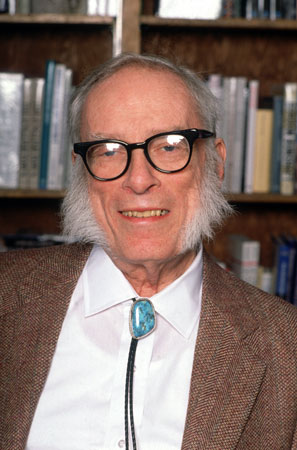
**Isaac Asimov 1920 – 1992**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov>

**Isaac Asimov** (c. [January 2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_2), [1920](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1920)[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-birthday-0) – [April 6](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_6), [1992](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1992)), pronounced [/ˈaɪzək ˈæzɪmɒv/](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:Pronunciation), originally Исаак Озимов but now transcribed into [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language) as [Айзек Азимов](http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%90%D0%B7%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B2%2C_%D0%90%D0%B9%D0%B7%D0%B5%D0%BA), was a [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia)-born [American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) author and professor of [biochemistry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biochemistry), a highly successful writer, best known for his works of [science fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction) and for his [popular science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_science) books.

Asimov was one of the most prolific writers of all time, having written or edited more than 500 books and an estimated 9,000 letters and [postcards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postcard)[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-1). His works have been published in nine of the ten major categories of the [Dewey Decimal System](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dewey_Decimal_System) (all except the 100s, Philosophy).[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-2)

Asimov is widely considered a master of the science-fiction [genre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genre) and, along with [Robert A. Heinlein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_A._Heinlein) and [Arthur C. Clarke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_C._Clarke), was considered one of the "Big Three" science-fiction writers during his lifetime.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-3) Asimov's most famous work is the [*Foundation* Series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Foundation_Series)[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-4); his other major series are the [*Galactic Empire* series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov%27s_Galactic_Empire_Series) and the [*Robot* series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov%27s_Robot_Series), both of which he later tied into the same fictional universe as the Foundation Series to create a unified "[future history](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Future_history)" for his stories much like those pioneered by [Robert A. Heinlein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_A._Heinlein) and previously produced by [Cordwainer Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cordwainer_Smith) and [Poul Anderson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poul_Anderson)[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-5). He penned numerous short stories, among them "[Nightfall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nightfall_%28Asimov%29)", which in 1964 was voted by the [Science Fiction Writers of America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_Fiction_Writers_of_America) the best short science fiction story of all time, a title many still honor. He also wrote [mysteries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystery_fiction) and [fantasy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantasy), as well as a great amount of nonfiction. Asimov wrote the [*Lucky Starr* series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Starr_series) of [juvenile](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Children%27s_literature) science-fiction novels using the [pen name](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pen_name) Paul French.

Most of Asimov's popularized science books explain scientific concepts in a historical way, going as far back as possible to a time when the science in question was at its simplest stage. He often provides nationalities, birth dates, and death dates for the scientists he mentions, as well as [etymologies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Etymology) and pronunciation guides for technical terms. Examples include his *Guide to Science,* the three volume set *Understanding Physics,* and *Asimov's Chronology of Science and Discovery.*

Asimov was a long-time member and Vice President of [Mensa International](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mensa_International), albeit reluctantly; he described some members of that organization as "brain-proud and aggressive about their IQs".[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-6) He took more joy in being president of the [American Humanist Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Humanist_Association)[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-7). The [asteroid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asteroid) [5020 Asimov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5020_Asimov), the magazine [*Asimov's Science Fiction*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asimov%27s_Science_Fiction)*,* a [Brooklyn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn), NY elementary school, and two different [Isaac Asimov Awards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov_Award) are named in his honor.

**Biography**

Asimov was born sometime between October 4, [1919](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1919) and January 2, [1920](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1920) in [Petrovichi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrovichi) in [Smolensk Oblast](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smolensk_Oblast), [RSFSR](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic) (now [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia)) to Anna Rachel Berman Asimov and Judah Asimov, a [Jewish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew) family of [millers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miller). His exact date of birth is uncertain because of differences in the [Gregorian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar) and [Hebrew calendars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_calendar) and a lack of records. Asimov himself celebrated it on January 2nd.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-birthday-0) The family name derives from озимые (*ozimiye*), a [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language) word for a winter grain in which his great-grandfather dealt, to which a [patronymic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patronymic) suffix was added. His family immigrated to the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) when he was three years old. Since his parents always spoke [Yiddish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yiddish_language) and [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language) with him, he never learned [Russian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_language)[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-8). Growing up in [Brooklyn, New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brooklyn%2C_New_York), Asimov taught himself to read at the age of five, and remained fluent in Yiddish as well as English. His parents owned a succession of [candy stores](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candy_store), and everyone in the family was expected to work in them. Science fiction [pulp magazines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulp_magazine) were sold in the stores, and he began reading them. Around the age of eleven he began to write his own stories, and by age nineteen, having discovered [science fiction fandom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction_fandom), he was selling them to the science fiction magazines. [John W. Campbell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_W._Campbell), then editor of [*Astounding Science Fiction*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astounding_Science_Fiction)*,* was a strong formative influence and eventually became a personal friend.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-9)

Asimov attended [New York City Public Schools](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City_Public_Schools), including Boys' High School, in Brooklyn, New York. From there he went on to [Columbia University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbia_University), from which he graduated in 1939, eventually returning to earn a [Ph.D.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctor_of_Philosophy) in biochemistry in 1948. In between, he spent three years during [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) working as a civilian at the [Philadelphia Navy Yard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philadelphia_Navy_Yard)'s Naval Air Experimental Station. After the war ended, he was drafted into the [U.S. Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Army), serving for just under nine months before receiving an honorable discharge. In the course of his brief military career, he rose to the rank of [corporal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporal) on the basis of his typing skills, and narrowly avoided participating in the 1946 [atomic bomb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atomic_bomb) tests at [Bikini Atoll](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bikini_Atoll).

After completing his doctorate, Asimov joined the faculty of the [Boston University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_University) School of Medicine, with which he remained associated thereafter. From 1958, this was in a non-teaching capacity, as he turned to writing full-time (his writing income had already exceeded his academic salary). Being [tenured](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tenure) meant that he retained the title of [associate professor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Associate_professor), and in 1979 the university honored his writing by promoting him to full [professor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Professor) of biochemistry. Asimov's personal papers from 1965 are archived at the university's [Mugar Memorial Library](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mugar_Memorial_Library), to which he donated them at the request of [curator](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curator) Howard Gottlieb. The collection fills 464 boxes, on seventy-one [metres](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metre) of shelf space.

Asimov married Gertrude Blugerman (1917, Canada–1990, Boston) on July 26, 1942. They had two children, David (b. 1951) and [Robyn Joan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robyn_Asimov) (b. 1955). After a separation in 1970, he and Gertrude divorced in 1973, and Asimov married [Janet O. Jeppson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janet_Asimov) later that year.

