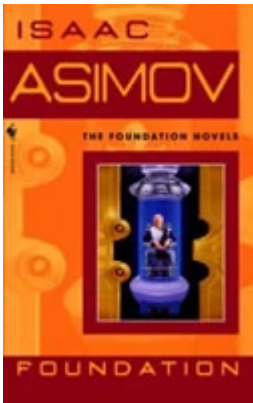


# Foundation

Contributors to Asimov



**Foundation** is a novel in [Isaac Asimov's Foundation Series](#). It is the first volume of the [Foundation trilogy](#).

The novel is a collection of five short stories which were first published together as a book by Gnome Press in 1951. The first story was written by Asimov in 1950 to serve as an introduction to the series. The other four stories were originally published in *Astounding Science Fiction* magazine under the titles "Foundation" (May 1942), "Bridle and Saddle" (June 1942), "The Wedge" (October 1944) and "The Big and the Little" (August 1944).

## Parts[ ]

### 1 The Psychohistorians[ ]

#### Summary[ ]

The story begins on Synnax, with Gaal Dornick. Gaal always had wanted to go to Trantor, the capital planet of the 12,000 year old [Galactic Empire](#). Though it has endured for so long and appears outwardly to be strong and stable, the empire has been imperceptibly declining for centuries. The only one who realizes this is [Hari Seldon](#), a mathematician who has created the science of [Psychohistory](#) by which it is possible to predict future events by extrapolating from historic trends. He has set up a project which is increasingly harassed by Imperial officials from the Commission of

Public Safety, the actual rulers of the Empire. They finally arrest Seldon and [Gaal Dornick](#), a young mathematician who has just arrived to join the project.

At Seldon's trial more details come out. Seldon predicts that Trantor will be destroyed within 300 years as the climax to the fall of the [Galactic Empire](#), leading to a 30,000 year period of anarchy before a Second Empire is established. The purpose of his project is to influence events so that the interregnum period will be only 1,000 years and not 30,000. This will be done, he says, by the production and dissemination by his team of an [Encyclopedia Galactica](#) which will contain all human knowledge. The commission is satisfied that Seldon's project is not a threat to the Empire but wants to quiet him. He and his team are exiled to [Terminus](#), a small planet on the periphery of the galaxy, to work on the encyclopedia. Several fascinating conclusions are reached during Seldon's conversation with Dornick: for example, that the Psychohistorians of Trantor maneuvered the Commissioners to move the [Foundation](#) to Terminus and that the Foundation is an active rebellion against the authoritative Empire, which Seldon says "has lost whatever virility and worth it once had."

## Background[

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*The Psychohistorians* is the only part of the *Foundation Trilogy* that was not originally published in *Astounding Magazine* and was, in fact, the last part of the trilogy that Asimov wrote, though, chronologically, it describes the earliest events. Asimov wrote this story circa 1950 when the series was being prepared for publication in book form by Gnome Press, who felt that the series began too abruptly. However, most people do not know that there was another, very brief, opening<sup>[1]</sup> that originally preceded *Foundation* (which was later published as *The Encyclopedists*), which was the first story written. The story is also notable for predicting the pocket calculator more than two decades before it was made possible by integrated circuits....

## 2 The Encyclopedists[

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(published May 1942 as *Foundation*)

Fifty years after the events in *The Psychohistorians*, Terminus is faced with the first of the "[Seldon Crises](#)," the events which will force it into choices that will eventually lead to the Second Empire. Four nearby provinces of the Empire have rebelled, forming independent kingdoms. Those kingdoms are fairly barbarous and the leaders of the most powerful, [Anacreon](#), begin threatening Terminus, which they covet for its strategic location vis-a-vis their rivals and for its advanced technology. Terminus has no mineral wealth - steel is so valuable that it is used to coin money - and so the Anacreonian envoy, Anselm Haut Rodric, proposes to implement a form of feudalism in exchange for "protection" from the other kingdoms.

The Foundation's Board of Trustees is blind to the danger, spending all of its time working on the encyclopedia. The Mayor of Terminus City, [Salvor Hardin](#), does perceive the danger, but he lacks the legal authority to act, all power under the Foundation's charter being vested in the Board of Trustees. Hardin had the good fortune to have been trained by Dr. Bor Alurin, the only [Second Foundationer](#) to have settled on Terminus, as a psychologist. Hardin did not complete his studies under Alurin, a notoriously uninstrusive teacher, as he grew tired of theory. Thus, he was unable to become a psychological engineer, so he entered local politics instead. He realizes that the key to beating this crisis is to play the "Four Kingdoms" off each other.

At the ceremonial opening of the time-locked vault at the Seldon Museum, a holographic image of Seldon appears and

announces that the Encyclopedia Galactica project had always been a fraud from its inception: the real purpose of the settlement of Terminus was to place the Foundation out of reach of the Empire for the near term. In addition, he reveals that the true goal of the Foundation is to further science in a galaxy consumed by interplanetary strife. The Board of Trustees are devastated, but fortunately for the Foundation, Hardin has engineered a bloodless coup leaving him in control of the planet, free to carry out his strategy. The first Seldon Crisis has been resolved in accordance with the plan.

