Blending Science and Fiction

Background information:

Many of our more science and math minded students struggle when asked to write narrative text as they feel inauthentic or disconnected to real life. This lesson works from an article about scientific ethics (the linked article is from 2015, however yearly updates can be found via google search to provide more relevant scientific concerns) and then asks students to create a scenario in which these ethical dilemmas are predominant as the primary conflict of a narrative.

Lesson Plan

Provide students with a copy of the article or internet access to the link itself:
http://reilly.nd.edu/outreach/emerging-ethical-dilemmas-and-policy-issues-in-science-and-technology-2015/

Teacher is to have students read initially just the dilemmas themselves without any of the information about what each means. Ask students to guess what each dilemma (e.g. enhanced pathogens) is and how this could present a conflict in ethics. What would be the benefit of each scientific breakthrough? What would be the potential downfall? Students are to then read through the article and choose which dilemma they find most interesting.

Students will then create a scenario where this technology is either beneficial or detrimental to society. Pre-writing/brainstorming begins as follows:

1. What is the problem?
2. Who are the characters? How do they interact?
3. What is the major event?
4. What/When/Where is the piece set?
5. How will engage the senses?
6. How does the piece conclude?

After each of these questions is answered students begin the writing process. Because one of the goals is precision in writing and language, it is recommended that the piece have page or word parameters (1 page or 500 words).

Evaluation

The attached general narrative writing rubric evolved from an edutopia template, however other more focused rubrics can direct assessment to specific skills or standards with which students need focus or assistance. This activity can be for a simple quick write or it can be extended to a more thorough proofread and polished piece.