Asimov was a [claustrophile](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/claustrophilia); he enjoyed small, enclosed spaces[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov" \l "cite_note-10" \o "). In the first volume of his autobiography, he recalls a childhood desire to own a magazine stand in a [New York City Subway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City_Subway) station, within which he could enclose himself and listen to the rumble of passing trains while reading.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-11)

Asimov was [afraid of flying](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear_of_flying)[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-Acrophobia-12), only doing so twice in his entire life (once in the course of his work at the Naval Air Experimental Station, and once returning home from the army base in [Oahu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oahu) in 1946)[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-13). He seldom traveled great distances, partly because his aversion to aircraft complicated the logistics of long-distance travel. This phobia influenced several of his fiction works, such as the [Wendell Urth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wendell_Urth) mystery stories and the Robot novels featuring [Elijah Baley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Baley). In his later years, he found he enjoyed traveling on [cruise ships](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cruise_ship), and on several occasions he became part of the cruises' "entertainment," giving science-themed talks on ships such as the [RMS *Queen Elizabeth 2*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Queen_Elizabeth_2)[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-14). Asimov was also an able public speaker, and enjoyed speaking.[[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-15)

Asimov was a frequent fixture at [science fiction conventions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction_convention), where he remained friendly and approachable.[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-16) As noted above, he patiently answered tens of thousands of questions and other mail with postcards, and was pleased to give autographs.

He was of medium height, stocky, with [muttonchop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muttonchop) whiskers and a distinct Brooklyn accent. His physical dexterity was very poor. He never learned to swim or ride a [bicycle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicycle); however, he did learn to drive a car after he moved to Boston. In his humor book *Asimov Laughs Again,* he describes Boston driving as "anarchy on wheels."

Asimov's wide interests included his participation in his later years in organizations devoted to the [operettas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operetta) of [Gilbert and Sullivan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilbert_and_Sullivan)[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-17) and in The Wolfe Pack [[1]](http://www.nerowolfe.org/), a group of devotees of the [Nero Wolfe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero_Wolfe) mysteries written by [Rex Stout](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rex_Stout). He was a prominent member of the [Baker Street Irregulars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baker_Street_Irregulars), the leading [Sherlock Holmes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherlock_Holmes) society.[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-18) From 1985 until his death in 1992, he was president of the [American Humanist Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Humanist_Association); his successor was his friend and fellow writer [Kurt Vonnegut](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_Vonnegut). He was also a close friend of [Star Trek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Trek) creator [Gene Roddenberry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gene_Roddenberry), and earned a screen credit on [*Star Trek: The Motion Picture*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Trek:_The_Motion_Picture) for advice he gave during production (generally, confirming to [Paramount Pictures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paramount_Pictures) that Roddenberry's ideas were legitimate science-fictional extrapolation).

Asimov died on [April 6](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/April_6), [1992](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1992). He was survived by his second wife, Janet, and his children from his first marriage. Ten years after his death, Janet Asimov's edition of Asimov's autobiography, [*It's Been a Good Life*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It%27s_Been_a_Good_Life), revealed that his death was caused by [AIDS](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AIDS); he had contracted [HIV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HIV) from a blood transfusion received during a heart bypass operation in December 1983.[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-19) The specific cause of death was heart and renal failure as complications of HIV infection. Janet Asimov wrote in the epilogue of *It's Been a Good Life* that Asimov had wanted to "go public," but his doctors convinced him to remain silent, warning that anti-AIDS [prejudice](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prejudice) would extend to his family members. Asimov's family considered disclosing his condition after he died, but the controversy which erupted when [Arthur Ashe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Ashe) announced his own AIDS infection convinced them otherwise. Ten years later, after Asimov's doctors had died, Janet and Robyn agreed that the AIDS story could be made public.[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-20)

## Intellectual positions

Isaac Asimov was a [Humanist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism_%28life_stance%29) and a [rationalist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationalist_movement).[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-21) He did not oppose religious conviction in others, but he frequently railed against [superstitious](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Superstition) and [pseudoscientific](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudoscience) beliefs that tried to pass themselves off as genuine science. During his childhood, his father and mother observed [Orthodox Jewish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Judaism) traditions, though not as stringently as they had in [Petrovichi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrovichi); they did not, however, force their beliefs upon young Isaac. Thus he grew up without strong religious influences, coming to believe that the [Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible) represented Hebrew mythology in the same way that the [*Iliad*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iliad) recorded [Greek mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology) (for a brief while his father worked in the local [synagogue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synagogue) to enjoy the familiar surroundings and "shine as a learned scholar" versed in the sacred writings. This experience had little effect upon Isaac beyond teaching him the [Hebrew alphabet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_alphabet)). For many years, Asimov called himself an [atheist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism); however, he considered the term somewhat inadequate, as it described what he did not believe rather than what he did. Eventually, he described himself as a "[humanist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanist)" and considered that term more practical.

In his last autobiography, Asimov wrote, "If I were not an atheist, I would believe in a God who would choose to save people on the basis of the totality of their lives and not the pattern of their words. I think he would prefer an honest and righteous atheist to a TV preacher whose every word is God, God, God, and whose every deed is foul, foul, foul." The same memoir states his belief that [Hell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hell) is "the drooling dream of a [sadist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadism_and_masochism_as_medical_terms)" crudely affixed to an all-merciful God; if even human governments were willing to curtail cruel and unusual punishments, wondered Asimov, why would punishment in the afterlife not be restricted to a limited term? Asimov rejected the idea that a human belief or action could merit infinite punishment. If an afterlife of just deserts existed, he claimed, the longest and most severe punishment would be reserved for those who "slandered God by inventing Hell". As his *Treasury of Humor* and *Asimov Laughs Again* record, he was willing to tell [jokes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joke) involving the [Judeo-Christian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judeo-Christian) God, [Satan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satan), the [Garden of Eden](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_of_Eden), and other religious topics, expressing the viewpoint that a good joke can do more to provoke thought than hours of philosophical discussion.

Asimov became a staunch supporter of the [Democratic Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_%28United_States%29) during the [New Deal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal), and thereafter remained a political liberal. He was a vocal opponent of the [Vietnam War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vietnam_War) in the 1960s and, in a television interview during the early 1970s, he publicly endorsed [George McGovern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_McGovern). He was unhappy about what he considered an "irrationalist" viewpoint taken by many liberal political activists from the late 1960s and onwards. In his autobiography *In Joy Still Felt,* he recalls meeting the counterculture figure [Abbie Hoffman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbie_Hoffman); Asimov's impression was that the [1960s' counterculture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterculture_of_the_1960s) heroes had ridden an emotional wave which, in the end, left them stranded in a "no-man's land of the spirit" from which he wondered if they would ever return (this attitude is echoed by [The Wave Speech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear_and_Loathing_in_Las_Vegas#The_.22wave_speech.22) in [Hunter S. Thompson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunter_S._Thompson)'s [*Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fear_and_Loathing_in_Las_Vegas)). His defense of civil applications of [nuclear power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_power) even after the [Three Mile Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Mile_Island) incident damaged his relations with some of his fellow liberals. In a letter reprinted in *Yours, Isaac Asimov,* he states that although he would prefer living in "no danger whatsoever" than near a nuclear reactor, he would still prefer a home near a nuclear power plant than in a slum on [Love Canal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_Canal) or near "a [Union Carbide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Carbide) plant producing [methyl isocyanate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methyl_isocyanate)" (referring to the [Bhopal disaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhopal_disaster)). He issued many appeals for [population control](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Population_control), reflecting a perspective articulated by people from [Thomas Malthus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Malthus) through [Paul R. Ehrlich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_R._Ehrlich). Asimov considered himself a [feminist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism) even before [Women's Liberation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_Liberation) became a widespread movement; he joked that he wished women to be free "because I hate it when they charge". More seriously, he argued that the issue of women's rights was closely connected to that of population control. Furthermore, he believed that [homosexuality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality) must be considered a "moral right" on population grounds, as must all [consenting adult](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consenting_adult) sexual activity that does not lead to reproduction (*Yours, Isaac Asimov*).

