytelling (e.g., moral reflections, comic relief, antagonists, symbols of fear). Each group will discuss how aliens can serve that role and provide examples from literature, movies, or TV. Have them share their findings and discuss how they can use aliens in their own writing.
- **Debate:** Funny Aliens. Hold a class debate on the topic: "Which kind of alien makes a more compelling story—one that induces fear and existential dread, or one that uses humor to comment on human nature?" Each side will argue the merits of their chosen alien type, providing examples from fiction. At the end, discuss how both types can serve different functions within a story.
- **Collaborative Alien Story-Building:** In small groups, have students collaboratively write a story about first contact with an alien species. Each student will take turns contributing to the story, but the alien must be woven into the backdrop of the human drama. Whether it's a romantic encounter, a family argument, or a quiet moment in a café, the alien's presence should have an impact—either reflecting the emotional turmoil of the humans or adding absurdity to the scene. The group will read the story aloud at the end of the session.

### **Closing note from the Podcasters, Tim & LeeAnna**

*As we wrap up another episode of *Alchemy*, let's remember the beauty and chaos that exists in the world—and in the stories we create. The alien, in all its forms, offers us the chance to explore the unknown, the frightening, and the ridiculous parts of ourselves. Whether it's an alien species that makes us question our morality or one that makes us laugh at the absurdity of human culture, the*

*possibilities are endless. Keep pushing boundaries, stay curious, and never stop imagining. Because in the end, that's what creativity is all about—finding the strange, the unexpected, and the wildly beautiful in this chaotic world. Keep writing. Keep creating. The universe is yours to explore.*