

3 possible futures for AI — which will we choose?

[listening comprehension questions]

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Level: **** [B1/B2/C1]

Link: https://www.ted.com/talks/alvin_w_graylin_manoush_zomorodi_3_possible_futures_for_ai_which_will_we_choose

Check these words and phrases before listening:

Key vocabulary

- 1) Cybersecurity, VR, semiconductors
- 2) Stanford (university)
- 3) Trillionaire
- 4) Hype
- 5) Silicon Valley
- 6) Kinetic war / nuclear war
- 7) Inflection
- 8) Elysium future
- 9) Mad Max future
- 10) Star Trek option (Vulcans bring peaceful technology)
- 11) Sam Altman (AI executive)
- 12) Myths
- 13) Trajectory
- 14) AGI- artificial generative intelligence
- 15) CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research)
- 16) Displaced people
- 17) Optimist
- 18) Sovereignty
- 19) AI policy paper (3 parts)
- 20) ISS (International Space Station)
- 21) Biased
- 22) Enlightened
- 23) GI Bill for the AI age
- 24) Displacement
- 25) Actionable
- 26) Reskilling
- 27) Industrial revolution
- 28) Proportions
- 29) Four-day workweeks
- 30) Mindset
- 31) Implement
- 32) A glimpse into the future

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TED Talks Test Questions

Aim: *to develop the students' ability to listen to a 10 min+ lecture, to take notes and then use those notes to answer some comprehension questions.*

Lesson Time: *Approximately 1:30-2:00 hours*

1. Lead in

- Ask Students to discuss the 'title' and predict the content of the lecture.
- Ask students to write down key terms / language from their discussions.
- Feed in / check key vocabulary.

Three types of lesson

Lesson #1: [challenging]

1. Students listen once & take notes.
2. Give the students 5 minutes to tidy their notes.
3. Students listen again and add to their notes (use a different **colour** pen).
4. Distribute questions. Set 20-25 minutes to answer.
5. Feedback: distribute or project answers.

Lesson #2: [medium]

1. Students listen once & take notes.
2. Distribute questions: Set 15 minutes for students to answer the questions from their notes.
3. Students listen again and answer the missed questions as they listen.
4. Give the students an extra 10 minutes to consolidate answers.
5. Feedback: distribute or project answers.

Lesson #3: [easier]

1. Distribute questions. Students have 10 minutes to read through the questions.
2. Students listen and answer the questions.
3. Give the students 5 minutes to tidy their answers.
4. Students listen again. They check their answers & answer any missed questions.
5. Give the students 5-10 minutes to tidy their answers.
6. Feedback: distribute or project answers.

3 possible futures for AI — which will we choose?

Take your notes here:

3 possible futures for AI — which will we choose?

Take your notes here:

3 possible futures for AI - which will we choose?

Answer the following questions:

1. What makes Alvin W. Graylin's background in the field of technology unique compared to many others?
2. According to the speaker, what are the three possible futures that AI could lead to?
3. Why do some people in Washington, D.C. view a "Mad Max future" as unavoidable?
4. According to the speaker, how does the AI industry mimic the historical methods of the military-industrial complex?
5. How does Sam Altman define Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)?
6. What is the "CERN of AI" proposal mentioned in the talk?
7. Why does Graylin argue against the concept of "sovereign AI"?
8. What historical initiative does the speaker suggest we copy to handle widespread AI unemployment?
9. How does the timeline of the current AI revolution compare to previous industrial revolutions?
10. Why does Graylin insist that business leaders must personally use current AI models?

Total Score ___ / 10

Critical Thinking Questions **B1-B2 Level**

1. Do you agree that countries should work together on AI instead of competing? Why or why not?
2. The speaker says AI could create millions of job losses. What should governments do to help affected workers?
3. Would a single global AI research centre be a good idea? Why or why not?
4. The speaker argues that AI should be used to help people rather than replace them. Do you think companies will follow this advice? Why?
5. Which future do you think is most likely: the Elysium future, the Mad Max future, or the Star Trek future? Explain your answer.