In the closing years of his life, Asimov blamed the deterioration of the quality of life that he perceived in [New York City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) on the shrinking [tax](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tax) base caused by [middle class](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_class) flight to the [suburbs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suburb). His last non-fiction book, [*Our Angry Earth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Angry_Earth) (1991, co-written with his long-time friend science fiction author [Frederik Pohl](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederik_Pohl)), deals with elements of the [environmental](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_environment) crisis such as [global warming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_warming) and the destruction of the [ozone layer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ozone_layer).

## Writing

### Overview

Asimov's career can be divided into several time periods. His early career, dominated by science fiction, began with short stories in 1939 and novels in 1950. This lasted until about 1958, all but ending after publication of [*The Naked Sun*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Naked_Sun). He began publishing nonfiction in 1952, co-authoring a college-level textbook called *Biochemistry and Human Metabolism*. Following the brief orbit of the first man-made satellite [Sputnik I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sputnik_I) by the [USSR](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USSR) in 1957, his production of nonfiction, particularly [popular science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_science) books, greatly increased, with a consequent drop in his science fiction output. Over the next quarter century, he wrote only four science fiction novels. Starting in 1982, the second half of his science fiction career began with the publication of [*Foundation's Edge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation%27s_Edge). From then until his death, Asimov published several more sequels and prequels to his existing novels, tying them together in a way he had not originally anticipated, making a unified series. There are however many inconsistencies in this unification, especially in his earlier stories.

Asimov believed that his most enduring contributions would be his "[Three Laws of Robotics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Laws_of_Robotics)" and the [Foundation Series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_Series) (see *Yours, Isaac Asimov,* p. 329). Furthermore, the [*Oxford English Dictionary*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_English_Dictionary) credits his science fiction for introducing the words [*positronic*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positron) (an entirely fictional technology), [*psychohistory*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychohistory_%28fictional%29) (frequently used in a different sense than the imaginary one Asimov employed) and [*robotics*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robotics) into the English language. Asimov coined the term *robotics* without suspecting that it might be an original word; at the time, he believed it was simply the natural analogue of [mechanics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mechanics), [hydraulics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydraulics), and so forth. (The original word [*robot*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robot) derives from the [Czech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Czech_language) word for "forced labor", *robotovat, robota* and was first employed by the playwright [Karel Čapek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karel_%C4%8Capek) in [R.U.R.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R.U.R.) [Rossum's Universal Robots].) Unlike his word *psychohistory*, the word *robotics* continues in mainstream technical use with Asimov's original definition. [*Star Trek: The Next Generation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Trek:_The_Next_Generation) featured [androids](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Android) with "[positronic brains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positronic_brain" \o "Positronic brain)", namely [Data](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Data_%28Star_Trek%29), [Lore](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lore_%28Star_Trek%29), [Lal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lal_%28Star_Trek%29), and [B-4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/B-4_%28Star_Trek%29) , giving Asimov full credit for 'inventing' this fictional technology. Ironically (or, given Asimov's sense of humor, perhaps not so ironically), Asimov disliked the word "[positron](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positron)" as the term for the electron's antiparticle. As he explained in the nonfiction work "Atom: Journey across the Subatomic Cosmos," the proper suffix is "-on," as in proton and muon, not "-ron," as in electron and neutron, these two terms inheriting their r's from their root words.

### Science fiction

Asimov first began reading the science fiction [pulp magazines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pulp_magazine) sold in his family's confectionery store in 1929. He came into contact with [science fiction fandom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Science_fiction_fandom) in the mid-1930s, particularly the circle which became the [Futurians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurians). He began writing his first science fiction story, "Cosmic Corkscrew", in 1937, but failed to finish it until June 1938, when he was inspired to do so after a visit to the offices of [*Astounding Science Fiction*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astounding_Science_Fiction). He finished "Cosmic Corkscrew" on 19 June, and submitted the story in person to *Astounding* editor [John W. Campbell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_W._Campbell) two days later. Campbell rejected "Cosmic Corkscrew", but encouraged Asimov to keep trying, and Asimov did so. Asimov sold his third story, "[Marooned Off Vesta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marooned_Off_Vesta)", to [*Amazing Stories*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amazing_Stories) magazine in October, and it appeared in the March 1939 issue. He continued writing and sometimes selling stories to the science fiction pulps.

In 1941, he published his 32nd story, "[Nightfall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nightfall_%28Asimov%29)", which has been described as one of "the most famous science-fiction stories of all time".[[23]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-22) In 1968 the Science Fiction Writers of America voted "Nightfall" the best science fiction short story ever written.[[24]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-23) In his short story collection [*Nightfall and Other Stories*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nightfall_and_Other_Stories) he wrote, "The writing of 'Nightfall' was a watershed in my professional career ... I was suddenly taken seriously and the world of science fiction became aware that I existed. As the years passed, in fact, it became evident that I had written a 'classic'".

"Nightfall" is an archetypal example of [social science fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_science_fiction), a term coined by Asimov to describe a new trend in the 1940s, led by authors including Asimov and [Heinlein](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_A._Heinlein), away from [gadgets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gadget) and [space opera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_opera) and toward speculation about the [human condition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_condition).

By 1941 Asimov began selling regularly to *Astounding*, which was then the field's leading magazine. From 1943 to 1949, all of his published science fiction appeared in *Astounding*.

In 1942 he published the first of his *Foundation* stories—later collected in the [*Foundation Trilogy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_Trilogy): [*Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_%28novel%29) (1951), [*Foundation and Empire*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_and_Empire) (1952), and [*Second Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Foundation) (1953)—which recount the collapse and rebirth of a vast [interstellar empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galactic_Empire_%28Asimov%29) in a universe of the future. Taken together, they are his most famous work of science fiction, along with the [Robot Series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov%27s_Robot_Series). Many years later, he continued the series with [*Foundation's Edge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation%27s_Edge) (1982) and [*Foundation and Earth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_and_Earth) (1986), and then went back to before the original trilogy with [*Prelude to Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prelude_to_Foundation) (1988) and [*Forward the Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forward_the_Foundation) (1992). The series features his fictional science of [Psychohistory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychohistory_%28fictional%29) in which the future course of the history of large populations can be predicted.

His [positronic robot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positronic_robot) stories—many of which were collected in [*I, Robot*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I%2C_Robot) (1950)—were begun at about the same time. They promulgated a set of rules of [ethics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics) for robots (see [Three Laws of Robotics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Laws_of_Robotics)) and intelligent machines that greatly influenced other writers and thinkers in their treatment of the subject. One such short story, "[The Bicentennial Man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bicentennial_Man)", was made into a [film](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film) starring [Robin Williams](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Williams).

The 2004 film [*I, Robot*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I%2C_Robot_%28movie%29), starring [Will Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_Smith), was based on a script by [Jeff Vintar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Vintar) entitled *Hardwired,* with Asimov's ideas incorporated later after acquiring the rights to the *I, Robot* title.[[25]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-24) It is not related to the *I, Robot* script by [Harlan Ellison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlan_Ellison), who collaborated with Asimov himself to create a version that captured the spirit of the original. Asimov is quoted as saying that Ellison's screenplay would lead to "the first really adult, complex, worthwhile science fiction movie ever made". The screenplay was published in book form in 1994, after hopes of seeing it in film form were becoming slim.

