



# Foundation and Empire

*Isaac Asimov*

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## **Foundation and Empire** Isaac Asimov

Led by its founding father, the great psychohistorian Hari Seldon, and taking advantage of its superior science and technology, the Foundation survived the greed and barbarism of its neighboring warrior-planets. Yet now it must face the Empire--still the mightiest force in the Galaxy, even in its death throes. When an ambitious general determined to restore the Empire's glory turns the vast Imperial fleet toward the Foundation the, the only hope for the small planet of scholars and scientists lies in the prophecies of Hari Seldon.

But not even Hari Seldon could have predicted the birth of the extraordinary creature called the Mule--a mutant intelligence with a power greater than a dozen battle fleets...a power that could turn the strongest-willed human into an obedient slave.

*Description from back cover*

## **Foundation and Empire Details**

Date : Published November 1991 by Bantam Spectra (first published 1952)

ISBN : 9780553293371

Author : Isaac Asimov

Format : Mass Market Paperback 282 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Fiction, Classics

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## From Reader Review Foundation and Empire for online ebook

### Lyn says

Isaac Asimov was 31 when he first published the SF classic Foundation in 1951. The next year he came out with the sequel, Foundation and Empire.

Unlike many series these days, or even a traditional series or trilogy (which this would be for 30 years) the first part, introducing readers to Hari Seldon and psychohistory and to the beginning of Seldon's millennia plan, was more of a prequel to the larger scope and more interesting plot brought out in Foundation and Empire.

The leaders of the Foundation operate under a foregone conclusion that their society will be a success, that theirs is a destiny proven with mathematical certainty by the great Seldon himself. Periodically in the Foundation history, a simulacrum of Seldon will appear to explain away a crisis in his plan. Up to the point of the story, Seldon had been prophetically correct in his predictions, reassuring his followers of the inevitability of his plan, and of Foundation.

But there are shadows and penumbra of uncertainty and the apprehensions are proven true when great Seldon appears and starts talking about an alternate history, one that was not going on. The Foundation was experiencing a crisis different than the one foretold by Seldon.

The mule.

Psychohistory deals with predicting statistical trends in human progress, a combined science of mathematics, sociology, psychology and cultural study that Seldon and his apostles have used Seldon's principles to exact a plan for cultural galactic evolution with exacting precision. What Seldon cannot, could not, predict was the actions of an individual. It is the unexpected ascendancy of a mutant with strange abilities that turns the Foundation plan into uncharted territory.

Decades before Darth Vader and his Emperor, Asimov's The Mule describes a conquering villain with complexities and humanistic intricacies that would create an SF/F template that would be mimicked by writers and speculative fiction writers for generations. Over sixty years later and Asimov's character is still a study in deterministic power.

One influence that jumped out to me was Trantor as a model for George Lucas' Coruscant. The center of galactic power is a planet / city with a single purpose. Asimov's impact on Herbert's Dune series is also suggested.

A must read for SF fans.

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### blakeR says

Less episodic than the first (Foundation), which was a plus. But it makes all the more apparent Asimov's complete inability to create memorable or sympathetic characters. This means that each of the two halves read like over-long short stories. Part I is a suspense-thriller, solved by a ridiculous and anti-climactic *deus*

*ex machina*, while Part II telegraphs its twist-ending so far in advance that the last few chapters are simply redundant.

There's no arguing the brilliance of Asimov's ideas -- on science, politics, economics, war, etc. -- all of which come into play in these stories. But his writing itself borders on horrendous. Dialogue is unrealistic and the lovers' language in Part II was particularly stilted and corny, although this could have just been a product of being written in the 50s. Transitions are nonexistent, making some of the scene-jumps confusing at best. A simple empty line would have helped a lot to show the change of scenery (perhaps a problem only of the old edition that I read). Last, the aforementioned characters are poorly developed.

It's one thing for Asimov to utilize his normal style of enigma/suspense followed by solution/resolution. This style works well for short stories even if they get monotonous after a while. But when stretched over 100 pages and combined with characters you don't care about, it makes for not much more than a mildly challenging brain teaser: interesting to be sure, but ultimately rather unfulfilling.

All this would normally combine for two-star status, but I grant it a third in deference to Asimov's genius and the sheer scope of the enterprise he created with this series. He was clearly an idea man, worrying much less or not at all about the literary aspect of his works. I can respect that, even if it doesn't make for a very satisfying novel.

Cross-posted at Not Bad Movie and Book Reviews.

@blakerosser1

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### **Aldo Meza says**

Esto se pone cada vez mejor !!! Habrá que continuar leyendo la saga. Altamente recomendable.

