

The SAASS "Fiction-a-Day" Book Club

The "Fiction-a-Day" syllabus translates the intellectual rigor and strategic depth of the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) into the world of creative literature. Known colloquially as the "book-a-day club," SAASS challenges its students to master a staggering volume of historical and theoretical texts to prepare them for the complexities of high-level strategic thought.

This parallel curriculum captures the same strategic themes found in SAASS's coursework, but through the lens of historical fiction, high fantasy, and science fiction. While standard military texts and academic monographs present data, theory, and doctrine; fiction offers a visceral re-imagining of the fog and friction of war, the moral weight of command, and the unintended consequences of policy.

1. *The Heroes* by Joe Abercrombie

- **Episode Release (estimated): July 2026**
- **Represents:** SAASS 601 Foundations of Strategy & SAASS 600 Foundations of Military Theory
- **Synopsis:** Over the course of a single three-day battle for a seemingly insignificant hill, the fates of two nations are decided. The story follows a diverse cast across the entire chain of command, from the weary foot soldier to the scheming high commanders, as they struggle with the chaos of combat and the political machinations behind the front lines.
- **The Strategic Tie:** This novel serves as a masterclass in the **Levels of War (SAASS 600)**. It provides a rare, multi-layered look at how a **Strategic** objective (forming a political alliance) is often mangled as it passes through the **Operational** layer (the battle plan) down to **Tactical** execution (the individual soldier's experience). It perfectly illustrates **Clausewitzian friction** and the **nature of war**, demonstrating that even in a world of swords and sorcery, the psychological and structural realities of conflict—fear, pride, and misinformation—remain constant. By focusing on the "Command Dilemma," the book challenges students to analyze the **"General's Genius"** not as a god-like trait, but as the ability to manage limited information, massive egos, and the "fog of war" under the pressure of **SAASS 601's** "Strategic Shock."
- **Note:** *This book is part of a series, but it is a standalone story and requires no prerequisite reading!*

2. *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* by Robert A. Heinlein

- **Episode Release (estimated): August 2026**
- **Represents:** SAASS 601 Foundations of Strategy & SAASS 600 Foundations of Military Theory
- **Synopsis:** A lunar penal colony (Luna) revolts against the heavy-handed rule of Earth (The Nations). Guided by a computer technician, a revolutionary leader, and a sentient supercomputer, the "Loonies" wage a high-stakes war for independence.
- **The Strategic Tie:** This book epitomizes the **Thucydidean** dynamics found in **SAASS 601**, specifically the friction between a declining, overstretched hegemon and a rising, revolutionary challenger. It explores the transition from peace to war through the lens of **Rational Choice**, as the lunar rebels must calculate the "calculus of rebellion" against overwhelming odds. The story illustrates the strategic importance of the "high ground" (gravity wells) as a metaphor for structural advantage, mirroring the course's focus on how social forces, analogies, and cognitive processes assist or lead decision-makers astray during a crisis of statecraft.

3. *Code Name Verity* by Elizabeth Wein

- **Episode Release (estimated): September 2026**
- **Represents:** SAASS 627 Air Power in the Age of Total War
- **Synopsis:** During WWII, a British spy plane crashes in Nazi-occupied France. The story is told through the "confession" of a captured female agent, revealing the intricate web of the Resistance and the brutal reality of the clandestine war.
- **The Strategic Tie:** This novel mirrors the "Conflict/Practice" block of **SAASS 627 (Airpower in Total War)**. While historians like **Richard Overy** provide the macro-level analysis of bombing campaigns, *Verity* provides the micro-view of **Airpower Support to Resistance** and the "Total War" environment where the line between combatant and civilian is non-existent. It captures the **adaptive responses** and emergent anxieties of the era, illustrating the "moral reality" of air warfare when the battlefield encompasses entire populations and the clandestine "behind-the-lines" support required for Allied victory.

4. *A Memory Called Empire* by Arkady Martine

- **Episode Release (estimated): October 2026**
- **Represents:** SAASS 632 Foundations of International Politics
- **Synopsis:** Ambassador Mahit Dzmare arrives at the center of the Teixcalaanli Empire to find her predecessor murdered. She must navigate a complex imperial court to prevent her home station from being annexed, all while battling the seductive power of the Empire's culture.
- **The Strategic Tie:** A perfect case study for **SAASS 632 (International Politics)**, this book explores **Hegemonic Stability Theory** and the role of **Strategic Narratives (Miskimmon/Goddard)**. It illustrates how a state acquires and exercises power not just through military "might," but through "right"—the institutionalization of culture and the creation of a narrative that makes annexation feel like an inevitability. It captures the **Gilpin-esque** theme of change in the international system, showing how an ambassador must use the "E" in DIME (economic and cultural statecraft) to manage transition and disorder without triggering a world-ending conflict.

