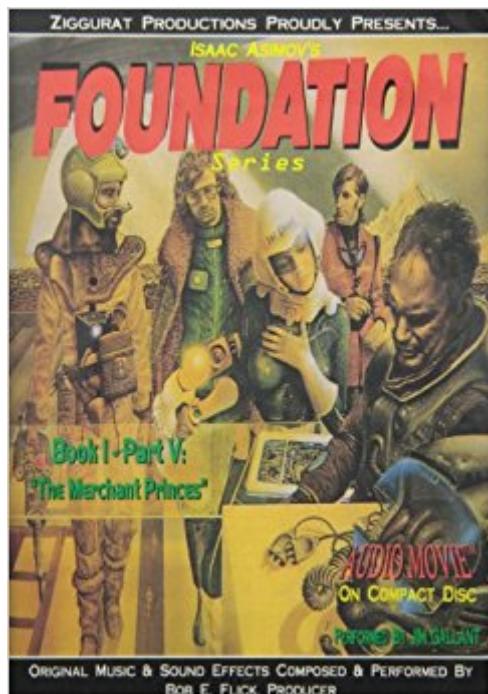


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Isaac Asimov's Foundation Series



Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This review is specifically of the Kindle edition, published by Ballantine/Bantam. The Foundation Trilogy is a wonderful piece of work, but the Kindle edition butchers it! Someone has decided to water down Asimov's prose, eliminating some of the more enjoyable passages of the book. Here are some examples, found by comparison with an old Bantam Doubleday hardcover edition. Several pages into chapter 3, Salvor Hardin is arguing with the Encyclopedists about the decline of the Empire. Original: "If you ask me,", he cried, "THE GALAXY IS GOING TO POT!" Kindle: "If you ask me,", he cried, "THE GALACTIC EMPIRE IS DYING!" In chapter 5, Hardin is again meeting with the Encyclopedists and discussing the threat received from Anacreon. Original: The message from Anacreon ... boils down easily and straightforwardly to the unqualified statement ... "You give us what we want in a week, or we beat the hell out of you and take it anyway." Kindle: The message from Anacreon ... boils down easily and straightforwardly to the unqualified statement ... "You give us what we want in a week, or we take it by force." I'm going to be asking for a refund.

Foundation and Empire by Isaac Asimov is a science fiction novel originally published in 1952. It is a classic piece of mid 20th century literature, and a breakthrough in its genre. It is the first of five sequels and one prequel in the Foundation series. The basic premise revolves around a group of scholars intent on writing an encyclopedia to preserve science who are exiled from the capital of a galactic Empire to a remote planet. They are lead by a man named Hari Seldon, a mathematician

and psychohistorian who predicts the future of civilizations and has declared that the Empire will eventually fall, leading to a long period of barbarism for all humanity. The original Foundation (#1) book has several parts that are spread over different centuries after the group is exiled and after they have formed their new society, called the Foundation, on the remote planet. Foundation and Empire centers around a man, Toran, and his wife, Bayta, as they travel through the ever-changing galaxy, as the Empire dissolves and the Foundation struggles to survive. The time period for this sequel is 300 years after the time of Hari Seldon. Also introduced in this sequel is a psychologist by the name of Ebling Mis, a strange and peculiar clown called Magnifico, and a powerful conqueror known as The Mule. In my previous review of the original Foundation (#1) book, I said "the characters are flat, the plot is laborious, and the themes are shallow.", but just by reading the first few pages of Foundation and Empire, my opinion of the series completely changed. As I also stated in my first review, I could not judge the entire collection having read just one of seven books in the series. Foundation and Empire in a word, is "genius", and it is no wonder why the Foundation series serves as a benchmark for its creativity in the science-fiction genre. It delivers a comprehensive study into what human civilization would look like spread out over the entire galaxy, with interstellar travel easy and commonplace. The fact that it is presented as a series is also notable and sets a standard for other works in the field. Indeed, Foundation and Empire has characters that come alive on the pages, a plot that unravels with non-stop intrigue, and a surprising (but somewhat predictable) ending that will have the reader eagerly anxious to read the rest of the series. I rate Foundation and Empire as highly recommended and a must-read for all sci-fi fans. 5 out of 5 stars.

After reading the whole trilogy I must say that the first installment still has the biggest impact for the single reason that this is where the whole grand idea was conceived and presented for the first time. The best aspect of this story is, of course, the awesome interplay between technology, politics, religion, economy, and culture within the galactic periphery in the immediate vicinity of planet Terminus, the location of the so-called First Foundation. This interplay is cleverly woven into a series of plots propelled by a handful of characters. That focus upon a few key characters in a sense brought the whole story down to earth (and for the better). The founder himself, Hari Seldon, is already long dead by the 2nd chapter but the plan he and his co-conspirators set in motion lingers on. Couple of problems are evident with the story and some suspension of disbelief is required to overcome them. First is the time scale in which the changes are set in. To put it simply, "descend of parts of the galaxy encompassing hundreds of planetary systems into that sort of technological and scientific barbarism" within mere 50 years is not believable. Establishing a religion based on

technology within 30 years after that is still kind of on the less believable side but it depends strongly on the magnitude of the technological difference between barbarians" and the foundationeers, so there is room for interpretation. Second is the technology itself. Nuclear fission has been known and used for 60 years and lost most of its appeal as the ultimate energy source of the future. In the meantime there has been countless ideas about alternative sources of energy much greater than fission and entirely possible (notably: nuclear fusion and matter/antimatter annihilation). To put it simply, the idea that nuclear fission will be powering everything at the point in time 12 millenia from now is archaic. Besides nuclear power, there are number of minor ideas introduced in the book that also did not hold well or at all since its writing (prevalent smoking, for instance). Together, the whole technological and cultural setting of the book has sort of a retro feel now... kind of like the Fallout games. All that, however, can be forgiven for the most part since it is often impossible to write about technology of the future merely decades from now let alone whole millenia from now. Asimov was a writer and a scientist, not a psychic. Striking is also the absence of biochemistry or genetics, since one would assume that those would be Asimov's strong points for the fact that he majored and worked in biochemistry. Third, while the passage of time had appropriate atmosphere of scale (more or less), the galaxy felt kind of small. The distances weren't shown or explained very well so a trip from the Periferies to Trantor or Kolgan(sp?) seems like a trip to an amusement park only some 100 miles away. Nevertheless, the best what Foundation has to offer more than makes up for its shortfalls.

This man wrote for the ages. He is the first among peers. The book is excellent. A series of men face tremendous challenges and win through. It is easy to slip into the steam and be carried along. I'm told this is the crown in his creation. This is the first of seven books in this collection. Or the second if you put the prequel before it. Either way I've read a lot of science fiction and strongly suspect this will be one of my favorites. Frankie chocolate.

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