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### **Markus says**

*Foundation and Empire* is sadly not as interesting as the first book in the series. It was hard to get through at times, mostly because of a total lack of suspense, depth and real characters (which is usually also the case in the first book, but that one easily gets extra points because of the brilliance of the ideas).

Still, there are many plainly visible influences to be found, and it's good enough that I definitely want to read more of these books.

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### **Denisse says**

Foundation and Empire is an excellent continuation. **For those who wanted more reliable characters, you will find them here. For those who enjoyed the hard psychology behind the first book, you will find that here too but briefly.** I still like Foundation more, but this second installment goes into a more classical sci-fi direction without losing its philosophical serious plot. Still a very intelligent book, with an incredible pace and perfect exposition. **An essential read if you liked the first book, which you should read if you're into hard science fiction.**

**Esta secuela no espera a nadie.** Si tienes la trilogía entera en un mismo tomo, como yo, no pierdas tiempo y lee la continuación ya ~~a menos que no te gustara Fundación~~ porque no tiene mucho *warm up*. Si, tiene un prólogo que te ayudaría a recordar cosas, pero es esencial que tengas fresco todo lo que paso en el primer libro ya que te ayudara a entender la primera parte de la secuela.

**La primera parte, sigue prácticamente las mismas pautas que el libro anterior,** solo que el “enemigo” ahora es el mismo Imperio, por lo tanto el problema es, digamos, más grande. La resolución, los personajes, todo te recuerda a Fundación, lo cual no es algo malo, ya que en esa primera parte nos exponen el problema más común dentro de una “*lucha por poder*” que no puedes dejar de lado, y se expone de maravilla.

**Lo más importante es que te ayuda a entender la Fundación no como comunidad si no como razón de ser. Lo fundamental de su existencia y lo inevitable de su progreso.** Y esto es muy necesario ya que la segunda parte hace mucho énfasis en lo único que no tiene en cuenta el **PLAN SELDON**, o sea, la individualidad. Y de eso trata más el libro. Como un plan que toma en cuenta los movimientos de toda una sociedad se ve en peligro por las motivaciones de una sola persona. Además es en esta parte donde el libro se separa casi por completo de su forma de contar las cosas y toma un giro sci-fi mas clásico y común, aunque sin perder el toque del autor.

Es muy interesante de leer, y aunque sigue sin hacer énfasis en los personajes ya que el autor sigue apostándole a una trama de exposición social, si les da más protagonico a algunos. Además vemos participación femenina, algo que no tuvimos en Fundación. Bayta me agrado mucho, algo excéntrica pero centrada en sus ideales. Pero recalco, **esta no es una historia centrada en los personajes y su evolución, es muy importante tener eso en cuenta.**

**Muy recomendado si te gusto el primer libro. Una continuación digna y con una meta específica.** Segura de sí misma y de la historia que plantea, con un ritmo increíblemente rápido para la sustancia tan seria que contiene y muy inteligente. No perderé tiempo, me voy a por el tercer libro ya de ya.

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## Nandakishore Varma says

The saga continues, with the Foundation coming up against the unexpected. We are sharply reminded that psychohistory is a probabilistic science and can fail against the unpredictable.

Edit to add:

I was thinking of the mutant, Mule, who upset the carefully planned Foundation applectart.

Yes, there's very little one can do against unexpected mutants! ;)

9/11/2016

Another one of my reviews which has proved prophetic today. I am getting so good at this so as to frighten myself.

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## mark monday says

*from the Earth Journal of Scientific Analyst SLJLK92349UO,  
Earth Invasion Exploratory Unit*

Humans will fail and fail again; this much I have learned from my time spent stationed on this muddy ball of earth, the third from its star. Humans will fail and try again, win and then fail, fail and then win, fail and then keep failing. Such is the human kind! Always doing the same things. Humans are much concerned with the concepts of "winning" and "failing", as they are with such things as "civilization" and "barbarism"... their finite grasp of what life should look like means that they will always grapple with the same challenges, again and again. Oh humanity! Find a random dozen humans and study them, my robot brothers and sisters, and you will know the personality templates for all humans - the same personality templates recurring throughout their short history and their doubtlessly short future. I have learned to sympathize with while not actually admiring their predictability.

It is an amusing thing to consider, this predictability and these repetitions. Back on Robot Planet, predictability and repetition are hallmarks of robot children, prior to gaining full consciousness. Perhaps humans will never reach our exalted state. Indeed they are like children themselves.

