

Chapter Three: The *Star Trek* Universe

"I don't believe in little green men"-- Captain John Christopherⁱ

Since the series began, fans have been writing historical time-lines for *Star Trek*, documenting every major event and reference to Earth's past. In the original series, Roddenberry opted to do away with conventional calendar years in favor of "stardates." Because of intergalactic space travel and different calendars used by different worlds, the Gregorian calendar would be seriously outmoded. The stardate was developed to eliminate the confusion over what day of the year it was on what planet, and therefore no exact Earth date could be assigned to the original series.ⁱⁱ Only in *The Next Generation* are dates actually specified for the development of the United Federation of Planets.

Roddenberry's utopian 23rd century developed from the ashes of the late 20th century. The last of the Earth's "so-called world wars" was the Eugenics Wars, which lasted from 1992 to 1996. In 1993, a group of genetically superior men, the Eugenics or tyrants, seized power in over 40 nations, and had an absolute rule over Earth. The last of the "tyrants" was overthrown in 1996.ⁱⁱⁱ Sometime after the Eugenics War, a nuclear holocaust devastated the Earth and chaos ruled almost until the 22nd century. Twenty-first century Earth was a place of post-atomic courts where the military was controlled by drugs, people summarily executed without a trial, and was considered the second true Dark Age of human culture.^{iv} It is presumed that

during the Eugenics Wars, the United Nations was dissolved since the rise and fall of the "new United Nations" was given as 2036 and 2079 respectively.^v

Sometime between 2079 and 2161, a new order was established but this time under benevolent rule, and these new governments joined together to form the United Earth. Space travel and exploration once again became one of the primary goals of United Earth and their exploration led them to the discovery of new worlds and races. A series of economic and military treaties were signed between Earth and the new worlds which led to the creation of an intergalactic United Nations called the United Federation of Planets (the Federation or UFP) 2161.^{vi}

While the Federation served mostly the economic and diplomatic needs of the member planets, Starfleet was created to be the more militaristic arm of the Federation, combining both space exploration and defense together.^{vii} In the original series, there were only 13 ships in the fleet like the *Enterprise*, and almost all of them were destroyed during the series' three year run. The *Enterprise* was considered a heavy cruiser capable of scientific, diplomatic, and defensive missions. There were more specialized ships, such as scout ships and research vessels, but the heavy cruisers served as an all-in-one type ship so that multiple story lines could be written. In *The Next Generation*, the fleet has grown considerably and it is known that well over 40 ships were in service as late as the end of the third season.^{viii}

By using dates and references made throughout the original series, the

movies, and *The Next Generation*, a basic timeline has been created for *Star Trek*. The first five year mission of the *Enterprise* under Kirk's command happens between 2265 and 2270. *The Wrath of Khan* happens fifteen years after Kirk's encounter with Khan and would occur somewhere around 2282. *The Search for Spock* and *The Voyage Home* happen within months of *The Wrath of Khan* and each other; therefore the dates would be 2283 to 2284. Ten years pass between *The Search for Spock* and *The Undiscovered Country*, placing the events in *The Undiscovered Country* to be around 2293. Two TNG episodes give exact years to when Captain Scott, the original *Enterprise's* engineer, retired and what year the first season of *The Next Generation* takes place: 2294 and 2364 respectively.^{ix}

Besides warp drive and the vessel type, there are several Trek terms that are associated with the series. For instance, when the original series was being planned, the budget didn't allow for the special effects that would be needed to land a starship on a planet. Roddenberry developed the transporter, which dematerialized a person standing on the transporter platform and rematerialized him/her at a given destination and vice versa. Other items include: dilithium crystals are the energy source that powered the ship; phasers are hand held laser guns that had a full range of settings from stun to kill; tricorders are information gathering devices; communicators are hand-held devices that work much in the manner of walkie-talkies; and hyposprays replace old-fashioned needles as a way to inject drugs into a patient.^x

The characters in the original series were not as detailed as the equipment that was used. Disputes over characters' backgrounds and specialties lead to one of the most interesting facets of the *Star Trek* lore-- the debate over what is canon and what is not. When Roddenberry created the *Star Trek* universe, he wrote a series "bible" which listed things that could and could not happen in the show. *Star Trek* had gained so much popularity over the years that novels were being written that gave more information about the main characters that the series ever gave. Fans wanted to make the *Star Trek* more "real" by filling in the void with their own facts and most of them were contradictory. Some had Kirk, Scott, and McCoy married and widowed between the original series and *The Motion Picture*. With each episode and movie, more details were added to the ensemble cast of the original series, including making Kirk's middle name Tiberius and Sulu's fan given first name Hikaru official in *The Undiscovered Country*.^{xi}

