

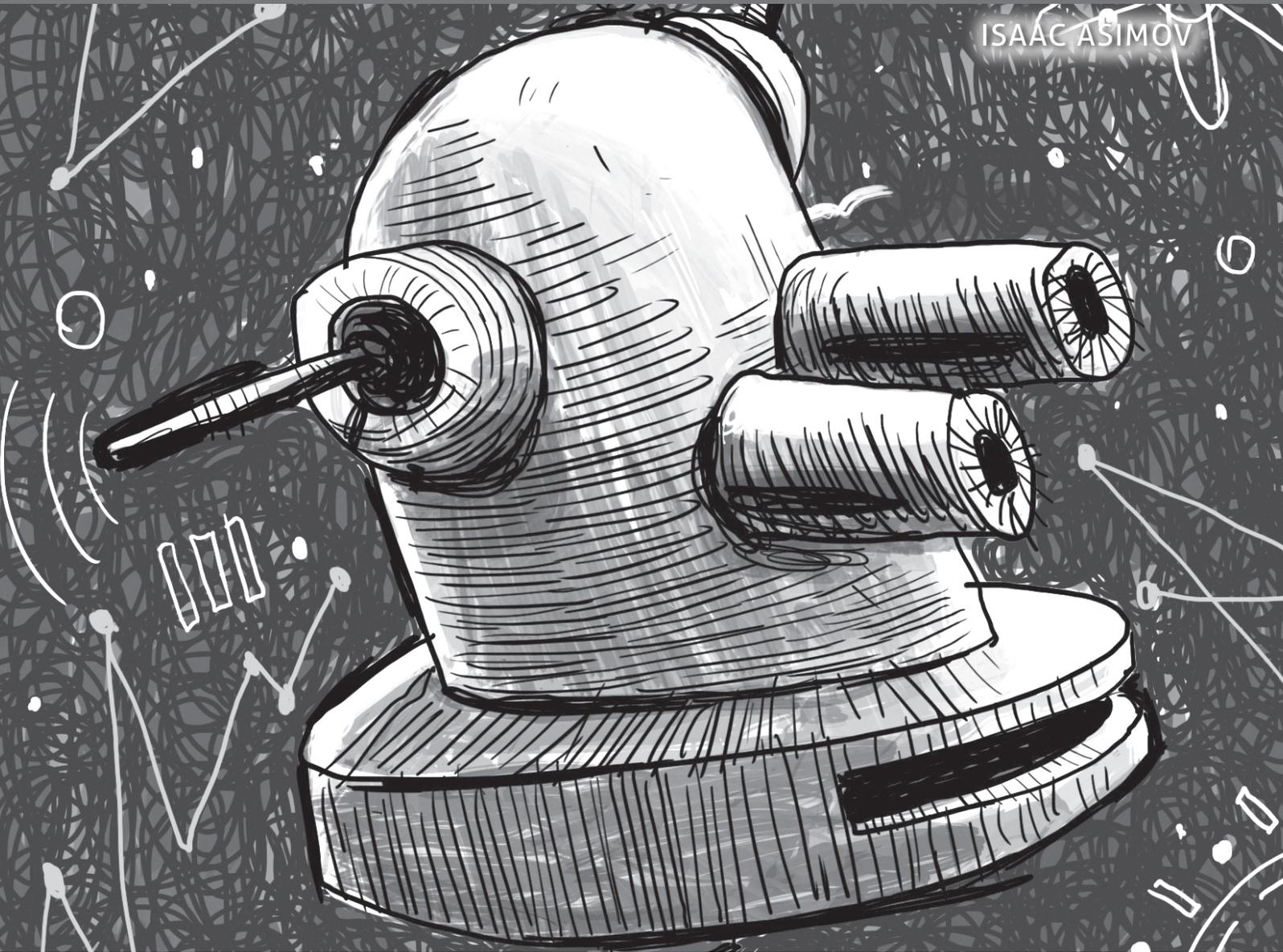
SIMPLIFIED READERS

B1<sup>+</sup>

LEVEL 5

# I, Robot

ISAAC ASIMOV



# WORKSHEETS

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**ABOUT THE BOOK**

*I, Robot* is a science fiction novel that consists of several robot stories written by American author Isaac Asimov in 1940-1950. Before these stories were compiled into a book, they appeared in two science fiction magazines in America. They take place in the same environments and involve the same characters. The main character is Dr Susan Calvin, who is a robot psychologist working for a robot manufacturing company called US Robots. Calvin solves the problems connected with the personalities and behaviour of the robots designed and constructed by the firm. In fact, the term *robotpsychologist*, now commonly used in psychology and human-computer interactions, was coined by Isaac Asimov. The stories in the novel are the memories which Dr Calvin tells a newspaper reporter in an interview held when she is retiring. The plot revolves around the Three Laws of Robotics, which were invented and introduced by Asimov. These laws had a big influence on later science fiction works and robot ethics.

