

# Title: *I, Robot* by Isaac Asimov (Published in 1950)

Approved for use in Grades 11-12

## Summary of the Work:

*I, Robot* is a collection of short stories originally published between 1940 and 1950 and united by the character of Susan Calvin, robot psychologist. From the publisher: The first and most widely read book in Asimov's Robot series, forever changed the world's perception of artificial intelligence. Here are stories of robots gone mad, of mind-reading robots, and robots with a sense of humor. Of robot politicians, and robots who secretly run the world—all told with the dramatic blend of science fact and science fiction that has become Asimov's trademark.

...In *I, Robot*, Asimov chronicles the development of the robot from its primitive origins in the present to its ultimate perfection in the not-so-distant future—a future in which humanity itself may be rendered obsolete.

## Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

"A must-read for science-fiction buffs and literature enjoyers alike."—*The Guardian*

"Tremendously exciting and entertaining . . . Asimov dramatizes an interesting question: How can we live with machines that, generation by generation, grow more intelligent than their creators and not eventually clash with our own invention?"—*The Chicago Tribune*

"[A]n exciting science thriller [which] could be fun for those whose nerves are not already made raw by the potentialities of the atomic age"—*The New York Times*

Critic P. Schuyler Miller recommended the collection: "For puzzle situations, for humor, for warm character, [and] for most of the values of plain good writing."

- \* Resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any Teacher-Librarian to view the scholarly sources.
- \* Scholarly reviews are also available online. Contact the Teacher-Librarian for guidance.

## Notes on the Text:

*(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)*

The individual stories in this collection can each stand alone, but they also work well together because each one explores one of the laws and the complexities of psychology and ethics involved.

## Rationale:

Asimov is one of the great writers of the science fiction genre and a key figure in the "Golden Age of Sci-Fi," during which the genre gained cultural prominence and authors honed distinctly literary styles. In this collection, Asimov proposes his Three Laws of Robotics and explores their nuances and flaws. These Laws became the foundation not only of Asimov's writing about robots across all his works, but also for most writing about robots and AI (including writing for tv and film) for all the decades that followed. It has influenced real-life technology as well as fiction, making *I, Robot* a significant cultural benchmark as well as a work of literature worthy of study.

## Noted Distinction:

- #63 on The Classics of Science Fiction list by Wallace and Jorgensen
- #16 on NPR's Top 100 Science Fiction & Fantasy book list
- #8 on David Brin's "Science Fiction for Young Adults: A Recommended List"

## Readability

- Lexile Score: 820
- Readability Level: n/a

## Learning Resources Guidelines

- The film meets the [Learning Resources Guidelines](#) and [Board Policy](#).

## Approval:

Submitted to Committee: August 2023

Approved for Adoption:

## Connection to the Curriculum:

Students in Science Fiction study the various ages of sci-fi writing, and this text is an iconic example of the Golden Age style of literary writing. While this text offers deep exploration of ethical

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These make a great introduction to science fiction, discussion of AI (including in its current forms—despite the book’s age it is still applicable to modern technology innovations), and philosophy or ethics.

and psychological concerns, it is also a classic of the sci-fi genre, an introduction to one of the most significant grandmasters of the genre (Asimov), and an example of a unique style of short story/novel construction that allows study of style, character, tone, and structure.

**Standard Alignment:** *(Type which standard number then link to specific standard document on OPI website.)*

[RL.11-12.2](#)

[RL.11-12.3](#)

[RL.11-12.5](#)

[RL.11-12.9](#)

**Additional Connections:**

*(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)*

This text is primarily used in the Science Fiction elective course.

There is a 2004 film based on the text, which features some of the same characters and the ethics around the Three Laws of Robotics, though the plot is based primarily on only one of the short stories from the book.