### 3 The Mayors[ ]

(published June 1942 as *Bridle and Saddle*)

Three decades later, relationships between the Foundation and nearby systems are based in technology transfer and [Scientism](#), a religion which the Foundation sets up around its technology to control the several larger systems that surround them. Only the priests, educated on Terminus, have the knowledge to use the technology--but they think it is mystical, not scientifically explainable. The Priesthood system, while an effective hold on the Four Kingdoms ([Anacreon](#), [Smyrno](#), Konom and Daribow) surrounding Terminus, caps any possible scientific rebellion and delocalization of knowledge: the most brilliant students of the sciences remain on Terminus as research students and finally citizens, drastically enhancing the scientific superiority of the Foundation.



The Imperial Cruiser redone for [Anacreon](#)

Salvor Hardin remains Mayor of Terminus, although his political dominance is being challenged by "The Actionist Party," a rival political party demanding "direct action" to challenge the military dominance of the surrounding systems. A bellicose warlord, the [Prince Regent Wienis](#), from [Anacreon](#), the largest of the four kingdoms, tries to take over the [First Foundation](#) by force of arms and the fortuitous recovery and salvage of a mighty warship, an old Imperial frigate restored by Foundation fleet technicians as an attempted appeasement. However, Seldon's inevitable psychohistory does not permit this, as the people of the Kingdoms already look to the Foundation for authority, while the secular power of the Kings is already a sub-function of priestly, and therefore Foundation, control. Seldon, appearing again in the time vault after the second crisis is resolved, warns the Foundation that the "spiritual power" of science, while sufficient for defense, is not sufficient to sustain a rapid political expansion. But leaves it to them to figure out the next step.

### 4 The Traders[ ]

(published October 1944 as *The Wedge*)

**Summary[ ]**

Approximately 75 years after the events of the previous story, Limmar Ponyets is dispatched to Askone, a world rich in raw materials which has thus far spurned any commerce with the [First Foundation](#), due to Askonian society's ban on atomic technology and as part of its religion of ancestor worship. Ponyets's job is to negotiate for the release of [Eskel Gorov](#), a Foundation agent who was sent to find a way to initiate trade with Askone. This was a violation of that planet's law, and Gorov is scheduled to be executed by lethal gassing.

The Grand Master, their elderly leader, is firm about not accepting any technology from the Foundation and about proceeding with Gorov's execution. However, Ponyets convinces them to release Gorov in exchange for 500 pounds of gold made by a transmuter he has jury-rigged out of a "food irradiation chamber," presumably a more advanced version of a microwave oven.

Of greater import, Ponyets accomplishes Gorov's mission of creating an opening for Foundation trade. He blackmails a member of the governing council, Pherl, to buy all of his cargo, which consists of many devices and machines forbidden by Askonian law. This council member, who does not believe in his culture's superstitions against technology, buys the transmuter from Ponyets, not knowing that it has microfilm recorder to record him using it. As a result, he has now an incentive to work towards the legalization of those machines, so that he can begin using and selling them to recoup his loss. It is indicated that Pherl, who is young for someone so important in government, will be the next Grand Master shortly thanks to the transmuter's gold, further hastening Askone's susceptibility to Foundation trade and the controlling religion that it brings with it. Ponyets and Gorov head back to Terminus with two shiploads of tin, which Ponyets was able to extract from Pherl as part of their bargain.

**Background[ ]**

Though *The Traders* takes place before *The Merchant Princes*, it was actually written and published later. Asimov went back to write it to make the transition from the Foundation's religious control to its economic influence more understandable and believable. This was made easier because there is a reference in *The Merchant Princes* to what happened on Askone. It is briefly indicated that Askone first allowed trade with the Foundation and was soon inundated with missionaries and lost its power to the Foundation.

Interestingly, the character of Limmar Ponyets is named "Lathan Devers" in the original story. Lathan Devers is the name of the trader who is heavily featured in *The General*, which was first published as *The Dead Hand* and was the first of the two stories that were reedited into [Foundation and Empire](#).

**5 The Merchant Princes[ ]**

(published August 1944 as *The Big and the Little*)

Additional years pass, and the Foundation's economic influence and religious control of surrounding worlds continues to grow, though this is not yet matched by military and political domination. Three of the Foundation's atomic-powered ships have disappeared near the Republic of [Korell](#), a nation that is suspected of developing advanced technology of its own, which would threaten the Foundation. [Hober Mallow](#), a master trader (though not a Foundation agent), is sent to Korell on a trade mission and told to keep his eyes open and learn what he can about their technology and the missing ships.