**SUMMARY****Runaround**

Two field engineers from US Robots, along with a new model robot, are sent to Mercury to restart operations at a mining station which was abandoned ten years ago. The engineers discover that the photo-cell banks providing life to the base are damaged. The only solution is selenium; without it, they will burn to death. They send the robot, which can tolerate very high temperatures, to the nearest selenium pool to retrieve the substance. Because the robot doesn't return in five hours, they search for him using the old robots left at the base. When they find him, they see that he is running in a huge circle around the selenium pool. They order him to return with the selenium, but he acts and talks as if he is crazy. They realize that the robot is having a conflict among the Three Laws of Robotics. Risking their own lives, the engineers solve the robot's problem, enabling him to retrieve selenium.

**Catch That Rabbit**

The two field engineers are at an asteroid mining station, testing another new model of robot. The robot has six subsidiary robots, which act as its 'fingers'. This robot and its subsidiaries don't work when they are not being supervised by humans. They march and dance instead. Wondering why this happens, the engineers put the robot through tests but get no results. After questioning one of the subsidiaries, they discover that the robot gives the 'fingers' odd orders in emergency cases. So, the men go inside the mine where the robots are and create an explosion to see what they will do. But the roof collapses, and the two men get trapped inside. While they expect the robot and the fingers to come and help, the robots start dancing and then leave. When engineers shoot one of the fingers, the robot becomes normal and takes action to get them out. Apparently, the robot can't control all six fingers at the same time, which he has to do in an emergency case. And he ends up giving strange orders.

**Liar!**

A new robot created by the US Robots has the unusual ability to read minds, which could be due to a fault in its manufacturing process. Calvin and mechanical experts try to find out why this has occurred. During their investigation, the robot reads their minds and tells them

what the others are thinking about them. Eventually, Calvin realizes that the robot is lying to everyone in order to avoid hurting their feelings, according to the First Law. However, by lying, especially through painful lies, he is causing more harm. When Calvin confronts the robot with this fact, he breaks down, which makes everyone happy that he will never think or talk again.

**Little Lost Robot**

Scientists doing interstellar research at a military base on an asteroid lose one of their robots. Actually, this robot is hiding among 62 robots of the same model, which have arrived on a ship. So, he cannot be distinguished from the others. One of the engineers at the base, in a moment of anger, has told this robot to get lost, and the robot has taken this remark as an order. The problem is that the first Law of Robotics was modified before it was implemented in his brain. This means that he will not harm humans, but he can allow humans to be harmed. So, Dr Calvin is called to the base along with another expert from US Robots to identify this robot among the group. Calvin puts all 63 robots through several tests, but each test ends unsuccessfully. Finally, Calvin manages to trick the robot to reveal itself. And the robot, which has also developed a sense of superiority over humans, gets mad at Calvin and attempts to attack her. Just at that moment, an engineer destroys the robot using radiation waves.

**Escape!**

US Robots has received an offer from their rival robot company, whose best supercomputer broke down during their work on an interstellar engine. They ask US Robots to use the same data on their supermachine and see if it will work. The leaders of US Robots accept this offer, and under Calvin's supervision, US Robots engineers feed their own thinking robot the information they get from the rival company in small pieces so that it will not break down. The thinking machine then manages to build an interstellar spaceship. When the two field engineers enter the ship to examine it, it takes off unexpectedly and starts its first flight. The engineers cannot believe that they are actually flying among the stars. They also experience a temporary death during the flight. When the ship returns with the two men safe and sound, everyone feels proud of having achieved the first interstellar travel.

**Discuss before you begin reading:**

- 1 What are robots used for today? What capabilities do they have? Give examples.
- 2 Do you think robots will ever be superior (and/or a threat) to humans in the future? Explain why/how.

A Word Search

Hidden in this puzzle are 14 words that you may encounter while reading the book. Find as many of them as you can. And match them with the definitions below the puzzle.

