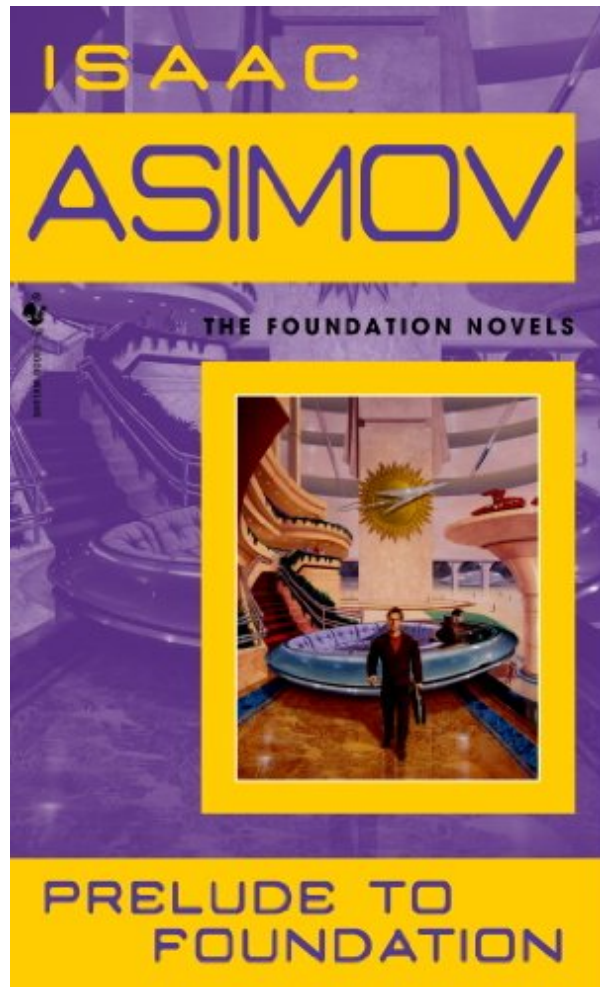
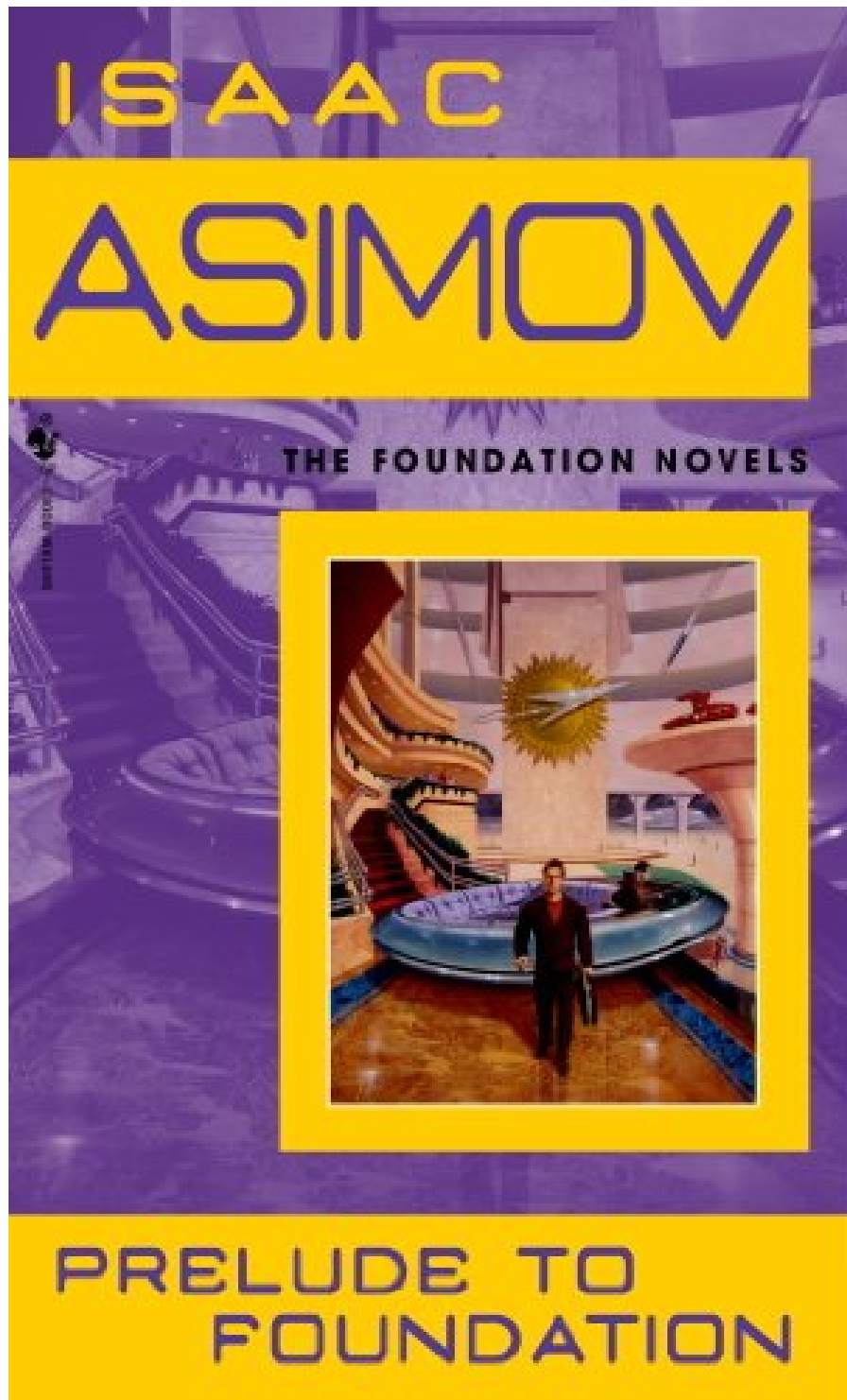


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Most helpful customer reviews

183 of 183 people found the following review helpful.

