

Title: AI Takeover

Synopsis:

In this episode of *Alchemy*, Tim and LeeAnna dive into the eerie, weird, and potentially world-altering world of AI in podcasting. They explore how artificial intelligence is starting to affect podcasts, making them glaringly strange. The episode hits briefly on how writers can use AI to drive unsettling or transformational moments for both characters and readers alike.

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Discussion Questions

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

- **How can AI function as a catalyst in a story?** What makes AI an effective catalyst, and what unique challenges or positives does it bring to the narrative?
- **What happens when AI acts as a catalyst for change in a story?** How can it disrupt existing character dynamics or even change the course of the plot? What does this say about human dependence on technology?
- **What role can AI play in creating tension or unease within a story?** How can you use AI to unsettle your reader while keeping them hooked?
- **Is AI a reflection of human nature, or is it its own entity with a separate set of characteristics?** When you write about AI, are you exploring a mirror of humanity, or is AI something completely new and foreign to us?
- **How could AI hallucinate a trend, or story, or idea that gains widespread currency?** What does that tell us about parallels between mischievous AI and mischievous humans, or even mischievous aliens/demons/gods?

Writer's Prompts

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

- **Prompt 1:** The Catalyst of AI. Write a scene where an AI, either directly or indirectly, causes a character to make a drastic, life-altering decision. Maybe the AI provides them with the perfect solution to a problem or manipulates them in subtle ways. How does this influence their future, and what does it say about human dependence on technology?
- **Prompt 2:** AI and Moral Dilemmas. Imagine a world where an AI is tasked with deciding who should receive life-saving resources (a scarce resource like food or medicine). Write a short

story that explores the moral dilemma of the AI's decision-making process and the consequences of those decisions. Do the characters agree with the AI's choices?

- **Prompt 3:** The AI in the Background. Write a story where an AI is a background character, influencing the plot through subtle changes in the environment or interactions between characters. Maybe it's controlling the weather, surveillance, or even small details that gradually shift the story in unexpected directions. How does this AI's influence affect the tension or the pacing of the story?
- **Prompt 4:** AI's Impact on Human Relationships. Write a short scene where an AI has been integrated into human relationships. Maybe it's a therapist bot, a partner's AI assistant, or a digital memory keeper. How does this affect the human's ability to connect with others? Does it help or hinder real human relationships?
- **Prompt 5:** A Future Without Humans. Write a scene set in a future where AI has outlasted humanity. The world is now run by AI, but the machines have developed their own culture, rituals, and sense of self. A single human survivor stumbles upon the AI-run world. What is their reaction? How do they interact with the AI, and what happens next?
- **Prompt 6:** Fake News! An AI puts an important story out into the world, but it's simply not true? What is the story, and what are the consequences for human?. Does the fake story ever get traced back to the unfortunate AI, and with what consequences?

Class Activities

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

- **Group Discussion:** AI as a Catalyst in Storytelling. Break into small groups and discuss the following questions: How can AI disrupt or enhance a narrative, and how does it affect character development? Share any ideas for how AI might be used to shift a plot in unexpected ways.
- **Design Exercise:** AI Character Design. Have each student design an AI character. Consider: What is the AI's purpose or function? How does it interact with the human world? What ethical dilemmas might arise from its presence in a story? Does the AI "feel" human in any way, or does it retain its robotic nature? Write a short scene featuring the AI character in action.
- **Debate:** The Ethics of AI in Creative Works. Divide the class into two groups. One argues that AI should play a central role in creative industries (writing, podcasting, etc.), while the other argues it undermines authenticity and creativity. Discuss the pros and cons, and then debate whether or not AI can - or should - take over creative roles.
- **Collaborative Story-Building:** AI's Role in a Dystopian Future. Collaborate with your classmates to create a short story outline where AI plays a pivotal role in shaping the future. How has AI evolved in this world? How does it interact with humans, and what are the societal consequences of its dominance?

Closing note from the Podcasters, Tim & LeeAnna

Well, that was a fun, unsettling trip into the world of AI podcasting, wasn't it? We've learned that AI isn't quite ready to replace us - thankfully, because let's be honest, no one can mimic our chemistry... or our tendency to make ridiculous jokes about peanut butter in mac and cheese. But hey, AI is creeping into our creative spaces, and it's definitely shaking things up.

As writers, we're not just observers of this technological evolution - we're at the ready to throw our characters into the chaos of AI's growing influence. So, lean into the weirdness, embrace the unexpected, and remember: if you start to believe a bunch of random things that may or may not be true - it's maybe just AI doing what it does best.