Author profile: Isaac Asimov

Born: 2 January 1920

Died: 6 April 1992

Place of birth: Petrovichi, Russia, emigrated to New York, USA in 1923

Studies: Bachelor of Science, M.A. in Chemistry, PhD in Chemistry

Themes in *I, Robot*: Laws of robotics, morality, racism and the relationship between robots and humans

Other works: He wrote fiction and non-fiction, but he is best known for his science-fiction work. The *Foundation* series and *Nightfall* are his most famous works

Prizes: Several Hugo and Nebula awards

Other achievements: Some of his novels, for example, *I, Robot* and *Bicentennial Man*, have been made into films
Inventor of the term 'robotics'

Synopsis: *I, Robot*

I, Robot is a collection of interconnected science-fiction short stories. They were first published separately in American magazines during the 1940s and finally published as a book in 1950.

The stories feature the Three Laws of Robotics and also explore the theme of robots ceasing to behave the way they were programmed to do and becoming a threat to the human race and the ethical problems they pose.

When Asimov wrote the stories, he set them in the future (1990s). Each story tells a tale of a different robot. There are basic machines, mind-reading robots, ones that go crazy, robots who control the world and so on. The plot is usually more important than the characters, but this doesn't affect the telling of the story. Asimov inspired generations of students to study degrees such as Engineering, Science and Maths with his books.

The film, *I, Robot*, loosely based on the stories was released in 2004, starring Will Smith.

1 Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? Use the exact words from the text to justify your answer.

1 Isaac Asimov always lived in the USA. ___

_____

2 He only wrote science-fiction books. ___

_____

3 He won a number of prizes. ___

_____

2 Answer the questions according to the information in the text. Use your own words.

1 How were the short stories first published?

_____

2 What themes are in the collection of stories?

_____

3 When were the stories set?

_____

4 What did young people want to do after reading stories by Isaac Asimov?

_____

5 When did the film *I Robot* appear in cinemas?

_____

Web quest

3 Type 'Asimov biography' in your web browser and find the answers to the questions.

1 How many brothers and sisters did Isaac Asimov have?

_____

2 Where did he go to university?

_____

3 What was the name of his first publication?

_____

4 Type 'New York guide' in your web browser and find the answers to the questions.

1 What are the top five places to visit?

_____

2 What is the Empire State Building Run-Up?

_____

Author biography

5 Complete the biography with the words from the box.

books children inspiration intelligence read scientist science-fiction University

Isaac Asimov was a 1 _____ and writer. He is known for writing 2 _____ stories. From an early age, he showed signs of great 3 _____ . He taught himself to 4 _____ before he was five and he started writing in his early teens. After graduating at 15 from secondary school, he went to Columbia 5 _____ to study Science.

Later his friends introduced him to Gertrude Blugerman in 1942 and they got married. They had two 6 _____ .

By the time of his death in 1992, he had written about 500 7 _____ . His most famous works are *I, Robot* and the *Foundation* series. His stories have been the 8 _____ for many teenagers to study Maths, Engineering and Science.

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