The Fall of the Empire... and the Start of the Foundation, 3-1/2 stars, 403 Pages, Publ 1988

By Antinomian

This novel has a subtle beginning. I would take a little to time reading the beginning to absorb Asimov's setting and style here. The science of psychohistory that laid out the Foundation had to start somewhere, and this is where it starts and with Hari Seldon. So there's a lot written of Seldon's early life and a lot about different sections of the Galactic Empire capital planet of Trantor. Seldon is not represented as some sort of superman, but if you've read other books in the Foundation series, as someone to admire, and is seen as a person outside of just psychohistory. Sort of like seeing the famous photograph of Albert Einstein riding a bicycle. And as others in the Empire see the potential power of psychohistory, even before Seldon does, thus begins the race to harness that power. The joy, and the point, in reading this novel is in the knowing the eventual power of psychohistory and thus how it develops. Seldon has to be persuaded to progress his theory of psychohistory by the other interesting characters in the novel. Can you imagine, early in the 20th century, having to go "come on Albert, will you at least *try* to develop the theory of General Relativity".

There are two type of readers that would be potentially interested in reading this book for the first time: those that have read the traditional Foundation series and are wondering if they should continue here with this prequel, and those that haven't read the originals and are wondering if they should start here. For the former, sure with the understanding that Asimov's style will be different 40 years after he wrote the novellas of the original series, and for the former, no, I would start with Asimov's original Foundation trilogy. His original series is almost essential 40's/50's science fiction, and if one doesn't like that series, one is not going to care about the characters and events in Prelude To Foundation.

From the Author's Note and adding Forward The Foundation which was written afterwards (I may have left out a book or two), there are 15 books (a quint-decology?) in Asimov's universe. They are:

1. The Complete Robot (includes every story of I, Robot)
2. The Caves of Steel
3. The Naked Sun
4. The Robots of Dawn
5. Robots and Empire
6. The Currents of Space
7. The Stars, Like Dust--
8. Pebble in the Sky
9. Prelude to Foundation
10. Forward the Foundation
11. Foundation
12. Foundation and Empire
13. Second Foundation

14. Foundation's Edge

15. Foundation and Earth

Books 1 to 5 are Asimov's Robot series, books 6-8 his Empire series, and books 9 to 15 his complete Foundation series. They were initially separate series, but he used books 5, 9, and 10 to encompass them all into one series.

32 of 33 people found the following review helpful.

The beginning book of the famous Foundation series.

By R. D. Allison (dallison@biochem.med.ufl.edu)

In 1988, Asimov published a prequel to his famous Foundation series. He also uses this book to continue to tie in other novels that he had already written, most notably all of the robot stories, particularly involving R. Daneel Olivaw and Lije Baley, as well as "Pebble in the Sky" (1950) (in fact, in such a larger scheme, "Prelude to Foundation" follows "Pebble in the Sky" and precedes "Forward the Foundation" (1993)). In this novel, he finally uses Hari Seldon as a main character. A young assistant professor of mathematics, Hari Seldon, travels to the planet Trantor (the governing planet of the galactic empire) to present a paper at a convention on a new field he has begun referred to as psychohistory. In his paper, Seldon suggests that it might be theoretically possible to develop mathematical equations and techniques of analyses to predict, with strong statistical analysis, future events of human history on a broad scale (in which the discipline only is applicable to extremely large numbers of people). Asimov provides some hints that this field might use chaos theory as well, although he never uses that term. Seldon also believes that, while theoretically possible, it isn't practical. There are those, however, who believe that the galactic empire is collapsing and hope to use a developed psychohistory theory to help direct human society. Seldon finds himself running from the Emperor's agents and hiding in various different enclaves throughout the planet Trantor, and thus learning more and more about Trantor (those reviewers who criticize this trek are obviously missing its importance in the greater scheme of the series). He is attempting to find a smaller model of galactic populations that would allow him the ability to develop his theory. There are legends that tens of thousands of years ago, man had lived on only one planet: Earth. He is hoping to find some historical evidence for Earth and, in so doing, he discovers some surprising facts and events. I am probably unusual in that I enjoyed this book the most in the series. Perhaps its because I also live in an academic environment and see many similarities to Hari's problems. Asimov was obviously drawing on his own experiences.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Didn't really add to my enjoyment of the original series

By Carey Allen Kohl

It's got an ok story, but the actual explanation of the ideas behind Asimov's 'psychohistory' from the original trilogy are lost behind a wordy story that only exists to claim the Robot series is connected to the Foundation one. Worth reading if you're a fan or a completist.

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