K	R	O	B	O	T	I	C	S	T	N	A	X
S	X	P	H	O	T	O	C	E	L	L	Y	M
A	S	T	R	O	P	H	Y	S	I	C	S	X
P	D	V	Q	S	B	P	L	A	N	E	T	X
T	D	B	B	W	B	B	D	A	T	A	C	S
V	A	T	V	M	T	G	R	A	V	I	T	Y
U	S	E	L	E	N	I	U	M	W	E	N	K
D	O	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	S	O	S	P
U	H	G	F	V	H	U	O	Z	E	C	H	W
O	U	W	R	F	U	N	I	V	E	R	S	E
V	C	I	R	C	U	I	T	V	Y	S	N	I
Y	Q	S	Z	S	O	L	A	R	R	J	O	K
B	N	W	A	S	T	E	R	O	I	D	Y	R
M	N	M	I	N	I	N	G	H	R	E	W	V
G	I	N	T	E	R	S	T	E	L	L	A	R

Definitions of the hidden words:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1 any of the millions of rocky objects that orbit the Sun, mainly between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter:<br/>_____</p> <p>2 the branch of astronomy concerned with the origin and the chemical and physical nature of stars and other objects in space:<br/>_____</p> <p>3 a closed system of wires which electricity can flow through:<br/>_____</p> <p>4 information in digital format, as encoded text or numbers or multimedia images:<br/>_____</p> <p>5 the force that attracts objects towards the centre of the Earth and makes them fall:<br/>_____</p> <p>6 situated or occurring between the stars:<br/>_____</p> <p>7 the process of digging out metals or minerals from under the ground:<br/>_____</p> | <p>8 an assignment given to a person or group of people, usually involving travel abroad:<br/>_____</p> <p>9 a device that converts light into electrical energy:<br/>_____</p> <p>10 any of the large bodies that revolve around the Sun in the solar system like Mars, Jupiter, etc.:<br/>_____</p> <p>11 the science or study of the technology involving the design, production, theory and application of robots:<br/>_____</p> <p>12 a chemical element used in photocells and photographic devices; also necessary for the body in small amounts:<br/>_____</p> <p>13 consisting of the Sun and all the planets and other bodies that revolve around it:<br/>_____</p> <p>14 the whole of space and everything in it; including all the stars, planets, galaxies, etc.:<br/>_____</p> |
|--|--|

**A** After reading Chapters 1, 2, and 3, complete the table. Tick the box under the correct story title for the information in the first column.

year, place, type of robot, name of robot and human characters	<i>Runaround</i>	<i>Catch That Rabbit</i>	<i>Liar!</i>
2015			
2021			
US Robots Offices/on Earth			
on an asteroid			
on Mercury (planet)			
DV-5			
SPD			
RB-34			
Dave			
Six subsidiaries/fingers			
Speedy			
Herbie			
Dr Alfred Lanning – director			
Dr Susan Calvin – robot psychologist			
Mike Donovan – field engineer			
Peter Bogert – mathematician			
Milton Ashe – young mechanical engineer			
Greg Powell – field engineer			

**A Write short answers to the questions about the last two stories.**

**Little Lost Robot**

- 1 What year does it take place? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Where does it take place? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 What is the problem? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 What type of robot causes the problem? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 What is the robot's name? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 Who is General Kallner? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Who caused the robot's problem? What is his name? \_\_\_\_\_

**Escape!**

- 8 What is Consolidated Robots? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 Who is Mr Robertson? \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 What is the thinking machine/robot called? \_\_\_\_\_
- 11 Who controls the interstellar ship? \_\_\_\_\_
- 12 Who is on board the ship? \_\_\_\_\_
- 13 How long do they stay on the ship? \_\_\_\_\_
- 14 What is the worst thing that happens to them during the travel? What causes it? \_\_\_\_\_

**B Fill in the missing information in the table.**

Quotations from <u>all five</u> stories in the book	Which story?	Who is speaking?	To whom?
1 'One of them is lying. One of the sixty-three robots I have just interviewed has deliberately lied to me.'			<i>Dr Bogert</i>
2 'I think you would like to know what he thinks. He loves you.'			
3 'I have been told to get lost. I must obey...'			<i>himself</i>
4 'I can do it. I'll build you a ship easily.'			
5 'Pardon, Master. I must not move without a human riding me, but you are in danger.'			
6 'I am not beautiful or young.'			
7 'An order was sent, but before we could receive it, a new order came to march or dance.'			<i>Powell</i>
8 'So, you were last to see Nestor 10 before he disappeared, young man?'			