Besides movies, his [Foundation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Foundation_Series) and [Robot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov%27s_Robot_Series) stories have inspired other derivative works of science fiction literature, many by well-known and established authors such as [Roger MacBride Allen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_MacBride_Allen), [Greg Bear](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greg_Bear), [Gregory Benford](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregory_Benford) and [David Brin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Brin). These appear to have been done with the blessing, and often at the request of, Asimov's widow [Janet Asimov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janet_Asimov).

In 1948 he also wrote a [spoof science article](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False_document), "[The Endochronic Properties of Resublimated Thiotimoline](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thiotimoline)". At the time, Asimov was preparing for his own doctoral [dissertation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissertation). Fearing a prejudicial reaction from his Ph.D. evaluation board, he asked his editor that it be released under a [pseudonym](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudonym), yet it appeared under his own name. During his oral examination shortly thereafter, Asimov grew concerned at the scrutiny he received. At the end of the examination, one evaluator turned to him, smiling, and said "Mr. Asimov, tell us something about the thermodynamic properties of the compound thiotimoline". After a 20-minute wait, he was summoned back into the Examination Room and congratulated as "Dr. Asimov."

In 1949, book publisher [Doubleday's](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doubleday_%28publisher%29) science fiction editor Walter I. Bradbury accepted Asimov's unpublished novel "Grow Old Along With Me" for publication, and it appeared under the Doubleday imprint in January 1950 as [*Pebble in the Sky*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pebble_in_the_Sky). Doubleday went on to publish four more original science fiction novels by Asimov in the 1950s, along with the six juvenile [Lucky Starr novels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Starr_series) under the pseudonym Paul French. Doubleday also published collections of Asimov's short stories, beginning with [*The Martian Way and Other Stories*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Martian_Way_and_Other_Stories) in 1955. The early 1950s also saw [Gnome Press](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gnome_Press) publish Asimov's positronic robot stories as [*I, Robot*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I%2C_Robot) and his [Foundation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Foundation_Series) stories as the three books of the [Foundation Trilogy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_Trilogy).

When new science fiction magazines, notably [*Galaxy Magazine*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galaxy_Magazine) and [*The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Magazine_of_Fantasy_%26_Science_Fiction), appeared in the 1950s, Asimov began publishing short stories in them as well. He would later refer to the 1950s as his "golden decade". A number of these stories are included in his [*Best of*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Best_of_Isaac_Asimov) anthology, including "[The Last Question](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Question)" (1956), on the ability of humankind to cope with and potentially reverse the process of [entropy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entropy). It was his personal favorite and considered by many to be equal to "Nightfall". Asimov wrote of it in 1973:

Why is it my favorite? For one thing I got the idea all at once and didn't have to fiddle with it; and I wrote it in white-heat and scarcely had to change a word. This sort of thing endears any story to any writer.

Then, too, it has had the strangest effect on my readers. Frequently someone writes to ask me if I can give them the name of a story, which they *think* I may have written, and tell them where to find it. They don't remember the title but when they describe the story it is invariably "The Last Question". This has reached the point where I recently received a long-distance phone call from a desperate man who began, "Dr. Asimov, there's a story I think you wrote, whose title I can't remember—" at which point I interrupted to tell him it was "The Last Question" and when I described the plot it proved to be indeed the story he was after. I left him convinced I could read minds at a distance of a thousand miles.

In December 1974, the former [Beatle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatle) [Paul McCartney](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_McCartney) approached Asimov and asked him if he could write the screenplay for a science-fiction movie musical. McCartney had a vague idea for the plot and a small scrap of dialogue; he wished to make a film about a rock band whose members discover they are being impersonated by a group of extraterrestrials. The band and their impostors would likely be played by McCartney's group [Wings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wings_%28band%29), then at the height of their career. Intrigued by the idea, although he was not generally a fan of [rock music](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_music), Asimov quickly produced a "treatment" or brief outline of the story. He adhered to McCartney's overall idea, producing a story he felt to be moving and dramatic. However, he did not make use of McCartney's brief scrap of dialogue, and probably in consequence, McCartney rejected the story. The treatment now exists only in Boston University's archives.

Beginning in 1977, he lent his name to [*Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov%27s_Science_Fiction_Magazine) (now [*Asimov's Science Fiction*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asimov%27s_Science_Fiction)) and penned an editorial for each issue. There was also a short-lived *Asimov's SF Adventure Magazine* and a companion *Asimov's Science Fiction Anthology* reprint series, published as magazines (in the same manner as stablemates [*Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellery_Queen%27s_Mystery_Magazine) and [*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Hitchcock%27s_Mystery_Magazine)*'*s "anthologies").

### Popular science

During the late 1950s and 1960s, Asimov shifted gears somewhat, and substantially decreased his fiction output (he published only four adult novels between 1957's [*The Naked Sun*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Naked_Sun) and 1982's [*Foundation's Edge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation%27s_Edge), two of which were mysteries). At the same time, he greatly increased his non-fiction production, writing mostly on science topics; the launch of [Sputnik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sputnik) in 1957 engendered public concern over a "science gap", which Asimov's publishers were eager to fill with as much material as he could write.

Meanwhile, the monthly [*Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magazine_of_Fantasy_and_Science_Fiction) invited him to continue his regular non-fiction column, begun in the now-folded bimonthly companion magazine [*Venture Science Fiction Magazine*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venture_Science_Fiction_Magazine), ostensibly dedicated to [popular science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Popular_science), but with Asimov having complete editorial freedom. The first of the *F&SF* columns appeared in November of 1958, and they followed uninterrupted thereafter, with 399 entries, until Asimov's terminal illness. These columns, periodically collected into books by his principal publisher, [Doubleday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doubleday_%28publisher%29), helped make Asimov's reputation as a "Great Explainer" of science, and were referred to by him as his only pop-science writing in which he never had to assume complete ignorance of the subjects at hand on the part of his readers. The popularity of his first wide-ranging reference work, [*The Intelligent Man's Guide to Science*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Intelligent_Man%27s_Guide_to_Science), also allowed him to give up most of his academic responsibilities and become essentially a full-time [freelance writer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freelance_writer).

Asimov wrote several essays on the social contentions of his time, including "Thinking About Thinking" and "Science: Knock Plastic" (1967).

The great variety of information covered in Asimov's writings once prompted [Kurt Vonnegut](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_Vonnegut) to ask, "How does it feel to know everything?" Asimov replied that he only knew how it felt to have the *reputation* of omniscience—"Uneasy". (See *In Joy Still Felt,* chapter 30.) In the introduction to his story collection [*Slow Learner*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slow_Learner)*,* [Thomas Pynchon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Pynchon) admitted that he relied upon Asimov's science popularizations (and the [*Oxford English Dictionary*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxford_English_Dictionary)) to provide his knowledge of [entropy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entropy).

