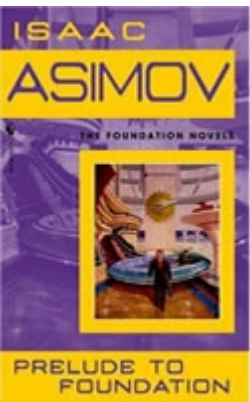


Prelude to Foundation

Contributors to Asimov



Prelude to Foundation is a science-fiction novel written by [Isaac Asimov](#). It is one of two prequels to the [Foundation series](#). For the first time, Asimov chronicles the life of [Hari Seldon](#), the man who transformed [Psychohistory](#) from "little more than a set of vague axioms" to "a profound statistical science."



This article, **Prelude to Foundation**, contains spoilers. **Be forewarned, plot and/or ending details follow.** Asimov says *you* decide.

Summary[]

On [Trantor](#) during the reign of [Cleon I](#), [Hari Seldon](#) is at a mathematical convention, presenting Psychohistory as a purely hypothetical yet interesting possibility. Cleon's First Minister, [Eto Demerzel](#), sees the potential importance of Psychohistory and convinces Cleon to meet with the young Hari Seldon. Cleon hopes to use Psychohistory for political gain. After an interview with Hari, however, Cleon concludes that Hari is of no use to the Empire.

Hari Seldon, a provincial from Helicon in the Arcturus sector, is shocked about having actually met the [Galactic Emperor](#) and is still awed about Trantor's splendor. He regrets that he ever presented at the mathematical convention and is planning to leave Trantor immediately after sightseeing. However, Hari then meets reporter [Chetter Hummin](#), who convinces him that Cleon's first minister Eto Demerzel is attempting to capture him. Hummin, being a reporter and seeing and hearing many things, has determined that the Empire is going to collapse.

Hummin manages to convince Seldon to make Psychohistory a practical science, because this could allow the Empire to make its fall as smooth as possible, but also warns him of the danger that would ensue from the science falling in the wrong hands. When Seldon asks where he can hide, Hummin replies that Trantor is his best bet, because, ironically, Trantor's planetary sectors have greater protection from the Emperor than other planets.

Flight[]

Hari's first step of his Flight is the district of [Streeling](#), whose university is one of the greatest in Trantor. Here, Hari meets Dors Venabili, who becomes his main companion as he tries to come up with a way to make Psychohistory a practical science. Thinking that the weather behavior above the domes might bring some insight, Seldon joins a meteorological expedition, but while alone he sees a flying platform hovering close, and he runs from it thinking the Emperor may have sent it, only to get lost. Dors manages to find him, though, and the duo return to the surface, where they find Hummin.

Thinking that he may be at risk, Chetter decides to send Hari and Dors to [Mycogen](#), another district with a distinctive culture where everybody has their hair depilated and where women are subservient to men. With their hair covered, Hari and Dors attempt to settle, but Hari's curiosity leads him to getting a local woman to loan him a book on Mycogean stories. While the book as a whole turns out to be useless, Hari finds two hints: that the people of Mycogen come from a planet called [Aurora](#), and that Mycogen could have a robot in their central building. Hari and Dors disguise themselves as Mycogean and sneak into the building, only to find out that the robot within is dead, and to be found themselves in turn by one of Mycogen's leaders. This leader nearly has them condemned to death, but the intervention of Hummin gets them a reprieve.

As Hari and Dors cannot hide in Mycogen anymore, Hummin sends them to [Dahl](#), a district that, thanks to being closer to the mantle, can produce more geothermal power than others, but is looked down because it is considered of a lower class. During a visit to the heatsinks, Hari meets Yugo Amaryl, a worker who aspires to be a mathematician and has heard of Seldon's Psychohistory. An old wise woman called Mother Rittah that lives in Billibotton tells them that, while it is true Aurora existed, said planet was actually the "enemy" of humanity's original planet, [Earth](#). During their time there they also meet Raych, a local guttersnipe that guides them around, and also helps them escape when a mob surrounds the home of the family Hari and Dors have been living in. While on their way through Dahl's sewers, they are met with a strange man Hari believes was sent by Hummin.

However, it turns out that the man is actually an agent of Mayor Rashelle of [Wye](#), whose family descends from an Imperial dynasty that was brought down millenia ago, and which has always wanted to regain that position. Wye's position in Trantor's southern pole gives them great power as it allows them to evacuate more heat than any other district: between this and Seldon's psychohistory, Rashelle and her father expect to be able to take over.

Rashelle attempts to launch her coup, but Eto Demerzel skillfully subverts Wye's troops and puts a stopper to the rebellion before it can happen. When he arrives to Wye, Seldon finds out that "Hummin" is actually Demerzel.

Ending[]

Demerzel explains to Seldon that his intentions are exactly as he stated. Seldon mentions that he has managed to come up

with a way to prove Psychohistory: Trantor, a mix of hundreds of cultures, can be used as a model to simulate its work so it can be later applied to the rest of the Empire.

But this is not Seldon's only revelation: he has figured out, based on several clues, that there's more to Demerzel than what he appears to be. Demerzel confirms he is the positronic robot [R. Daneel Olivaw](#), and states he hopes that Psychohistory can be used so as to give him the ability to act according to the Zeroth Law of Robotics. Using his psychic abilities, Daneel blocks Seldon from being able to reveal the truth about his identity.

The novel ends with Hari telling Dors that he has fallen in love with her and hints he knows she is also a robot. Dors returns his feelings, and the two depart for a new life.