Students' own answers.

Critical Thinking Questions **C1-C2 Level**

- 1. Question:** The speaker mentions that if AI replaces the average worker it could liberate us to do art, music, and attend events. Do you think a society without traditional work would make humans happier, or would it lead to a crisis of purpose and identity?
- 2. Question:** Graylin advocates for "open science" and global collaboration, similar to CERN or the International Space Station. Given the current geopolitical tensions and economic competition between world superpowers like the US and China, is a unified global AI lab realistic? Why or why not?
- 3. Question:** The talk proposes a "GI Bill for the AI age" to support displaced workers. Since AI automation will affect billions of people globally rather than just citizens of one nation, who should be financially responsible for funding this massive social safety net?
- 4. Question:** Graylin states that working together is not a sign of weakness, but rather "enlightened self-interest" because a non-zero-sum mindset raises everyone up. Can capitalism, which is fundamentally built on competition and market dominance, adapt to this cooperative mindset?
- 5. Question:** Consider the three futures outlined: Elysium (trillionaire rule), Mad Max (warfare), and Star Trek (peaceful collaboration). Based on how governments and tech companies are behaving right now, which path do you think we are most likely to follow, and what specific sign shows you this?

Students' own answers.

3 possible futures for AI - which will we choose? **ANSWERS**

1. What makes Alvin W. Graylin's background in the field of technology unique compared to many others?

- **Answer:** Graylin has 35 years of experience in fields like AI, cybersecurity, VR, and semiconductors, and his unique perspective comes from working extensively in both the United States (Stanford University) and China.

2. According to the speaker, what are the three possible futures that AI could lead to?

- i. **The Elysium future** – Powerful AI companies gain enormous wealth and influence, creating a society with a small group of trillionaires and everyone else.
- ii. **The Mad Max future** – Competition between countries over AI increases, leading to conflict, war, and possibly even nuclear war.
- iii. **The Star Trek future** – AI and technology are shared for the benefit of humanity, promoting peace, cooperation, and scientific discovery.

3. Why do some people in Washington, D.C. view a "Mad Max future" as unavoidable?

- **Answer:** They see it as inevitable because the current situation is intensifying conflicts between countries, which could escalate an AI development race into actual military and nuclear war.

4. According to the speaker, how does the AI industry mimic the historical methods of the military-industrial complex?

- **Answer:** The AI industry creates a foreign enemy (such as China) to successfully secure massive funding, gain public support, achieve deregulation, and move faster to make trillions of dollars.

5. How does Sam Altman define Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)?

- **Answer:** Altman defines AGI as a technology that is capable of completely replacing the average worker and taking over their job.

6. What is the "CERN of AI" proposal mentioned in the talk?

- **Answer:** It is a proposal to create a single, collaborative international laboratory that brings together all global tech talent and resources instead of having hundreds of isolated labs competing against each other.

7. Why does Graylin argue against the concept of "sovereign AI"?

- **Answer:** He argues against it because limiting an AI to a small, national subset of data actually increases the bias within the system. An optimal AI requires global history, languages, and cultures to balance everyone's needs fairly.

8. What historical initiative does the speaker suggest we copy to handle widespread AI unemployment?

- **Answer:** He suggests creating a modern version of the 1944-45 GI Bill, which originally helped millions of returning World War II veterans by providing free education, zero-interest loans, and medical care to build a stable middle class.

9. How does the timeline of the current AI revolution compare to previous industrial revolutions?

- **Answer:** Previous industrial revolutions took between 40 and 80 years to unfold, giving society time to adjust. The AI revolution is expected to fully play out in just five to ten years, which is a speed our society is not equipped to handle.

10. **Question:** Why does Graylin insist that business leaders must personally use current AI models?

- **Answer:** He insists they use them because it is the only way to truly understand how powerful these tools are and how fast they are evolving. Without firsthand experience, leaders will not realize the true potential or risks of the technology.