It is a mark of the friendship and respect accorded Asimov by [Arthur C. Clarke](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_C._Clarke) that the so-called "Asimov-Clarke Treaty of Park Avenue", put together as they shared a cab ride along [Park Avenue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Park_Avenue_%28Manhattan%29) in [New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York), stated that Asimov was required to insist that Clarke was the best science fiction writer in the world (reserving second best for himself), while Clarke was required to insist that Asimov was the best science writer in the world (reserving second best for himself).[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-25) Thus the dedication in Clarke's book *Report on Planet Three* (1972) reads: *"In accordance with the terms of the Clarke-Asimov treaty, the second-best science writer dedicates this book to the second-best science-fiction writer."*

### Other writing

In addition to his interest in science, Asimov was also greatly interested in history. Starting in the 1960s, he wrote 14 popular history books, most notably *The Greeks: A Great Adventure* (1965), *The* [*Roman Republic*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Republic) (1966), *The* [*Roman Empire*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire) (1967), *The Egyptians* (1967) and *The Near East: 10,000 Years of History* (1968).

He published [*Asimov's Guide to the Bible*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asimov%27s_Guide_to_the_Bible) in two volumes— covering the [Old Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament) in 1967 and the [New Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) in 1969— and then combined them into one 1,300-page volume in 1981. Complete with maps and tables, the guide goes through the books of the [Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible) in order, explaining the history of each one and the political influences that affected it, as well as biographical information about the important characters. His interest in literature manifested itself in several annotations of literary works, including [*Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asimov%27s_Guide_to_Shakespeare) (1970), *Asimov's Annotated Paradise Lost* (1974), and *The Annotated Gulliver's Travels* (1980).

Asimov was also a noted mystery author and a frequent contributor to Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine. He began by writing science fiction mysteries such as his Wendall Urth stories but soon moved on to writing "pure" mysteries. He only published two full-length mystery novels but he wrote several stories about the Black Widowers, a group of men who met monthly for dinner, conversation, and a puzzle. He got the idea for the Widowers from his own association in a stag group called the Trap Door Spiders and all of the main characters (with the exception of the waiter, Henry, who he admitted resembled Wodehouse's Jeeves) were modeled after his closest friends.[[27]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-26)

Toward the end of his life, Asimov published a series of collections of [limericks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limerick_%28poetry%29), mostly written by himself, starting with [*Lecherous Limericks*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lecherous_Limericks), which appeared in 1975. *Limericks: Too Gross,* whose title displays Asimov's love of [puns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pun), contains 144 limericks by Asimov and an equal number by [John Ciardi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Ciardi). He even created a slim volume of [Sherlockian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherlock_Holmes) limericks (and embarrassed one fan by autographing her copy with an impromptu limerick that rhymed 'Nancy' with 'romancy'). Asimov featured [Yiddish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yiddish) humor in [*Azazel, The Two Centimeter Demon*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Azazel_%28Asimov%29). The two main characters, both Jewish, talk over dinner, or lunch, or breakfast, about anecdotes of "George" and his friend Azazel. Asimov's *Treasury of Humor* is both a working joke book and a treatise propounding his views on [humor theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_humor). According to Asimov, the most essential element of humor is an abrupt change in point of view, one that suddenly shifts focus from the important to the trivial, or from the sublime to the ridiculous.

Particularly in his later years, Asimov to some extent cultivated an image of himself as an amiable lecher. In 1971, as a response to the popularity of sexual guidebooks such as [*The Sensuous Woman*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sensuous_Woman) (by "J") and *The Sensuous Man* (by "M"), Asimov published *The Sensuous Dirty Old Man* under the byline "Dr. 'A'", but with his full name prominently displayed on the cover.

Asimov published two volumes of autobiography: [*In Memory Yet Green*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_Memory_Yet_Green) (1979) and [*In Joy Still Felt*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/In_Joy_Still_Felt) (1980). A third autobiography, *I. Asimov: A Memoir*, was published in April 1994. The epilogue was written by his widow [Janet Asimov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janet_Asimov) a decade after his death. [*It's Been a Good Life*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/It%27s_Been_a_Good_Life) (2002), edited by Janet, is a condensed version of his three autobiographies. He also published three volumes of retrospectives of his writing, [*Opus 100*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opus_100) (1969), *Opus 200* (1979), and *Opus 300* (1984).

Asimov and [Star Trek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Star_Trek) creator [Gene Roddenberry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gene_Roddenberry) developed a unique relationship during Star Trek's initial launch in the late 60s. Asimov wrote a critical essay on Star Trek's scientific accuracy for [*TV Guide*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/TV_Guide) magazine. Roddenberry retorted respectfully with a personal letter explaining the limitations of accuracy when writing a weekly series. Asimov corrected himself with a follow-up essay to TV Guide claiming despite its inaccuracies, that Star Trek was a fresh and intellectually challenging science fiction television show. The two remained friends to the point where Asimov even served as an advisor on a number of Star Trek projects.

### Literary themes

Much of Asimov's fiction dealt with themes of [paternalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paternalism). His first robot story, " [Robbie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robbie_%28short_story%29" \o "Robbie (short story))", concerned a robotic [nanny](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nanny). "Lenny" deals with the capacity of [robopsychologist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robopsychologist) Susan Calvin to feel [maternal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maternal) love towards a robot whose positronic brain capacities are those of a 3-year-old. As the robots grew more sophisticated, their interventions became more wide-reaching and subtle. In "[Evidence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evidence_%28Asimov%29)", the story revolves around a candidate who successfully runs for office who may be a robot masquerading as a human. In "[The Evitable Conflict](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Evitable_Conflict)", the robots run humanity from behind the scenes, acting as nannies to the whole species.

Later, in [*The Robots of Dawn*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Robots_of_Dawn) and [*Robots and Empire*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robots_and_Empire), a robot develops what he calls the [Zeroth Law of Robotics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeroth_Law_of_Robotics), which states that: "A robot may not injure humanity, nor, through inaction, allow humanity to come to harm". He also decides that robotic presence is stifling humanity's freedom, and that the best course of action is for the robots to phase themselves out. A non-robot, [time travel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Time_travel) novel, [*The End of Eternity*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_End_of_Eternity), features a similar conflict and resolution. The significance of the Zeroth Law is that it outweighs and supersedes all other Laws of Robotics: if a robot finds himself in a situation whereby he must [murder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder) one or more humans (a direct violation of the [First Law of Robotics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Law_of_Robotics)) in order to protect all of humanity (and preserve the Zeroth Law), then the robot's positronic programming will require him to commit murder for humanity's sake. Only highly advanced robots (such as Daneel and Giskard) could comprehend this law.

In [The Foundation Series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Foundation_Series) (which did not originally have robots), a scientist implements a semi-secret plan to create a new [galactic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galaxy) empire over the course of 1,000 years. This series has its version of [Platonic guardians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato%27s_Republic), called the Second Foundation, to perfect and protect the plan. When Asimov stopped writing the series in the 1950s, the Second Foundation was depicted as benign protectors of humanity. When he revisited the series in the 1980s, he made the paternalistic themes even more explicit.

[*Foundation's Edge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation%27s_Edge) introduced the planet [Gaia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_%28Foundation_universe%29), obviously based on the [Gaia hypothesis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_hypothesis). Every animal, plant, and mineral on Gaia participated in a shared consciousness, forming a single super-mind working together for the greater good. In *Foundation and Earth*, the protagonist starts searching for the [Earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth), thinking that there he could find the answer of why he decided, in *Foundation's Edge*, that [Galaxia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galaxia) was the right choice to take. [Gaia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_%28Foundation_universe%29) is one of Asimov's best attempts at exploring the possibility of a collective awareness, and is compounded further in [*Nemesis*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemesis_%28Asimov%29), in which the planet *Erythro* composed primarily of [prokaryotic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prokaryotic) life has a mind of its own and seeks communion with human beings.