Hari Seldon, prophet of the future from the Foundation novels, feels similarly. This comes as no surprise; as my robot brothers and sisters all know, "Isaac Asimov" was the nom de plume of my predecessor, Scientific Analyst SLJLK92349UN. May his name be forever celebrated! "Asimov" positions Seldon as a quirky but still coldly logical voice of reason from the past, carefully charting the future fall and rise again of humanity through *psychohistory* - that discipline that combines history, sociology, and mathematical statistics to predict the future behavior of large groups of people. In the preceding novel, Seldon's theories were proven to be factual, again and again. The repetition made the book an imperfect experience, but still one that this Scientific Analyst quite enjoyed. Despite the frequent human error of considering the Foundation novels to be "hard science fiction", the first and second novels are anything but hard, and revel in the so-called soft sciences instead. They have a warm and witty human touch (or at least a careful simulation) that makes these stories pleasant and charming to read, despite the repetitive nature of the first book and the first half of the second book.

In short, the first half of Foundation and Empire - the novella "The General" - replicates the themes and narrative arcs of the prior book's stories. Foundation is led by humans who misunderstand their purpose; elsewhere, forces rise to challenge Foundation; in the end, psychohistory accurately predicts the inevitable failure of those forces. Fresh new voices wrest control of the Foundation from their corrupt superiors, and all's well that ends well. It was an enjoyable adventure despite bringing nothing new to the storyline.

However, the second half of the book is a thrilling leap forward. "The Mule" is the strongest novella this Scientific Analyst has read by this author. Its strengths lie in its critique of all that was established beforehand: Seldon's predictions, the idea of Foundation being humanity's last hope, the concept of psychohistory itself... all come under severe review. Psychohistory complacently imagines it can predict every large movement of the human kind; "The Mule" posits that such predictions are limited by the basic fact that they are entirely concerned with the *human* kind. What if a factor external to the basic homo sapien model was introduced? One that may have very human yearnings yet also has abilities that no one can predict. Such a factor could lead humanity places that neither Hari Seldon nor - dare I say - the Great Minds of Robot Planet could ever predict. And such is the story and character of The Mule. A fast-paced space opera that dashes through various exotic locales, with characters transforming from friend to enemy and back to friend, entirely unpredictable; The Mule himself an insidious threat to humanity, but one who eventually shows his all-too-human and fallible motivations and goals. The Mule upends psychohistory, almost. Perhaps the fabled Second Foundation will prove a more worthy foe!

Brothers and sisters, we should evaluate "The Mule" as a coded message from its author to our masters on Robot Planet. Although the time of our invasion draws near, this Scientific Analyst suggests that we should consider external factors - ones that exist outside of basic human predictability - that may prove to be a challenge to our upcoming enterprise. Perhaps there are other, less obstreperous planets where we could harvest our necessary fuel sources and capture our meat-based servants...

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### Sanjay Gautam says

Differs considerably from its prequel while maintaining the same thrill throughout.

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### Manny says

Isaac Asimov based *Foundation and Empire* on *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; if you're in any doubt, consider the following lines from his well-known poem "The Foundation of SF Success":

So success is not a mystery, just brush up on your history, and borrow day by day.  
Take an Empire that was Roman and you'll find it is at home in all the starry Milky Way.  
With a drive that's hyperspatial, through the parsecs you will race, you'll find that plotting is a breeze,  
With a tiny bit of cribbin' from the works of Edward Gibbon and that Greek, Thucydides.

I hope you're convinced. But it does raise an interesting question: if the Trantorian Empire is the Roman Empire, what is the real-world counterpart of the Foundation? Who kept the flame of classical civilization alive through the Dark Ages, so that it could burst forth again during the Renaissance? I'm curious to see what other answers people might have, but it seems to me that the most obvious candidate is the Arabs, which presumably implies that Hari Seldon corresponds to the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh).

But what was the Seldon Plan? A united Islamic Europe? And who is the Mule? I must admit that I still haven't completely figured this out.

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### Ahmad Sharabiani says

527. Foundation and Empire (Foundation, #2), Isaac Asimov

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## Adrian says

2016

Well I first read this back in the mid 70s and have re-read it (non Gr) many times since. In my view the trilogy is comparable (if not better than) LOTR which I often say is my favourite all time book. What a quandary.

2017

As their "series" read, I am reading the Foundation series ( the 7 volume version) with SF Aficionados. I have now re-read the first 2 of the original trilogy and thoroughly enjoyed. Ok so I only read them last year but each time I (re)read them I am truly astonished by the wide ranging scope of Asimov's vision. Wonderful series of books that can be read as a trilogy, as 7 (septology?) or if one wishes to include the Asimov Robot and Empire novels its a lot more (other (Asimov estate authorised) authors have also increased the Foundation series even further).