5. *The Hunters* by James Salter

- **Episode Release (estimated): November 2026**
- **Represents:** SAASS 628 Airpower in the Age of Limited War
- **Synopsis:** Set during the Korean War, the novel follows Cleve Connell, a veteran WWII ace flying F-86 Sabres in "MiG Alley." He must navigate a new kind of air warfare defined by political boundaries, protected sanctuaries, and the frustrating shift from the total victory of his past to the limited objectives of the Cold War.
- **The Strategic Tie:** This novel serves as the definitive fictional proxy for **SAASS 628 (Airpower in Limited War)** and **Conrad Crane's** analysis of the Korean conflict. It masterfully explores the **psychological and strategic shock** of the transition to Limited War, where "victory" is no longer total and where sanctuaries—like the Chinese border—are protected by political decree rather than military necessity. By juxtaposing the "MiG Alley" experience (the pinnacle of air-to-air combat) against the grinding nature of the conflict, Salter forces a confrontation between **Tactical Excellence and Strategic Futility**, questioning whether even the highest level of tactical brilliance contributes to a meaningful political end state. Furthermore, it mirrors the course's focus on **Professionalism and Culture**, illustrating how a military culture built for the "Total War" of WWII struggles to adapt to the friction and constraints of the Cold War environment.

6. *The Mote in God's Eye* by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle

- **Episode Release (estimated): December 2026**
- **Represents:** SAASS 633 Coercion in Theory and Practice
- **Synopsis:** First contact with an alien race leads to a desperate diplomatic and military standoff. Humanity discovers that the aliens' biological drive for expansion makes them an existential threat that can only be managed through permanent, credible containment.
- **The Strategic Tie:** This is a direct proxy for **SAASS 633 (Coercion)**. It illustrates the non-intuitive logic of **Nuclear Deterrence** and **Bernard Brodie's** realization that the only purpose of a modern military is to *avoid* war. It forces students to grapple with the **Security Dilemma**—where two rational actors, both seeking survival, are driven toward a catastrophic outcome unless a coercive balance of terror is maintained. The story maps to **Thomas Schelling's** *Arms and Influence*, focusing on the "threat that leaves something to chance" and the necessity of **credible signaling** when the stakes are planetary survival (xenocide).

7. *The Poppy War* by R.F. Kuang

- **Episode Release (estimated): January 2027**
- **Represents:** SAASS 644 Irregular Warfare
- **Synopsis:** Rin, a war orphan, wins a spot at the elite Sineward military academy. When a Third Poppy War breaks out, she discovers that her conventional training is useless against a genocidal foe, leading her to embrace shamanic, irregular, and catastrophic powers.
- **The Strategic Tie:** This mirrors **SAASS 644 (Irregular Warfare)** and the foundational writings of **Mao Zedong**. It follows the trajectory from a "professional" conventional mindset to the brutal, adaptive logic of **Protracted War**. Rin's journey encapsulates **Stathis Kalyvas's** "Logic of Violence in Civil War" and **Stephen Biddle's** theories on how nonstate actors leverage influence. It forces a discussion on the "character of war" when an actor transitions from institutional military tactics to an asymmetric, "win at any cost" struggle for national survival.

8. *This Is How You Lose the Time War* by Amal El-Mohtar & Max Gladstone

- **Episode Release (estimated): February 2027**
- **Represents:** SAASS 667 Information and Cyber Power
- **Synopsis:** Two rival agents, Red and Blue, travel through time to alter history in favor of their respective warring empires. They begin leaving letters for one another, turning a war of cosmic proportions into a clandestine dialogue.
- **The Strategic Tie:** This is a lyrical exploration of **SAASS 667 (Information and Cyber Power)**. It focuses on the **Weaponization of Narratives (Andreas Krieg)** and the "Cognitive" high ground. The agents' battle is not one of physical destruction, but of **Subversion**—altering the "pictures in our heads" to shift attitudes and behaviors. It illustrates **Cyber Persistence Theory** by showing that the information environment is a space of constant, enduring contestation where the goal is to gain influence and control the flow of "data" to reshape the foundation of an adversary's strategy.

10. *Leviathan Wakes* by James S.A. Corey

- **Episode Release (estimated): March 2027**
- **Represents:** SAASS 665 Space Power
- **Synopsis:** In a colonized solar system, tensions reach a breaking point between Earth, Mars, and the "Belters" of the asteroid belt. A missing girl and a mysterious "protomolecule" become the spark for a system-wide conflict.
- **The Strategic Tie:** This is the primary fictional text for **SAASS 665 (Space Power)**. It provides a visceral look at **Astropolitik (Everett Dolman)** and the unique tactical and logistical constraints of the space domain. The story illustrates **John Klein's** theories on space warfare and **Bleddyn Bowen's** "Original Sin," exploring how the physics of orbits, gravity wells, and cislunar space create a multi-domain environment where the "high ground" is a matter of orbital mechanics rather than mere altitude. It forces students to consider the **Politics of Space Security** in a world where commercial interests and state power are inextricably linked.

9. *The Light Brigade* by Kameron Hurley

- **Episode Release (estimated): April 2027**
- **Represents:** SAASS 660 Technology and Military Innovation
- **Synopsis:** In a future where corporations wage war across the solar system, soldiers are turned into light to be beamed to the front lines. The protagonist, Dietz, begins to experience the war out of chronological order, discovering that the "heroic" struggle is a high-tech deception maintained by those who control the transmission of information.
- **The Strategic Tie:** This serves as the modern replacement for the "Innovation" block (**SAASS 660**). It explores the **Character of War** through the lens of disruptive technology, illustrating how a "Leap-Ahead" capability can fundamentally shatter an organization's understanding of time, space, and truth. It provides a searing look at **Information Power (SAASS 667)** and the **Cognitive Domain**, showing how the manipulation of data can be used to achieve "strategic effect" more efficiently than kinetic force. It challenges students to consider **Stephen Peter Rosen's** theories on innovation within a "New Guard" framework of corporate interests and existential subversion.

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