[*Foundation and Earth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_and_Earth) introduces robots to the Foundation universe. Two of Asimov's last novels, [*Prelude to Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prelude_to_Foundation) and [*Forward the Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forward_the_Foundation), explore their behavior in fuller detail. The robots are depicted as [covert operatives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covert_operative), acting for the benefit of humanity.

Another frequent theme, perhaps the reverse of paternalism, is social oppression. [*The Currents of Space*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Currents_of_Space) takes place on a planet where a unique plant fiber is grown; the agricultural workers there are exploited by the aristocrats of a nearby planet. In [*The Stars, Like Dust*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Stars%2C_Like_Dust), the hero helps a planet that is oppressed by an arrogant interplanetary empire, the Tyranni.

Often the victims of oppression are either Earth people (as opposed to colonists on other planets) or robots. In "The Bicentennial Man", a robot fights prejudice to be accepted as a human. In [*The Caves of Steel*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Caves_of_Steel), the people of Earth resent the wealthier "Spacers" and in turn treat robots (associated with the Spacers) in ways reminiscent of how whites treated blacks, such as addressing robots as "boy". [*Pebble in the Sky*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pebble_in_the_Sky) shows an analogous situation: the Galactic Empire rules Earth and its people use such terms as "Earthie-[squaw](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Squaw)", but Earth is a theocratic dictatorship that enforces [euthanasia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euthanasia) of anyone older than 60. One hero is Bel Arvardan, an upper-class Galactic archaeologist who must overcome his prejudices. The other is Joseph Schwartz, a 62-year-old 20th century American who had emigrated from [Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe), where his people were persecuted (he is quite possibly [Jewish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jew)), and is accidentally transported forward in time to Arvardan's period. He must decide whether to help a downtrodden society that thinks he should be dead.

Yet another frequent theme in Asimov is [rational thought](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rational_thought). He invented the science-fiction [mystery](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mystery_fiction) with the novel *The Caves of Steel* and the stories in [*Asimov's Mysteries*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asimov%27s_Mysteries), usually playing fair with the reader by introducing early in the story any science or technology involved in the solution. Later, he produced non-SF mysteries, including the novel [*Murder at the ABA*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_at_the_ABA) (1976) and the "[Black Widowers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Widowers)" and "Union Club" short stories, in which he followed the same rule. In his fiction, important scenes are often essentially debates, with the more rational, humane—or persuasive—side winning.

### Awards

* 1957 [Thomas Alva Edison](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Alva_Edison) Foundation Award, for *Building Blocks of the Universe*
* 1960 Howard W. Blakeslee Award from the [American Heart Association](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Heart_Association) for *The Living River*
* 1962 [Boston University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_University)'s Publication Merit Award
* 1963 special [Hugo Award](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugo_Award) for "adding science to science fiction" for essays published in the [Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magazine_of_Fantasy_and_Science_Fiction)
* 1965 James T. Grady Award of the [American Chemical Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Chemical_Society) (now called the [James T. Grady-James H. Stack Award for Interpreting Chemistry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_T._Grady-James_H._Stack_Award_for_Interpreting_Chemistry))
* 1966 Best All-time Novel Series Hugo Award for the *Foundation* series
* 1967 [Westinghouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westinghouse_Electric_Corporation_%281886%29) Science Writing Award
* 1973 Hugo Award
* 1973 Nebula Award for Best Novel for *The Gods Themselves*
* 1977 Hugo Award
* 1977 Nebula Award for Best Novelette for *The Bicentennial Man*
* In 1981 an asteroid, [5020 Asimov](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5020_Asimov), was named in his honor
* 1987 Nebula Grandmaster award, a lifetime achievement award
* 1983 Hugo Award for Best Novel for *Foundation's Edge*
* 1992 Hugo Award for Best Novelette for *Gold*
* 1995 Hugo Award for Best Nonfiction for *I. Asimov: A Memoir*
* 1996 -- A 1946 Retro-Hugo for Best Novel of 1945 was given at the 1996 WorldCon to *The Mule*, the 7th Foundation story published in Astounding Science Fiction
* 14 [honorary doctorate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honorary_doctorate) degrees from various universities
* 1997 posthumous induction into the Science Fiction and Fantasy Hall of Fame

## Criticisms

One of the most common impressions of Asimov's fiction work is that his writing style is extremely unornamental. In 1980, science fiction scholar [James Gunn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Gunn_%28author%29), professor [emeritus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emeritus) of [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_studies) at the [University of Kansas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Kansas) wrote of *I, Robot*:[[28]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-IASFM-Gunn-27)

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| **“** | Except for two stories—"[Liar!](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liar%21)" and "[Evidence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evidence_%28Asimov%29)"—they are not stories in which character plays a significant part. Virtually all plot develops in conversation with little if any action. Nor is there a great deal of local color or description of any kind. The dialogue is, at best, functional and the style is, at best, transparent.... The robot stories—and, as a matter of fact, almost all Asimov fiction—play themselves on a relatively bare stage. | **”** |

Gunn observes that there are places where Asimov's style rises to the demands of the situation; he cites the climax of "Liar!" as an example. Sharply drawn characters occur at key junctures of his storylines: In addition to [Susan Calvin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susan_Calvin) in "Liar!" and "Evidence", we find [Arkady Darell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arkady_Darell) in [*Second Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Foundation)*,* [Elijah Baley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Baley) in [*The Caves of Steel*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Caves_of_Steel) and [Hari Seldon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hari_Seldon) in the Foundation prequels.

Asimov was also criticised for the lack of sex and aliens in his science fiction. Asimov once explained that his reluctance to write about aliens came from an incident early in his career when *Astounding'*s editor [John Campbell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_W._Campbell) rejected one of his early science fiction stories because the alien characters were portrayed as superior to the humans. He decided that, rather than write weak alien characters, he would not write about aliens at all. Nevertheless, in response to these criticisms he wrote [*The Gods Themselves*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gods_Themselves), which contains aliens, sex, and alien sex. Asimov said that of all his writings, he was most proud of the middle section of *The Gods Themselves*.[[29]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-28)

In the [Hugo Award](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugo_Award)-winning novella "[Gold](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gold_%28Asimov_short_story%29)", Asimov describes an author clearly based on himself who has one of his books ([*The Gods Themselves*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gods_Themselves)) adapted into a "compu-drama", essentially [photo-realistic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photo-realistic) [computer animation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer_animation). The director criticizes the fictionalized Asimov ("Gregory Laborian") for having an extremely nonvisual style making it difficult to adapt his work, and the author explains that he relies on ideas and dialogue rather than description to get his points across.

