

Star Trek, the Cold War, and Beyond

Art reflecting life

When Gene Roddenberry created the first Star Trek series (in 1966), he based it on the Cold War and events surrounding it. What events were going on in North America that may have influenced Roddenberry?

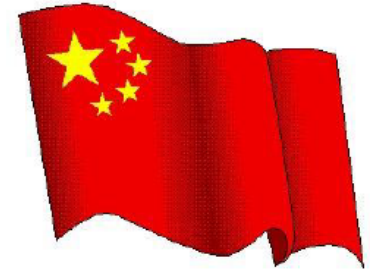
While more common in subsequent years, in the 1960s it was controversial to feature a cast that included a Japanese helmsman, a Russian navigator, a black female communications officer (her kiss with Captain Kirk is often touted as the first interracial kiss shown on television), and a human–Vulcan first officer.

The storylines were loosely based on events going on in the world around him, and were designed to give people hope for the future. If you look closely at the original series (including the movies) you should see some interesting parallels . . .



United Federation of Planets
(Circa 2290)





Star Trek has become a cultural powerhouse, and even represents the idea of “Life imitating Art.” Some examples:

- When the United States created their shuttle program (1972-2011) the first test shuttle was named the “Enterprise.” Fans of Star Trek asked US President Gerald Ford, through a letter-writing campaign, to name the orbiter after the television show's fictional starship, USS Enterprise. The picture at right shows Gene Roddenberry the original cast of *Star Trek* standing in front of the *Space Shuttle Enterprise* in 1976.
- The Star Trek franchise inspired some designers of technologies, including the handheld mobile phone.
- Computer engineer and entrepreneur Steve Wozniak credited watching *Star Trek* and attending Star Trek conventions in his youth as a source of inspiration for co-founding Apple Inc. in 1976.
- Created by President Donald Trump in 2019, the United States Space Force (USSF) is the space service branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. When the USSF unveiled its new insignia and symbols, many people pointed to their similarities with those used by *Star Trek*'s “Starfleet Command.”



- In 2020 the US effort to develop a vaccine to protect against COVID-19 was named *Operation Warp Speed*, which is the brainchild of a Star Trek fan, Dr. Peter Marks. Dr. Peters led the unit at the US Food and Drug Administration which approved vaccines and therapies.

Since its creation in 1966, Star Trek has been reincarnated in the following television series and feature films:

Television Series:

- The Original Series (1966 – 1969)
- The Animated Series (1973 – 1974)
- Star Trek: The Next Generation (1987 – 1994)
- Star Trek: Deep Space Nine (1993 – 1999)
- Star Trek: Voyager (1995 – 2001)
- Star Trek: Enterprise (2001 – 2005)
- Star Trek: Discovery (2017 – Present)
- Star Trek: Picard (2020 – Present)
- Star Trek: Lower Decks (2020 – Present)

Feature Films:

- Star Trek: The Motion Picture (1979)
- Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan (1982)
- Star Trek III: The Search for Spock (1984)
- Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home (1986)
- Star Trek V: The Final Frontier (1989)
- Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country (1991)*
- Star Trek: Generations (1994)
- Star Trek: First Contact (1996)
- Star Trek: Insurrection (1998)
- Star Trek: Nemesis (2002)
- Star Trek (2009)
- Star Trek into Darkness (2013)
- Star Trek Beyond (2016)

 **Justin Trudeau** @JustinTrudeau · Feb 27, 2015
We mourn the loss of Leonard Nimoy. For us #Trekkies he was – and always shall be – our friend. #LLAP



In a tweet, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau mark the death of Leonard Nimoy ("Spock" from the original Star Trek Series) in 2015.



President Obama meets his hero, Star Trek's Nichelle Nichols, in 2012. Both give the Vulcan Salute at the White House.

*It comes as no coincidence that Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country (whose storyline is based on the collapse of the Klingon Empire) was released in 1991 – the same year that witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Empire