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# A Comparison Between Science Fiction Works of Arthur C. Clarke and Douglas Adams' Parody of the Genre

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# Anotace

Úkolem práce je nejprve definovat žánr science fiction na základě odborné literatury a dále rozebrat obecně literárně teoretický pojem parodie. Součástí práce budou stručné životopisy obou autorů (Arthur C. Clarke a Douglas Adams) a analýza Clarkovy série románů *Vesmírná Odysea*. Cílem práce je srovnání Clarkovy legendární série a Adamsovy parodie žánru *Stopařův průvodce Galaxií*, přičemž v každé sérii práce vytyčí hlavní postavy, motivy a symboly a následně porovná prostředí obou sérií, motivaci hrdinů, narativní strategii a vypravěčský styl.

# Abstract

The first purpose of this paper is to define the term of science fiction genre, using literature specialized in the subject and later analyse the theoretical concept of parody in literature. The second part of the paper will consist of brief biographies of both authors (Arthur C. Clarke and Douglas Adams) and an analysis of Clarke's novel series *Space Odyssey*. The purpose of this paper is a comparison of Clarke's legendary series with Adams' parody of the genre *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, by identifying main characters, motifs and symbols, and subsequently compare the settings of both series, character motivations and narrative strategies.

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# Introduction

When Douglas Adams came with the idea of writing *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* he has managed not only to create a popular science fiction radio play and a series of novels, but also something new and unique in the genre.

Its uniqueness came from a simple fact - it completely differed from any other science fiction work made so far. The reason for this is obvious to anyone who has read or heard *The Guide* and is at least familiar with other science fiction works - while *The Guide* definitely fulfils the "fiction" part of the genre, the "science" inside is at the very least debatable, if it is even there.

In this work I will attempt to compare *The Guide* with another well-known science fiction - Arthur C. Clarke's *Space Odyssey*. Unlike Adams', Clarke's series is well-known for its strict adherence to science - even going so far that each of his book is slightly deviates from the previous one in order to incorporate the latest scientific findings and theories.

The comparison of the two series will be made on three levels - there will be short summaries of plot for each book followed by analysis of their main characters and finally motifs and symbols found in them.

In the end this paper will be divided into three separate parts. The first part will consist of relevant terminology - more precisely the terms Science Fiction and Parody will be explained. The second part will focus on Arthur C. Clarke, his series and the symbolic, motifs and characters found in *Space Odyssey*, while the third part will do the same with the work of Douglas Adams.

During this work I will mostly use the novels of the two series, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Space Odyssey* for the comparative part and D'Amassa's *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, Roberts' *History of Science Fiction* and Cuddon's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* for the theoretical part.

# Science Fiction, Parody

## Science Fiction

Science fiction, as a genre first appears in the early 19th century with the works of H. G. Wells, Mary Shelley and Jules Verne. Each one of these writers' work had something that distinguished them from the ordinary fiction - H. G. Wells used the idea of time travel (*The Time Machine*), Jules Verne had new technologies (*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*) and Mary Shelley made her protagonist a scientist specialising in newly developed medical technologies (*Frankenstein*).<sup>1</sup>

The reason for the genre's appearance in the 19th century is simple - the Industrial revolution. The world, Britain in particular, underwent a massive technological leap that allowed great progress in both science and culture which in turn inspired the authors to incorporate new ideas in their works and more importantly used them as a stepping stone for new ones that might be possible sometimes in the future.

In his book, *The History of Science Fiction*, Adam Roberts introduces three main definitions of science fiction genre. The first, devised by Darko Suvin, says that science fiction is a literary work that contains what he calls "*the novum*"<sup>2</sup> - a new idea, or item that doesn't appear in reality, such as spaceship, a time machine or even new ways of understanding of gender or consciousness.<sup>3</sup>

The second introduced definition comes from Damien Broderick, who based his theory on Suvin's ideas. In his opinion, science fiction is a genre that reflects the technological, scientific and cultural advances during 19th and 20th century and believes that the genre uses these changes to fuel and define itself.<sup>4</sup>

The last theory, by Samuel Delany, disregards the scientific and technological focus of the first two theories. Instead, Delany believes that science fiction comes from the reader's interpretation of the text - the text becomes a science fiction text only if the reader believes that he is reading a science fiction text which is, in his opinion, based on the reader's image of the real world. Or simply put, the reader must see the world shown in the book sufficiently different from ours to read it as science fiction.<sup>5</sup>

In summary, it can be said that science fiction should contain at least one new idea or technology, either completely inexistent or just theoretical in the real world, no matter whether the story is set in an alien world (such as *Dune*) or on Earth (*1984*, *Flowers for Algernon*).

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<sup>1</sup> p. 88, Roberts, Adam, *The History of Science Fiction*, Hampshire: Palgrave McMillan, 2006;  
*Britannica: Science Fiction*, <https://www.britannica.com/art/science-fiction>

<sup>2</sup> p. 1, Roberts, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> p. 1, Roberts, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> p. 2, Roberts, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> p. 2, Roberts, *ibid.*



## Parody, Science Fiction Parody

A parody is one of the literature styles used to make fun of a specific theme - a person, a problem, a historic occurrence or even other author's work through their imitation and exaggeration, usually in order to criticize the parodied topic, but can also be used a form of correction.