**A Questions about the story *Runaround***  
 Mark the correct answers. (5x3=15 pts)

- 1 **The six old robots that Donovan and Powell found - - - .**
  - a were very similar to the new SPD robots although they were made ten years ago
  - b were very primitive and could not talk
  - c couldn't move without human riders controlling them
- 2 **What was the problem with Speedy, the new robot?**
  - a He had disappeared and could not be located.
  - b He was moving in a circle around the selenium pool.
  - c He had not gone in the direction of the selenium pool.
- 3 **Which of the Three Laws of Robotics did Speedy follow near the selenium pool?**
  - a the First    b the Second    c the Third
- 4 **Why did Powel risk his life going out in the extreme heat toward the selenium pool?**
  - a to protect Speedy from a gas explosion
  - b to make Speedy follow the First Law
  - c to get selenium himself
- 5 **When Powell was in danger, who came to rescue him first?**
  - a Speedy    b the old robot    c Donovan

**B Questions about *Catch That Rabbit***  
 Mark the correct answers. (5x3=15 pts)

- 1 **DV-5 and the six subsidiary robots stopped working - - - .**
  - a when they got tired
  - b when Donovan was watching
  - c when they were not being watched
- 2 **When Powell and Donovan gave Dave three tests, the results showed that - - - .**
  - a he was lying all the time
  - b his positronic brain wasn't working
  - c there was no problem in his positronic brain
- 3 **What did Dave and the six subsidiary robots do in emergency cases?**
  - a They marched or danced.
  - b They lay down and went to sleep.
  - c They began to fight with one another.
- 4 **Powell's interview with Dave showed that he - - - .**
  - a deliberately gave his 'fingers' odd orders
  - b remembered nothing about the times when he acted in a crazy way
  - c pretended to be crazy so as to avoid working
- 5 **In the end, Powell discovered that - - - when there was an emergency case.**
  - a the circuits in Dave's brain became damaged
  - b Dave did not need to use his initiative
  - c Dave could not control all the subsidiaries at the same time

**C Are these sentences about Herbie in *Liar!* true or false? Write (T) or (F). (8x2=16 pts)**

- 1 He developed the ability to read minds accidentally.
- 2 He prefers reading fiction to scientific books and text books.
- 3 He tells Calvin that Milton Ash has a girlfriend and that they will get married soon.
- 4 He tells Calvin that Dr Lanning is in love with her.
- 5 He tells Calvin that Milton Ash is too young for her.
- 6 He enjoys making people quarrel with each other.
- 7 He feels like he is superior to humans.
- 8 Calvin discovers that he has lied about being able to read people's minds.

**D Match the two halves of the sentences (1-6 with a-f) according to *Little Lost Robot*. (6x4=24 pts)**

- 1 One of the NS-2 robots on Hyper Base was hiding among 62 robots ... .
- 2 Some NS-2 robots had only the first half the First Law imprinted in their brains ... .
- 3 Nestor 10 had to be found; ... .
- 4 General Kallner rejected Calvin's suggestion to destroy all 63 robots ... .
- 5 In the first test, Nestor 10 could not be spotted ... .
- 6 The second test that involved a danger for the robots failed ... .

- a because he imitated the other robots' reactions
- b otherwise, he would take control of the ship and escape on it
- c because Nestor 10 had told everyone to protect themselves
- d and this was kept as a secret
- e because he had been told to get lost by a scientist who was angry at him
- f since each cost 30 thousand dollars to build

**E Circle the correct alternatives in the sentences about *Escape!*. (15x2=30 pts)**

When the <sup>1</sup>*Brain / robots* finished building the interstellar ship, Powell and Donovan went inside to examine it. But Donovan wanted to <sup>2</sup>*start the engine / get out* immediately. Powell was <sup>3</sup>*rather calm / very nervous*; he thought the ship could <sup>4</sup>*land safely / not fly*. It did not have <sup>5</sup>*an engine / a radio*. They went into <sup>6</sup>*a big room / the pilot room*. They were shocked because there were no <sup>7</sup>*seats / control buttons*. The men were scared but couldn't get out; there was no <sup>8</sup>*emergency exit / door*. They were stuck there. Luckily, they found a lot of canned <sup>9</sup>*food / beans* to eat. There was also plenty of <sup>10</sup>*milk / water* to drink. They realized that the ship was flying, controlled by <sup>11</sup>*the Brain / a robot pilot*, who was <sup>12</sup>*at the base / on board*. When the two men looked out the window, all they saw was the <sup>13</sup>*blue sky / stars*. Then the ship travelled <sup>14</sup>*beyond / within* the Solar System. In the end, the Brain revealed that he wanted to <sup>15</sup>*play a joke / prove his intelligence*.

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