Others have criticised him for a lack of strong female characters in his early work. In his autobiographical writings he acknowledges this, and responds by pointing to inexperience. His later novels, written with more female characters but in essentially the same prose style as his early SF stories, brought this matter to a wider audience. For example, the 25 August 1985 *Washington Post*'s "Book World" section reports of *Robots and Empire* as follows:

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| **“** | In 1940, Asimov's humans were stripped-down masculine portraits of Americans from 1940, and they still are. His robots were tin cans with speedlines like an old [Studebaker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Studebaker), and still are; the Robot tales depended on an increasingly unworkable distinction between movable and unmovable [artificial intelligences](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artificial_intelligence), and still do. In the Asimov universe, because it was conceived a long time ago, and because its author abhors confusion, there are no computers whose impact is worth noting, no social complexities, no [genetic engineering](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetic_engineering), aliens, [arcologies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arcologies), [multiverses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiverses), [clones](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clone_%28genetics%29), sin or sex; his heroes (in this case [R. Daneel Olivaw](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R._Daneel_Olivaw), whom we first met as the robot protagonist of *The Caves of Steel* and its sequels) feel no pressure of information, raw or cooked, as the simplest of us do today; they suffer no deformation from the winds of the Asimov future, because it is so deeply and strikingly orderly. | **”** |

Be that as it may, a considerable portion of such criticism boils down to the charge that Asimov's works are simply dated. More precisely, some details of Asimov's imaginary future technology as he described in the 1940s and 1950s have not aged well. He, for example, described powerful robots and computers from the distant future as still using [punch cards](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punch_card) or [punched tape](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Punched_tape) and engineers using [slide rules](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slide_rule). In one dramatic scene in [*Foundation and Empire*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_and_Empire)*,* a character gets the news by buying a paper at a [vending machine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vending_machine).

In addition, his stories also have occasional internal contradictions: names and dates given in [The Foundation Series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Foundation_Series) do not always agree with one another, for example. Some such errors may plausibly be due to mistakes the characters make, since characters in Asimov stories are seldom fully informed about their own situations. Other contradictions resulted from the many years elapsed between the time Asimov began the Foundation series and when he resumed work on it; occasionally, advances in scientific knowledge forced him to revise his own fictional history.

Other than books by Gunn and Patrouch, there is a relative dearth of "literary" criticism on Asimov (particularly when compared to the sheer volume of his output). Cowart and Wymer's *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (1981) gives a possible reason:

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| **“** | His words do not easily lend themselves to traditional [literary criticism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_criticism) because he has the habit of centering his fiction on plot and clearly stating to his reader, in rather direct terms, what is happening in his stories and why it is happening. In fact, most of the dialogue in an Asimov story, and particularly in the Foundation trilogy, is devoted to such exposition. Stories that clearly state what they mean in unambiguous language are the most difficult for a scholar to deal with because there is little to be interpreted. | **”** |

In fairness, Gunn's and Patrouch's respective studies of Asimov both take the stand that a clear, direct prose style is still a style. Gunn's 1982 book goes into considerable depth commenting upon each of Asimov's novels published to that date. He does not praise all of Asimov's fiction (nor does Patrouch), but he does call some passages in [*The Caves of Steel*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Caves_of_Steel) "reminiscent of [Proust](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcel_Proust)". When discussing how that novel depicts night falling over futuristic [New York City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City), Gunn says that Asimov's prose "need not be ashamed anywhere in literary society".

Although he prided himself on his unornamented prose style (for which he credited [Clifford Simak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifford_Simak) as an early influence), Asimov also enjoyed giving his longer stories complicated [narrative structures](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Narrative_structure), often by arranging chapters in non-[chronological](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronology) ways. Some readers have been put off by this, complaining that the [nonlinearity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonlinear_%28arts%29) is not worth the trouble and adversely affects the clarity of the story. For example, the first third of *The Gods Themselves* begins with Chapter 6, then backtracks to fill in earlier material.[[30]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov#cite_note-29) (John Campbell advised Asimov to begin his stories as late in the plot as possible. This advice helped Asimov create "[Reason](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reason_%28Asimov%29)," one of the early Robot stories. See *In Memory Yet Green* for details of that time period.) Patrouch found that the interwoven and nested flashbacks of [*The Currents of Space*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Currents_of_Space) did serious harm to that novel, to such an extent that only a "dyed-in-the-[kyrt](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kyrt&action=edit&redlink=1" \o "Kyrt (page does not exist)) Asimov fan" could enjoy it. Asimov's tendency to contort his timelines is perhaps most apparent in his later novel [*Nemesis*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemesis_%28Asimov%29)*,* in which one group of characters live in the "present" and another group starts in the "past", beginning fifteen years earlier and gradually moving toward the time period of the first group.

In 2002, [Donald Palumbo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Palumbo), an English professor at [East Carolina University](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Carolina_University), published *Chaos Theory, Asimov's Foundations and Robots, and Herbert’s Dune: The* [*Fractal*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fractal) *Aesthetic of Epic Science Fiction*. This includes a review of Asimov's narrative structures that compares them with the scientific concepts of [fractals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fractals) and [chaos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaos). Palumbo finds that though the traditional interests of literature (such as [symbolism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolism) and [characterization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Characterization)) are often somewhat lacking or even absent, a fascination with the [Foundation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Foundation_Series) and [Robot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov%27s_Robot_Series) [metaseries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metaseries) remains. He determines that the purposeful complexities of the narrative build unusual symmetric and [recursive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recursion#Recursion_in_language) structures to be perceived by the mind's eye. This volume contains some of the most scholarly and in-depth criticism of Asimov to date.

John Jenkins, who has reviewed the vast majority of Asimov's written output, once observed:[[31]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov" \l "cite_note-30" \o ")

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| **“** | It has been pointed out that most science fiction writers since the 1950s have been affected by Asimov, either modeling their style on his or deliberately avoiding anything like his style. | **”** |

## Selected bibliography

In addition, see [Isaac Asimov complete bibliography](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov_complete_bibliography). For Asimov's suggested reading order, see the [Foundation Series list of books](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_Series#List_of_books). If all titles, charts, and edited collections are counted, there are currently 515 items in his complete bibliography. Asimov could have written an *Opus 400*, which would have been a celebration of his 400th title; the bibliography lists only up to his commemorative [*Opus 300*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Opus_300&action=edit&redlink=1). He wrote books in every category of the [Dewey Decimal Classification](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dewey_Decimal_Classification) except for [Philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy).

### Science fiction

#### Fantastic Voyage series

* [*Fantastic Voyage*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantastic_Voyage) (1966) (a novelization of the movie)
* [*Fantastic Voyage II: Destination Brain*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantastic_Voyage_II:_Destination_Brain) (1987) (not a sequel to *Fantastic Voyage,* but a similar, independent story)

#### "Greater Foundation" series

The Robot series was originally separate from the Foundation series. The Galactic Empire novels were originally published as independent stories. Later in life, Asimov synthesized them into a single coherent 'history' that appeared in the extension of the *Foundation* series.

*Main article:* [*Foundation series*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_series)

*Main article:* [*Isaac Asimov's Robot Series*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov%27s_Robot_Series)

*Main article:* [*Isaac Asimov's Galactic Empire Series*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Asimov%27s_Galactic_Empire_Series)

* **The Robot series:**
  + [*The Caves of Steel*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Caves_of_Steel) (1954), [ISBN 0-553-29340-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553293400) (first [Elijah Baley](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Baley) SF-crime novel)
  + [*The Naked Sun*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Naked_Sun) (1957), [ISBN 0-553-29339-7](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553293397) (second Elijah Baley SF-crime novel)
  + [*The Robots of Dawn*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Robots_of_Dawn) (1983), [ISBN 0-553-29949-2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553299492) (third Elijah Baley SF-crime novel)
  + [*Robots and Empire*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robots_and_Empire) (1985) (sequel to the Elijah Baley trilogy)
* **Galactic Empire series:**
  + [*Pebble in the Sky*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pebble_in_the_Sky) (1950)
  + [*The Stars, Like Dust*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Stars%2C_Like_Dust) (1951)
  + [*The Currents of Space*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Currents_of_Space) (1952)
* **Original Foundation trilogy:**
  + [*Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_%28novel%29) (1951), [ISBN 0-553-29335-4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553293354)
  + [*Foundation and Empire*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_and_Empire) (1952), [ISBN 0-553-29337-0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553293370)
  + [*Second Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Foundation) (1953), [ISBN 0-553-29336-2](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553293362)
* **Extended Foundation series:**
  + [*Foundation's Edge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation%27s_Edge) (1982), [ISBN 0-553-29338-9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553293389)
  + [*Foundation and Earth*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foundation_and_Earth) (1986), [ISBN 0-553-58757-9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553587579)
  + [*Prelude to Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prelude_to_Foundation) (1988), [ISBN 0-553-27839-8](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553278398)
  + [*Forward the Foundation*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forward_the_Foundation) (1993), [ISBN 0-553-40488-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553404881)

