

Comprehension Questions for *The X-Files: "Pilot"*

Check your comprehension of the following expressions.

When Agent Scully asks if she's being sent to **"debunk"** the X-Files, her superiors reply, **"We trust you will make the proper scientific analysis."** What do they mean?

1. She will report on how the X-Files are true.
2. She will report on how the X-Files are false.
3. She will report on Fox Mulder's secret crimes.
4. She will prove that aliens are real.
5. She will help her partner, Fox Mulder, by providing her scientific knowledge.

Mulder says that the previous FBI investigators enjoyed the local salmon, **"which, with a little lemon twist is just to die for, if you'll pardon the expression,"** the phrase **"to die for"** means:

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| 1. poisonous | 3. very dangerous |
| 2. part of a murder conspiracy | 4. very expensive |
| | 5. very delicious |

In Mulder's quip, **"It's a safe bet Soames never made the varsity basketball team,"** what is he saying about Soames?

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| 1. He looks like he was unhealthy. | 3. He looks pretty short. |
| 2. He looks like an alien. | 4. He looks like he died young. |
| | 5. He doesn't look like an athlete. |

When Mulder says, **"You're part of that agenda, you know that,"** what is he telling Scully?

1. He knows Scully is secretly a powerful member of the FBI.
2. He knows why she was assigned as his partner.
3. He knows Scully's scientific background will be helpful to him.
4. He understands that Scully is an important part of the X-Files team now.
5. He knows about Scully's connection with the aliens.

The nurse says, **"Now, we could stand around here until the second coming, waiting for Billy to get out of this bed. It ain't gonna happen."** What does **"until the second coming"** refer to?

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| 1. until the end of the world | 4. until the night shift begins work |
| 2. until sunrise tomorrow morning | 5. until his father comes back and catches you here |
| 3. until you solve this case | |

When Scully says, **"My reports are personal and subjective,"** what does she mean?

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| 1. You should ignore my reports. | 3. I don't have scientific proof. |
| 2. My reports present my own opinion. | 4. My reports are for your eyes only. |
| | 5. I am not sure what I believe. |

Discussion Questions for *The X-Files*: “Pilot”

1. Do you consider *The X-Files* SF? Why or why not? In what ways does it conform to what you expect in SF, and in what ways does it not feel like SF to you?
2. Mulder “wants to believe” in aliens and other unexplained phenomena. Scully, on the other hand, is a scientist and refuses to believe in things without evidence. How do you read Mulder and Scully’s partnership?
3. Among the major pilot threads of the *X-Files* is the idea of conspiracies involving aliens, technology, and the United States government. In fact, many critics have argued that the *X-Files* series helped to make conspiracy theories part of mainstream American culture, and had a major effect on American thinking in the 21st century, in popularizing things like QAnon and anti-vaccine conspiracy theories. Why do you think conspiracy theories are so attractive to people, and maybe especially to Americans? Can entertainment be dangerous for a society?
4. The episode opens with the words, “THE FOLLOWING STORY IS INSPIRED BY ACTUAL DOCUMENTED ACCOUNTS.” However, *The X-Files* is in fact a fictional television series, although it does draw inspiration from (very questionable) real-life claims made by people. How does this kind of introduction affect the way we read *The X-Files* as a text? Does it make the story feel more like SF, or less so?
5. Why do you think alien abduction experience stories have been so popular in America since World War II?
6. A major part of *The X-Files* fandom was concerned with the potential for a romantic relationship between Scully and Mulder, especially in later seasons. Some fans were MSR (Mulder Scully Romance) and others were “Noromo” (“No Romance”). What do you make of this split in *X-Files* fandom?
7. Write your own question here:

Whatever questions you don’t answer as a group—and also, the questions you *do* answer as a group—continue to think and ruminate on them. Tomorrow, we’ll discuss the story more deeply.