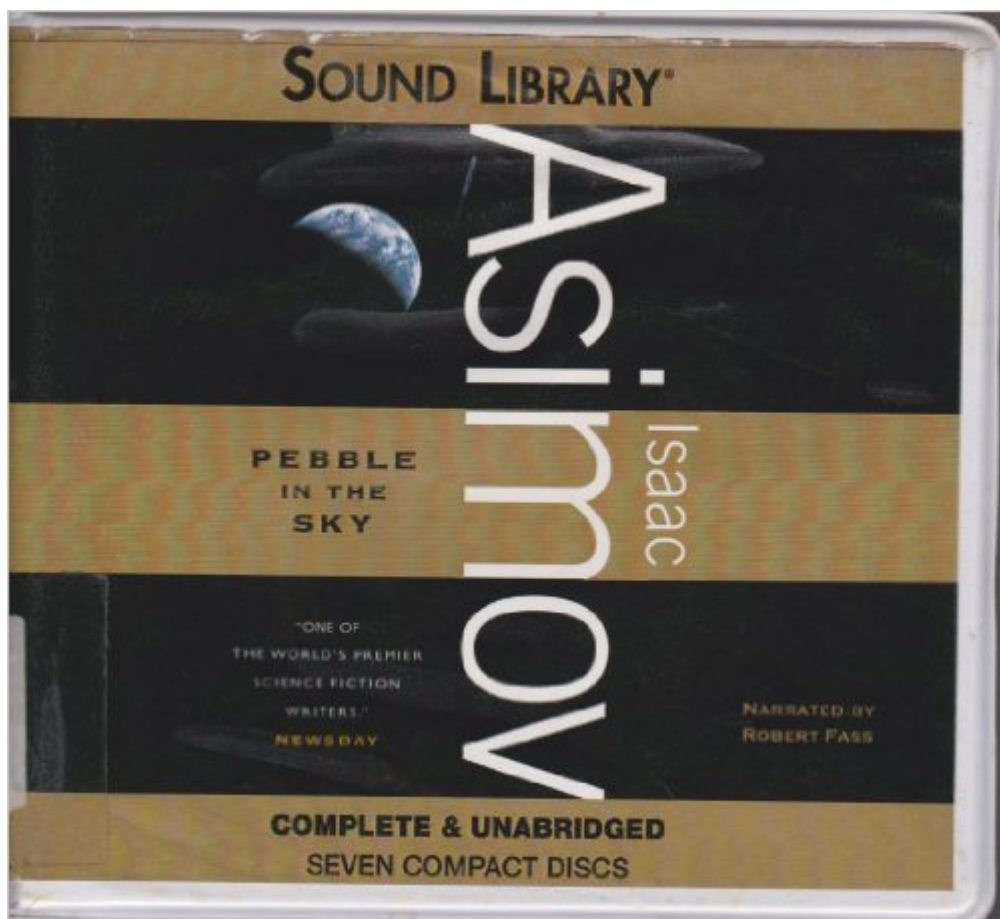


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Pebble In The Sky



Synopsis

One moment Joseph Schwartz is a happily retired tailor in Chicago, 1949. The next he's a helpless stranger on Earth during the heyday of the first Galactic Empire. Earth, as he soon learns, is a backwater, just a pebble in the sky, despised by all the other 200 million planets of the Empire because its people dare to claim it's the original home of man. And Earth is poor, with great areas of radioactivity ruining much of its soil so poor that everyone is sentenced to death at the age of sixty. Joseph Schwartz is sixty-two. This is young Isaac Asimov's first novel, full of wonders and ideas, the book that launched the novels of the Galactic Empire, culminating in the Foundation series. "

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Pebble In The Sky is probably the reigning titleholder of "Undiscovered Classic" in Isaac Asimov's impressive lexicon. It may take a little searching to locate this book, but believe me, it's well worth it. Dr. Asimov constructed a huge universe that traces humanity from the near future (the Robot stories) to its first creaking footsteps into the unknown (the Robot novels), to the founding of a Galactic Empire (the Empire novels), and finally to the ultimate destination of mankind (the Foundation novels), although this was not his original intention - the Robot universe and Empire/Foundation universe were knotted together by later books. Anyway, of these four categories, the Empire novels are easiest the weakest. This is partly because it is very early Asimov (but Foundation and I, Robot, both classics, are equally early), and partly because the idea behind it all maybe isn't as inspired as the others. However, Pebble in the Sky is a true work of literary genius. It is set on Earth in the year 827 of the Galactic Era. A man called Joseph Schwarz is found by a farming family, who find that he cannot communicate. They take him to a doctor at the city of Chica,

Dr. Shekt, who uses his new Synapsifier to increase intelligence. Soon, they discover that Schwarz is in fact from the year 1949 AD, an era thousands of years back. Schwarz is equally amazed to find himself thousands of years in the future. And what a future he finds waiting for him...I will not give any further information because it may well spoil the plot for you. It is a well-written enjoyable book. It showcases Dr. Asimov's incredible ability to render cultures, as his portrayal of Earth is one of the most haunting things I have ever seen.

Pebble in the Sky is the last of Asimov's Galactic Empire trilogy, which precedes events described in the masterful Foundation Trilogy. Pebble adds further detail about the Empire of Trantor and the place of Earth within it, thousands of years in our future. Humanity is spread across the Galaxy, inhabiting a hundred million star systems and numbering in the quadrillions. Yet atomic warfare has reduced Earth to a radioactive backwater, despised by the other imperial citizens. This is the world where Joseph Schwartz, a complacent and mild-mannered tailor, finds himself after being catapulted forward in time as a result of an accident in a nuclear lab in mid-20th century Chicago. He soon meets two brilliant scientists: Dr. Bel Arvardan, who is intent on proving that Earth is humanity's birthplace, and Dr. Affret Shekt, physicist and inventor of the Synapsifier, which can boost intelligence in astonishing ways. They team up to foil a plot that could destroy nearly every human alive in the Galaxy. The book is not without weaknesses. The future science that drives the plot is often a bit dodgy and far-fetched. Schwartz is propelled into the future as a result of an experiment with crude uranium gone freakishly awry, but how exactly this happens is never explained. Nor does Asimov convincingly describe how the biological WMD at the heart of the plot could actually spread across the Galaxy so quickly without the many technologically-advanced worlds of the Empire discovering a way to stop it. Then there is some of the dialog. Even though most of the book takes place so far in the future that humans have evolved miniature appendices and no longer grow facial hair or wisdom teeth, the characters sometimes lapse into dialog reminiscent of American slang straight out of a bad 1950s detective novel. Dr.

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