#### Lucky Starr series

*Main article:* [*Lucky Starr series*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Starr_series)

* [*David Starr, Space Ranger*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Starr%2C_Space_Ranger) (1952)
* [*Lucky Starr and the Pirates of the Asteroids*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Starr_and_the_Pirates_of_the_Asteroids) (1953)
* [*Lucky Starr and the Oceans of Venus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Starr_and_the_Oceans_of_Venus) (1954)
* [*Lucky Starr and the Big Sun of Mercury*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Starr_and_the_Big_Sun_of_Mercury) (1956)
* [*Lucky Starr and the Moons of Jupiter*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Starr_and_the_Moons_of_Jupiter) (1957)
* [*Lucky Starr and the Rings of Saturn*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Starr_and_the_Rings_of_Saturn) (1958)

#### Norby Chronicles

*Main article:* [*Norby*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norby)

* [Norby, the Mixed-Up Robot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norby%2C_the_Mixed-Up_Robot) (1983)
* *Norby's Other Secret* (1984)
* *Norby and the Lost Princess* (1985)
* *Norby and the Invaders* (1985)
* *Norby and the Queen's Necklace* (1986)
* *Norby Finds a Villain* (1987)
* *Norby Down to Earth* (1988)
* *Norby and Yobo's Great Adventure* (1989)
* *Norby and the Oldest Dragon* (1990)
* *Norby and the Court Jester* (1991)

#### Novels not part of a series

Novels marked with an asterisk \* have minor connections to the Foundation series.

* [*The End of Eternity*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_End_of_Eternity) (1955) \*
* [*The Gods Themselves*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gods_Themselves) (1972)
* [*Nemesis*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemesis_%28Asimov%29) (1989) \*
* [*Nightfall*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nightfall_%28Asimov%29) (1990) - with [Robert Silverberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Silverberg)
* [*The Ugly Little Boy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ugly_Little_Boy) (1992) - with [Robert Silverberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Silverberg) (aka: [*Child of Time*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_of_Time))
* [*The Positronic Man*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Positronic_Man) (1993) - with [Robert Silverberg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Silverberg)

#### Short story collections

*See also* [*List of short stories by Isaac Asimov*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_short_stories_by_Isaac_Asimov)

* [*I, Robot*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I%2C_Robot) (1950), [ISBN 0-553-29438-5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:BookSources/0553294385)
* [*The Martian Way and Other Stories*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Martian_Way_and_Other_Stories) (1955)
* [*Earth Is Room Enough*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Is_Room_Enough) (1957)
* [*Nine Tomorrows*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nine_Tomorrows) (1959)
* [*The Rest of the Robots*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rest_of_the_Robots) (1964)
* [*Through a Glass, Clearly*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Through_a_Glass%2C_Clearly) (1967)
* [*Nightfall and Other Stories*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nightfall_and_Other_Stories) (1969)
* [*The Early Asimov*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Early_Asimov) (1972)
* [*The Best of Isaac Asimov*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Best_of_Isaac_Asimov) (1973)
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* [*The Bicentennial Man and Other Stories*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bicentennial_Man_and_Other_Stories) (1976)
* [*The Complete Robot*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Complete_Robot) (1982)
* [*The Winds of Change and Other Stories*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Winds_of_Change_and_Other_Stories) (1983)
* [*The Alternate Asimovs*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Alternate_Asimovs) (1986)
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* [*Magic*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_%28Asimov%29) (1995)

### Mysteries

#### Novels

* [*The Death Dealers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Death_Dealers) (1958) (later republished as *A Whiff of Death*)
* [*Murder at the ABA*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_at_the_ABA) (1976) (also published as *Authorized Murder*)

#### Short story collections

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* [*Tales of the Black Widowers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tales_of_the_Black_Widowers) (1974)
* [*More Tales of the Black Widowers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/More_Tales_of_the_Black_Widowers) (1976)
* [*Casebook of the Black Widowers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casebook_of_the_Black_Widowers) (1980)
* [*Banquets of the Black Widowers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Banquets_of_the_Black_Widowers) (1984)
* [*Puzzles of the Black Widowers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puzzles_of_the_Black_Widowers) (1990)
* [*The Return of the Black Widowers*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Return_of_the_Black_Widowers) (2003)

#### Other mysteries

* [*Asimov's Mysteries*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asimov%27s_Mysteries) (1968)
* [*The Union Club Mysteries*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Union_Club_Mysteries) (1980)
* [*The Disappearing Man and Other Mysteries*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Disappearing_Man_and_Other_Mysteries&action=edit&redlink=1) (1985)
* [*The Best Mysteries of Isaac Asimov*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Best_Mysteries_of_Isaac_Asimov&action=edit&redlink=1) (1986)

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#### Popular science

**Collections of columns from the** [**Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magazine_of_Fantasy_and_Science_Fiction)

1. [*Fact and Fancy*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fact_and_Fancy) (1962)
2. [*View from a Height*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/View_from_a_Height) (1963)
3. [*Adding a Dimension*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adding_a_Dimension) (1964)
4. [*Of Time, Space, & Other Things*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Of_Time%2C_Space%2C_%26_Other_Things&action=edit&redlink=1) (1965)
5. [*From Earth to Heaven*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=From_Earth_to_Heaven&action=edit&redlink=1) (1966)
6. [*Science, Numbers and I*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Science%2C_Numbers_and_I_%28book%29&action=edit&redlink=1) (1968)
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8. [*The Stars in Their Courses*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Stars_in_Their_Courses&action=edit&redlink=1) (1971)
9. [*Left Hand of the Electron*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left_Hand_of_the_Electron) (1972)
10. [*The Tragedy of the Moon*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Tragedy_of_the_Moon&action=edit&redlink=1) (1973)
11. [*Of Matters Great & Small*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Of_Matters_Great_%26_Small&action=edit&redlink=1) (1975)
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16. [*Counting the Eons*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Counting_the_Eons&action=edit&redlink=1) (1983)
17. [*X Stands for Unknown*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=X_Stands_for_Unknown&action=edit&redlink=1) (1984)
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21. [*Out of the Everywhere*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Out_of_the_Everywhere) (1990)
22. [*The Secret of The Universe*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Secret_of_The_Universe) (1990)

**Others**

* [*The Chemicals of Life*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Chemicals_of_Life_%28book%29&action=edit&redlink=1) (1954)
* [*Inside the Atom*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Inside_the_Atom_%28book%29&action=edit&redlink=1) (1956)
* [*Only a Trillion*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Only_a_Trillion) (1957)
* [*The World of Carbon*](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_World_of_Carbon_%28book%29&action=edit&redlink=1) (1958)
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