



WELCOME TO ALIEN WORLDS

Welcome to Alien Worlds!

I am excited about beginning this book group this fall. And what better way to begin than to read Dune by Frank Herbert? Dune tops most lists of the best science fiction, so we will set our standards high with this first book. Many of you may have read Dune already, but you will find a second reading (or more) deepens your understanding of the book in significant ways. And if you are a Dune scholar, your insights will be very welcome. For those of you who are not familiar with the book, well, you are in for a treat.

Our focus in *Alien Worlds* will be on the ways that science fiction allows us to examine our own world and what it means to be human, but from the distance that placing these issues on another planet gives to us. Arrakis is our world in a different form.

Frank Herbert, like J. R. Tolkien, is one of the great worldbuilders in Science Fiction and Fantasy. If you are not familiar the term, worldbuilding refers to the ability of an author to create a unique and coherent universe in a work of fiction. In other words, the author's universe has a fully thought out culture, religion, history, economic system, and in Dune, a fully thought out ecology which directly shapes the characters and their way of understanding the world. There is a lot of information to unload in this book and Herbert succeeds in doing this while not losing sight of the story and the characters.

And what about the characters? Dune is an epic, so don't be surprised when various characters are recognizable archetypes: the love interest, the warrior, the mentor. Dune is also a coming-of-age story of a young man born to rule, or perhaps to be a god.

As you can see, we will have much to talk about and not enough time to do the book justice. As you read, watch for the epic elements as well as the worldbuilding elements that I describe above. And think about the importance of the theme of ecology. Is Dune (the planet) itself a character? As well, bring any ideas that interest you as you read. We will meet on Tuesday, September 26 at 6:30. Come prepared to revel in discussing Dune. I can't wait!

Dr. Donna McBride