In an effort to streamline the confusion over what "really" happened in the *Star Trek* universe and what didn't, Paramount declared that all 79 episodes of the original series were "canon"; that is, the events actually happened. All the movies except *The Final Frontier* are considered canon as well. Neither Roddenberry nor Paramount liked the results of Shatner's screen writing and directing efforts, and have not decided whether or not to acknowledge the events in *The Final Frontier* as canon. All the episodes of *The Next Generation* and the episodes for the upcoming *The Next Generation* spinoff series *Deep Space Nine* are or will be canon. What is

considered "fiction" by Paramount are the novels, comics, TAS, gaming materials, and any fan written material. In a sense, if it wasn't on the screen, then it didn't happen.

Characters used key phrases that became trademarks of the show, such as Spock's "Fascinating," McCoy's "I'm a doctor, not a...," and Scott's "The engines canna take ne more!" Interesting to note is that never once in the original series did a crew member say, "Beam me up, Scotty," which is a well known line from *Star Trek* fandom.

With technology and the regular cast in place, alien races had to be developed. As mentioned in the history of the series, Spock is from the planet Vulcan and represents the only alien in the regular crew. Vulcan was one of the five original governments that founded the Federation and its dry, hot atmosphere and desert-like surface can be seen in the original series's "Journey to Babel," *The Motion Picture*, *The Search for Spock*, *The Voyage Home*, and *The Next Generation*'s "Unification I." They are a pacifistic race who view logic as the ultimate way of living and who feel that emotion is a major character flaw. Once a violent race, a spiritual leader named Surak ushered the Vulcans away from destruction by using logical thinking and shedding emotion. The right-handed, V-shape made between the index and ring finger with the thumb extended is the Vulcan hand salute and the fore finger, index finger and thumb are used for the Vulcan neck pinch--a non-violent way to render someone unconscious. Their traditional greeting is "Peace and long life" and the response is "Live long and prosper."

An offshoot of the early Vulcans were the Romulans, believed to have left the planet shortly after Surak's teachings became a way of life. Both races share a common ancestry, but while the Vulcans are one of the most respectable and noble races of the Federation, the Romulans are one of the most deadly enemies of the UFP. Their ideologies are very similar to the Spartans of ancient Rome because they kill genetically or physically inferior infants, have strong militaristic views, and have strict codes of loyalty among them.^{xii} They are also "aggressive by nature, ruthless in warfare, and do not take captives."^{xiii}

While the Romulans displayed courage and integrity, the greatest adversary of the Federation, the Klingons, are almost the complete opposite. They are guided by personal gain, whether it is achieved through assassination, deceit, or military strength. For the Klingons, "cruelty is something admirable; honor is a despicable trait."^{xiv} For them, war is a way of life and they constantly try to provoke an encounter with the Federation. They have an alliance with the Romulans, and because of that, the Romulans primarily use Klingon weaponry and technology.

The Federation does have peace treaties with both races and "neutral zones" in space that are basically no-man's land on the borders of the Imperial Klingon Empire, the Romulan Star Empire, and the Federation. Intrusion on these zones is enough to provoke both races to war, and the Klingons are most likely to violate that zone.

Klingons went through radical transformations in appearance between

the original series and *The Motion Picture*. During the original series, they had dark hair, heavy eyebrows, and beards and in general were sinister looking, but they still looked a lot like humans. In the opening scenes of *The Motion Picture*, we see a different type of Klingon; this time their foreheads had vertical ridges that went from their noses to the top of their scalps. Their hair was longer and more unkempt while their costumes changed from a mere metallic cloth honor band running from the left shoulder to right side of the waist to actual leather and metal armor. Several fans argue that the changes from the original series Klingons to present-day Klingons are due to the existence of *two* groups of Klingons: the series type and the movie type. There was a civil war between the two types and the movie type, complete with ridges and armor, won. Paramount explains it differently: the budget for makeup design was bigger for *The Motion Picture*.

