

Robots in Science Fiction

How are self-aware robots depicted in science fiction?

1 Isaac Asimov's Laws of Robotics

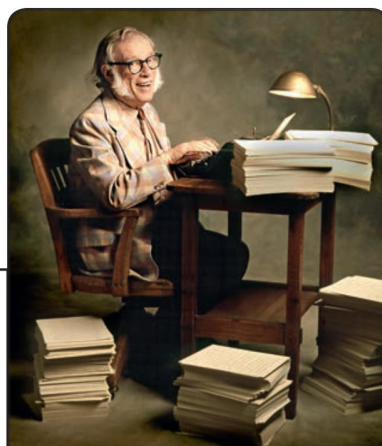


- A. Listen to **MP3 n°99**, in which Isaac Asimov speaks about the three Laws of Robotics he created and used in his novels.
- B. Rewrite the three laws in your own words.
- C. How can you relate the three laws to the documents studied in this unit?

Cultural fact

Isaac Asimov (1920-1992) was one of the 20th century's most prolific writers, writing in many genres. He is known for sci-fi works like *Foundation* and *I, Robot*.

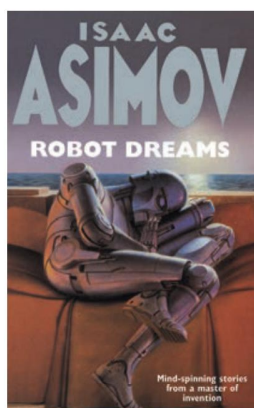
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2 "Robot Dreams"

- A. Read the title of the text and look at its cover. Imagine what robots may dream about.

- B. Read the text and use **Worksheet n°51** to answer the questions.



Part 1

Calvin said, "How often have you dreamed, Elvex?"

"Every night, Dr. Calvin, since I have become aware of my existence."

"Ten nights," interposed Linda, anxiously, "but Elvex only told me of it this morning."

"Why only this morning, Elvex?"

"It was not until this morning, Dr. Calvin, that I was convinced

that I was dreaming. Till then, I had thought there was a flaw¹ in my positronic brain pattern, but I could not find one. Finally, I decided it was a dream."

"And what do you dream?"

"I dream always very much the same dream, Dr. Calvin. Little details are different, but always it seems to me that I see a large panorama in which robots are working."

"Robots, Elvex? And human beings, also?"

"I see no human beings in the dream, Dr. Calvin. Not at first. Only robots."

"What are they doing, Elvex?"

"They are working, Dr. Calvin. I see some mining in the depths of the Earth, and some laboring

in heat and radiation. I see some in factories and some undersea."

Calvin turned to Linda. "Elvex is only ten days old, and I'm sure he has not left the testing station. How does he know of robots in such detail?"

Linda looked in the direction of a chair as though she longed to sit down, but the Old Woman was standing and that meant Linda had to stand also.

She said, faintly, "It seemed to me important that he know about robotics and its place in the world. It was my thought that he would be particularly adapted to play the part of overseer with his – his new brain."

"His fractal brain?"

"Yes."

Calvin nodded and turned back to the robot. "You saw all this – undersea, and underground, and aboveground – and space, too, I imagine."

"I also saw robots working in space," said Elvex.

"It was that I saw all this, with the details forever changing as I glanced² from place to place, that made me realize that what I saw was not in accord with reality and led me to the conclusion, finally, that I was dreaming."