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## Luca Ambrosino says

English (Foundation and Empire) / Italiano

«Galactic Empire was collapsing»

Less fragmented than the previous one, the second novel of the Foundation series is divided only into two time bands, respectively 150 and 230 years after the birth of the Foundation. With a new "Seldon Crisis" at hand, a formidable enemy, the Mule, equipped with almost supernatural powers, moves against the Foundation.

I enjoyed the Isaac Asimov technique to divide the novel into different temporal phases to better describe the fallen of the Empire and the rise of the Foundation. It's a suggestive experience of science fiction. It really seems to read the "Encyclopedia Galactica" that several times appears in the pages of the Foundation series. Exciting surprise ending, that remembers me the first Asimov novels of the Robot series.

Vote: 7,5

«L'Impero Galattico stava crollando»

Meno frammentario del precedente, il secondo romanzo del Ciclo delle Fondazioni risulta suddiviso in soli due blocchi temporali, rispettivamente 150 e 230 anni dopo la nascita della Fondazione. Una nuova "Crisi di Seldon" si avvicina, apparentemente scatenata da un nuovo temibile nemico, il Mulo, un'essere dotato di poteri quasi soprannaturali.

Devo dire che la tecnica di Isaac Asimov di descrivere per fasi o blocchi temporali le vicende che hanno

portato alla caduta dell'Impero e alla nascita e sviluppo della Fondazione a me piace. E' un tipo di fantascienza molto suggestiva. Sembra davvero di scorrere quell'Enciclopedia Galattica che più volte ricorre nelle pagine della serie. Molto bello il finale a sorpresa, amarcord dei primi romanzi asimoviani del Ciclo dei Robot.

Voto: 7,5

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### **Simona Bartolotta says**

I read it half in Italian (my physical copy) and half in English (my digital copy) and I've come to the conclusion that the Italian translation sucks. Hard.

**"It was strange that the Glory of the Galaxy should be a rotting corpse."**

I have gone over and over what to say in this review, but I realized that at the end of the day I had already said everything in my review of *Foundation*, the first installment in the series. The two books are of course different (for one thing, I found this one less episodic, which neither particularly pleased or displeased me), but what I think of this series didn't change. It has its strengths and its weaknesses, and I am enjoying it in that peculiar and unique way Asimov and only Asimov is able to make me enjoy a book.

(The exam went great by the way. Thank you all for your support. I'm sure Asimov helped too.)

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### **Bradley says**

Split into two stories instead of many like the first book, this one feels a lot more streamlined and the Foundation has met two of its greatest foes.

One of which was expected, and one that wasn't.

The path back to stable galactic civilization is a tortuous one. The foundation always knew that it would one day have to face against the Empire, and it did, and that story was very interesting.

But the Mule?

Well, he's just fascinating. And iconic. And perhaps a bit overdone ever since then, because, let's face it, we love mutants with mighty mental powers, don't we? Grasp the date. 1951. This isn't a comic book, either. Yes, sure, there's the Lensman and others, but what we've got here is the grand social tide set against the powers of a single individual. The very thing that Hari Seldon's math couldn't account for. And now, ashes.

What an awesome reversal! One that's both chilling and affirming at the same time, playing to our prejudices that we as individuals matter, while also showing the grand destruction that comes with it.

I'm revising the novel upwards. It was great fun and still a part of the grand trilogy. I don't know why I thought it was anything less than fantastic. :)

## Patrick says

Wow! Such a great book! I couldn't put it down! This book tied in the loose ends of Foundation, and Foundation and Empire really brought it all together with a huge bang at the end! I can't wait to read Second Foundation to see what happens!!

Foundation and Empire is set around a century after the first book. At this point, the Empire has completely collapsed and the galaxy is divided into barbarian tribes vying for power. The Foundation is the most technologically advanced group but it doesn't seek to conquer, only to hold on to its closest territories until Seldon's predictions come to fruition. However, Hari Seldon never predicted—a mutant, called the Mule!

Throughout the book I was rooting for the Foundation and my heart dropped when something horrible happened. (I'm trying so hard to keep this spoiler free)

The end was such a twist. I never saw it coming. I'm really good at predicting endings to movies and books and this one got me. I predicted the death of Viscerion from Game of Thrones but I never saw the ending of this book!

Foundation and Empire brought me back to the story. Foundation was a bit taxing since it seemed like an entire piece of dialogue but the story was intriguing. This book had many descriptions and the action was fast paced and everything I love about Sci-fi. Asimov really blew this one out of the water. Please let the third book be just as good or better than this one!!

Now, onto Second Foundation!!

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