Perhaps the biggest discrepancy between the original series, the movies, and *The Next Generation* is the Klingons. In the original series, they were despicable, constantly fighting among themselves, and saw honor as a "despicable trait."^{xv} The movies portrayed them being more centralized, calculating, yet still warring between themselves. By the time *The Next Generation* came along, over 80 years had passed since the original series's time. Klingons are no longer enemies of the Federation since they signed an alliance, which has been threatened on more than one occasion. This alliance happened shortly after the defense of the Klingon outpost Narendra III by the *Enterprise-C* against a Romulan sneak attack in 2344 and the

Khitomer Massacre of 2346 when the Romulans completely destroyed a Klingon outpost. Negotiations had begun after the *Enterprise-C* was presumed to be destroyed and all hands dead defending the Klingons and perhaps sealed after the massacre.^{xvi}

In *The Next Generation's* time, the Klingons had taken on more Romulan traits and had completely shed their hatred of "honor." In fact, "modern" Klingon ideologies almost parallel those of pre-industrialized Japan. They have strict codes of honor and extreme loyalty to their Empire to the point of accepting public disgrace in order to maintain the peace within the Empire.^{xvii}

Romulans were altered slightly from their original Vulcan-like pointed ears and slanted bushy eyebrows. Their foreheads became heavier and more lined than in the original series. It was more because of money in the budget rather than the actual evolution of the race.

The Romulans, although changed slightly in appearance, also went under a character revision. While their belief in their own superiority was still intact, their integrity had been lessened a bit. Dealing with the Romulans is compared to "playing a game of chess...move, countermove," and while "Klingons are brutish; the Romulans are satanic."^{xviii} They are still considered one of the most deadly enemies of the Federation, although there are Romulans who want to end the hostilities and return to their Vulcan ancestry.^{xix}

With the Klingons as allies and Romulans still the enemy, Roddenberry

opted to create new aliens instead of using the one established in the original series. They include the Betazoids, the Ferengi, the Cardassians, the Bajorans, and the Borg. Betazoids are one of the more powerful and respected races in the Federation, but more for economics and culture than for military. They are fully telepathic with most of the major races seen in *Star Trek*, but the ability varies from person to person.

Another new race introduced were the Ferengi. At first, they were supposed to be a major enemy to the Federation, but after their first two appearances in first season's "The Battle" and "The Last Outpost," their ferociousness was seen as silliness. Their government and culture employ a caste system based on making a profit, and removal from command can be based on missing an opportunity to make a profit. They are described as "intra-galactic wheeler-dealers," and are compared to 18th and 19th century Yankee traders of Earth because "they sail the galaxy in search of mercantile and territorial opportunity."^{xx} The Ferengi women are not allowed to wear clothing and are seen as property more than actual people.^{xxi} The initial characterization of the Ferengi was in fact so bad that their appearances in subsequent *The Next Generation* episodes were used as comic relief.

Cardassians made their debut in the fourth season episode "The Wounded." They and the Federation had been at war for some time, and the Cardassians used a more terroristic approach to attack. Little is known about the race except that they are every bit as ruthless as the Romulans and that they are directly responsible for the displacement of Bajorans from their

home planet around 2328. The Cardassians have exploited the Bajorans, tortured them, and enslaved them to the point that the Bajorans now use terroristic attacks in an effort to exonerate themselves from Cardassian domination.^{xxii}

The creation of the Ferengi, Betazoids, Cardassians, Bajorans and other races has been overshadowed by one race--the Borg. These part organic, part mechanical lifeforms are the most powerful and deadly foes that *The Next Generation* has ever created. They assimilate life and technology in order to better their collective conscience and not for political or social reasons. Their ships are able to withstand and adapt to any assaults that the *Enterprise* tries to use. The third season cliffhanger and fourth season opener, "Best of Both Worlds I & II," are one of the most popular episodes that *The Next Generation* has made. In these episodes, Captain Picard is assimilated by the Borg and used as an unwilling liaison between the Borg and the Federation. By using Picard's over thirty years experience with and knowledge of Starfleet operations, the Borg easily defeat a Starfleet defense force and go on to Earth while the *Enterprise* crew are helpless to stop them. Only after retrieving Picard from the Borg vessel and accessing the Borg collective conscience, the *Enterprise* crew are able to stop them.

With new allies and enemies, *The Next Generation* also introduced updated tricorders, phasers, and communicators. The phasers looked like mini hand-held vacuum cleaners and the tricorders folded down into a palm-sized box. Communicators replaced the sewn ship insignia on the original

series uniforms and could be activated by touch. The *Enterprise* was totally redesigned from both the original series and the movies, this time allowing for families to stay on board because of the long missions. Uniforms were altered from the original series and movies, thus the attempt to separate the original series and *The Next Generation* continued.

Notes

ⁱThe original series episode "Tomorrow Is Yesterday."

ⁱⁱThe original series did not follow any particular pattern in using stardates except for the four digit-decimal-digit format. However, *The Next Generation's* stardates can be used as an accurate timeline for the series, except for the first season, when the production, stardate, and aired order are not consistent. *The Next Generation* uses a five digit-decimal-digit such as 41823.2 where the first number indicates that it is the 24th century, the second digit what season it occurs, and the remaining numbers how early or late it is in the season.