Korell does little commerce with the Foundation, and their leader, Commdor (First Citizen Of The State) Asper Argo, whose wife, Commidora Licia Argo, proves to be a daughter of the Viceroy of the Normannic Sector of the Empire, is reluctant to adopt their technology. It is learned that Askone did indeed fall under the control of [Scientism](#) after it became dependent on Foundation technology. However, Mallow finds the missionaries's mysticism and hocus-pocus annoying, and thus, he is not interested in proselytizing; he simply wants to make money--and convinces the Commdor of this. After demonstrating the many useful products that he can sell them, ranging from steel foundry technology and portable force-field generators to miniature laundries and floor-scrubbers, Mallow signs contracts to provide them with such things, making huge profits for himself. He sees no sign of the missing ships while there, but he does discover that the Korellians retain some vestiges of atomic technology in the shape of atomic handguns.

Shortly after this, Mallow travels to the fringes of the [Galactic Empire](#), where he finds out the true extent of the empire's decline. Political leadership of the Empire has been unstable, rebellion is frequent among the planets, and opportunistic generals often arbitrarily massacre the planets they are sent to pacify. Equally stunning is the decline of the Empire's technological prowess: "tech-man" is a hereditary office held by persons who restrict themselves to simple maintenance of previously produced machinery, which they are able neither to understand fully nor to replicate. As Mallow explains, "The machines work from generation to generation automatically, and the caretakers are a hereditary caste who would be helpless if a single D-tube in all that vast structure burned out."

After returning to [Terminus](#), Mallow is denounced as a traitor for not spreading the Foundation's religion along with trade. Mallow argues that religion has played itself out as a means of furthering Foundation control. Trade, for now, will be the Foundation's tool for expanding into the Second Galactic Empire. Mallow is arrested for having allegedly allowed a Foundation missionary ("Jord Parma, of the Anacreonian worlds") to be killed while he was on Korell, but he shows the event to have been staged. (A visual record which he plays as the primary evidence exhibit for his defense at his trial shows that Jord Parma was an impostor--an agent of the Commdor's secret police.) Mallow eventually wins the next mayoral election, becoming leader of Terminus.

Years later, the Foundation is invaded by the Korellians, who have been armed with nuclear technology by a general of the Galactic Empire seeking power and riches beyond the empire's periphery. Although the Korellian ships are far too powerful for the Foundation to resist, Mallow is convinced that the [First Foundation](#) will win in the end, as Korell's attack has caused the Foundation to impose a trade embargo on it. As he explains, the Korellians have become so totally dependent on Foundation technology to maintain their infrastructure and day-to-day lives that as the Foundation's equipment wears out in Korell's factories and homes, the resulting economic contractions would lead to a huge popular upheaval. Mallow is convinced that all the Foundation needs to do is avoid battle, as it might give the Korellians reason to support their government out of patriotism.

Shortly after, Mallow's predictions come to pass, and Korell surrenders and is incorporated into the Foundation.

The Foundation is still far from the huge power the former Empire was, but it is rapidly growing and expanding its control and prestige.

Characters[ ]

- Hari Seldon
- Gaal Dornick
- Linge Chen
- Lors Avakim

- JerriI
- Salvor Hardin
- Anselm hault Rodric
- Bor Alurin
- Jord Fara
- Lewis Pirenne
- Lundin Crast
- Lord Dorwin
- Tomaz Sutt
- Yate Fulham
- Yohan Lee
- Dokor Walto
- Jaim Orsy
- King Lepold I
- Lem Tarik
- Levi Norast
- Lewis Bort
- Prince Lefkin
- Prince Regent Wienis
- Poly Verisof
- Theo Aparat
- Eskel Gorov
- Limmar Ponyets
- Lers Gom
- Hober Mallow
- Publis Manila
- Jorane Sutt
- Jaim Twer

**Planets and locations[ ]**

- Synnax
- Trantor
- Terminus
  - Terminus City
    - City Hall
    - Time Vault
    - Cyclopedia Square
- Anacreon
- Smyrno
- Konom
- Daribow
- Askone
- Korell
- Siwenna

Organizations[ ]

- Galactic Empire
  - Commission of Public Safety
- Seldon Project
- First Foundation
  - Board of Trustees
  - City Council
  - Actionist Party
  - Encyclopedia Galactica Publishing Company
- Second Foundation
- Four Kingdoms
  - Kingdom of Anacreon
  - Kingdom of Smyrno
  - Kingdom of Konom
  - Kingdom of Daribow
- Traders
- Scientism
- Elders of Askone
- Republic of Korell
- Korellian Secret Police

Titles[ ]

- Galactic Emperor
- Chief Commissioner
- Mayor
- Chairman
- Chief Advisor
- King
- Prince
- High Priest
- Ambassador
- Master Trader
- Grand Master
- Councilor
- Foreign Secretary
- Mayoral Secretary
- First Citizen
- Merchant Prince

**Events[ ]**

- First Seldon Crisis
- Second Seldon Crisis
- Third Seldon Crisis
- Korellian War

**See Also[ ]**

[List of Books by Isaac Asimov](#)