

# EXAMPLE QUESTIONS



## 1. WHAT INSPIRED THE PREMISE OF YOUR BOOK?

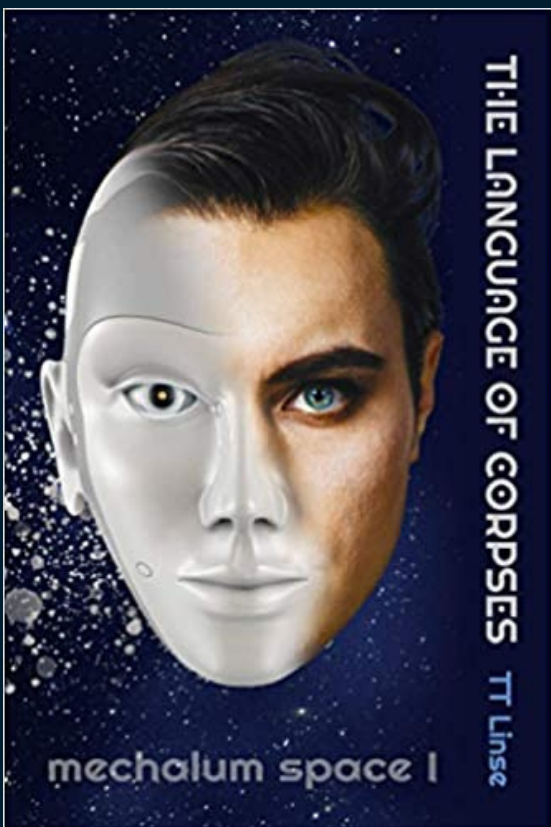
I literally started it by saying, I want to write a science fiction novel. How do I do that? Well, I need a future history first, and so I figured out a future history. That was so fun! And in order to have humanity spread as far as it is—90 light years—a lot of time had to have passed, so it's set in the 2700s. It also started with the characters. I had Eala, the scientist, first. Then I had Jazari because I had the plot point of someone gating into her friend, the *taktak*. Then I was going to have a ghostly third person sprinkled throughout, a voice, but then that became ZD777 and the third POV. I loved writing the beginning of his part. So I didn't know how it would all come together for a while, just a general direction.

## 2. WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH DO YOU DO, AND HOW LONG DO YOU SPEND RESEARCHING BEFORE BEGINNING A BOOK?

I do research for all the books I write, even the lit fic. I tend not to do a bunch of research before beginning a book—I just plunge down rabbit-holes as I go along. I have notebooks and notebooks of figuring things out. The only exception was before I began the Mechalum Space series, I had to figure out a future history, which was a blast! I did a whole bunch of research about current science and tech and took them to their logical extensions. My research is all online, but it includes technical publications. I'm a bit of a recluse, so I don't generally contact people.

## 3. WHAT'S THE MOST DIFFICULT THING ABOUT WRITING A NOVEL?

Two things. First, it takes a whole hell of a lot of courage. Being an artist and creating your best work involves exposing yourself to the world. It's showing your greatest fears and weaknesses, which often turn out to be your greatest strengths. This vulnerability is hard, and people who turn away from creativity and don't have the courage sometimes become critics and shoot down other people's work. They're what Julia Cameron in *The Artist's Way* calls crazy-makers or cramped creatives.



Second, it's a marathon. It's not something you can take a week and do. It takes stamina, sticking with it every day for five or six months. I often get stuck, and I'll procrastinate for a month or two at a stretch.

It may be because the emotions of the scene I'm avoiding on the page is something that I haven't dealt with in my own life. For instance, I had a miscarriage scene in my historical fiction, and I've had multiple ones in my own life. It took me years to get back to that book. Fear of success or failure also causes writer's block, and I'll inevitably get stuck when I only have a weekend left to write the first draft. Plus, life just gets in the way.

#### **4. HOW DO YOU SELECT THE NAMES OF YOUR CHARACTERS?**

I will have an idea of what the character is like and then I will try to find a name that suits my imagining of that character. I often look up lists of names on the internet. I want it to be unusual and memorable, and I rarely choose common names. I usually have to have the character's name first thing, but I often go with my gut on choosing it, but then it takes on a life of its own as my subconscious works it through. Details in the story will come from the name.

#### **5. HOW MANY HOURS A DAY DO YOU WRITE?**

Ideally, I write first thing in the morning. I get up early and am at my desk at six or seven and I write before I start doing my job. I try for 1,000 words a day, with more on the weekend. In a good week, I'll get 10,000 words. But when I was working in the office instead of at home, I would get the kids off to the bus and then I would go in to work early and write uninterrupted at my desk before the workday began. That's two to three hours on a good day.