ⁱⁱⁱThe original series episode "Space Seed," which aired on February 16, 1967, gives the most information about the latter part of the 20th century. There were only 90 surviving Eugenics and they used the sleeper compartments on the hijacked ship as a way to survive from the late 20th century to the mid-23rd century. Sleeper ships allowed each crewmember to be put in stasis and revived at a later date. As mentioned in the history of *Star Trek*, these Eugenics attempted to take over the *Enterprise* in the episode and were exiled to Ceti Alpha V and became the subject of *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*.

^{iv}There is some disagreement between the original series and *The Next Generation*. According to the original series episode "The Omega Glory," Earth escaped a nuclear holocaust, but *The Next Generation's* "Encounter at Farpoint" makes it clear that there was a holocaust. Other *The Next Generation* episodes such as fifth season's "A Matter of Time" refer to Earth's nuclear winters of the late 21st century.

^v*The Next Generation's* "Encounter at Farpoint." This was the first ST episode to graphically describe and show what happened on Earth during the mid-21st century. Four crew members are placed on trial in a historically accurate post-atomic horror court mock-up.

^{vi}*The Next Generation's* "The Outcast" made the founding date of the UFP official in the *Star Trek* universe.

^{vii}David J. Schmidt, et al, *Starfleet Dynamics: A Starfleet Academy Reference Guide and Textbook* Created by Strategic Design (Starfleet Academy Training Command Press, 1992), p. 24.

^{viii}*The Next Generation's* fourth season opener, "Best of Both Worlds II," confirmed that 39 ships were destroyed at Wolf 359 during an invasion by the Borg.

^{ix}There are many time-lines and theories as to when events occurred in the original series and the movies. Only TNG has used actual Earth year dates for history hungry fans, and it is from these dates that the time-line has been created for the original series. The two TNG episodes mentioned are "Relics" and "The Neutral Zone."

^xWhenever a character explains how an instrument works or how to correct a problem using scientific descriptions such as "warp field chamber" or "lateral sensor arrays" that is distinct to the ST universe, it is called technobabble or Trek-nobabble.

^{xi}According to Mark Holtz's "List of Lists," Kirk was christened Tiberius in the TAS episode "Bem." Many fans believed the reason why both Tiberius and Hikaru were canonized TUC is because it is supposed to be the last ST movie featuring the the original series.

^{xii}The original series's "Balance of Terror" gives Trek audiences the first view

of Romulans. The Romulan commander (played by Mark Lenard) is so impressed by Kirk's command abilities that he remarks that in another time and place, they could have been friends. Romulans only appeared in two other original series episodes, "Journey to Babel" and "The Enterprise Incident," but have had numerous appearances during the first five seasons of TNG: "The Neutral Zone," "The Enemy," "The Defector," "Future Imperfect," "Unification I & II," and "Redemption I & II."

^{xiii}Stephen E. Whitfield and Gene Roddenberry, *The Making of Star Trek* (New York: Ballantine books, 1968), p. 256.

^{xiv}Whitfield, p. 257.

^{xv}Whitfield, p. 257.

^{xvi}Two TNG third season episodes, "Sins of the Father" and "Yesterday's Enterprise," give the most information about the Klingon-Federation alliance, although most of it is very vague. It is known that the Federation and the Klingons were at war sometime after the events in TUC and before 2344 from references in "Hide and Q" and "Heart of Glory," both TNG first season episodes.

^{xvii}TNG's "Heart of Glory," "Sins of the Father," "The Reunion," and "Redemption I & II" show the intricacies of Klingon politics. One explanation of the differences between the original series and TNG Klingons is that they are from two separate factions, as mentioned before.

^{xviii}TNG's "Future Imperfect" and Gene Roddenberry, *Star Trek: The Next Generation Writers/Directors Guide Season III* (Los Angeles: Lincoln Enterprises, 1989), p. 56.

^{xix}TNG's "Unification I & II" show a different side of the Romulan culture. Instead of dealing strictly with military personnel, civilians are shown in their every day life.

^{xx}Roddenberry, pp. 52-3 and Larry Nemecek, *TNG-1: A Guide to the First Season of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" Revised 2nd Edition* (Oklahoma: Mystar Press, 1989), p. 60.

^{xxi}TNG's "Menage a Troi."

^{xxii}"The Wounded" and "Ensign Ro." The Cardassian-Bajoran political problems will be one of the focuses of the new series *Deep Space Nine*.