The imitation of the subject is accomplished by copying and possibly exaggeration of the style used by subject's author - it can emphasize their style of writing, their characters, symbols, motifs, or just expressions the author used.<sup>6</sup>

But, any parody needs to follow certain rules to be successful. The parody must be different enough from the original to be able to discern between those two, but not too different, otherwise the imitation would not be recognisable and the whole work would lost its meaning and the effort would be wasted.

Coming from the Greek *parōidia*, its creation is credited to Hegemon of Thesos, who was the first to use in theatre plays in the 5th century BC, and to Hipponax, a poet from Ancient Greece, who lived in a century before.<sup>7</sup>

After their creation, parodies were used throughout history by various authors. In ancient Greece Homer's work was parodied in *Batrachomyomachia*. Later, Miguel de Cervantes came with his *Don Quixote* who was definitely unlike any knight that had ever appeared in a book before.<sup>8</sup>

More recently, and more importantly for this work, came Douglas Adams with his *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and by this combining parody and science fiction. While it could be argued that other science fiction works already had parody themes in them, they were always only parodies or comedies set in science fiction settings.

Douglas' "unique style", as D'Amassa calls it in his book<sup>9</sup>, allowed him to create a universe that was a parody to the themes used in traditional science fiction - it was not just a parody set in science fiction, the setting itself was already a parody.

So far, at least to my knowledge (and to D'Amassa' in 2005), there was only one author who tried to replicate Douglas' work in science fiction parody - Eoin Colfer, who had to make an attempt at doing so in order to write the final book of Hitchhiker's series.

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<sup>6</sup> p. 514, Cuddon, J. A., *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, John Willey & Sons, 2013

<sup>7</sup> p. 514, Cuddon, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Britannica: Parody - Literature*, <https://www.britannica.com/art/parody-literature>

<sup>9</sup> p. 2, D'Amassa, D., *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2005

# Arthur C. Clarke

## Biography

Sir Arthur Charles Clarke was born in December 16 1917, in Somerset, England and is considered as one of the fathers of "hard science fiction" - a science fiction based on already established science or using it to extrapolate a possible future technology.<sup>10</sup>

Coming from a rural background, Clarke showed interest in science from a young age, but was unable to follow it further than reading an occasional magazine until his family moved to London in 1936.

There, while also working as a government auditor, he managed to secure a position in the British Interplanetary Society where he worked with astronautic material and started his work on writing science fiction.<sup>11</sup>

In 1941 he joined the Royal Air Force where he served as a radar technician and used his work as an inspiration for *Wireless Word* - an article predicting an existence of a number of satellites used for communication.<sup>12</sup>

Three years after the end of the 2nd World War, Clarke received a bachelor degree in Science and published his first science fiction book *Against the Fall of Night*, which was later edited and re-published as *The City and the Stars*, which is still considered as one of his best works.<sup>13</sup>

His most famous work came in 1968, when the movie, *2001: A Space Odyssey* was first screened. Based on Clarke's short story, *The Sentinel*, *Space Odyssey* was a huge success which prompted Clarke and the movie's creator Stanley Kubrick to collaborate on the same-named novel.<sup>14</sup>

During 1950s Clarke developed an interest in undersea exploration which prompted his move from England to Sri Lanka from where he continued his work. Before his death in 2008 he had managed to write over 30 non-fiction and 20 fiction books in addition to a number of short stories which contributed to his reputation of one of the best science fiction authors so far.

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<sup>10</sup> p. 84, D'Ammassa, D., *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2005

<sup>11</sup> *Britannica: Arthur C Clarke*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arthur-C-Clarke>;  
*The Arthur C. Clarke Foundation: Biography*, <http://www.clarkefoundation.org/biography/>

<sup>12</sup> *Britannica: Arthur C Clarke*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arthur-C-Clarke>;  
*The Arthur C. Clarke Foundation: Biography*, <http://www.clarkefoundation.org/biography/>

<sup>13</sup> p. 85, D'Ammassa, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> p. 85, D'Ammassa, *ibid.*

*Britannica: Arthur C Clarke*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arthur-C-Clarke>

# Space Odyssey

## 2001: A Space Odyssey

*2001: A Space Odyssey* was first published in 1968, shortly after the success of a movie of the same name based on some of Clarke's stories, mainly his short story *The Sentinel* written in 1951. The book is divided into five subsequent parts with three different protagonists. While the story of the book mostly matches the film, there are a few changes, most importantly the shift of the third and fourth part from Jupiter to Saturn.

Part 1 - Primeval Night takes place in Africa about three million years before the rest of the story and follows a man-ape called Moon-Watcher and his family. At this point, still basically herbivores, man-apes survive on day-to-day basis, barely avoiding starvation, spending most of the day looking for food and looking out for predators at night.

One night the man-apes are woken-up by an unknown sound, but do not pay any attention to it, since it is not a sound of danger and resume sleeping soon afterwards. However, when they approach the river the next day they find the source of the night-time sound - a large, transparent, crystal monolith that has fallen near the river, but since it is not dangerous or edible, it is swiftly forgotten.<sup>15</sup>

At night the crystal activates and forces Moon-Watcher and other man-apes to gather around it. The crystal starts examining them through a beam of light, probing their minds and later starts experimenting with their bodies - some are forced to move their hands, others made to stare into patterns showing up on the crystal; but eventually, the light fades and the man-apes return to their caves.<sup>16</sup>

The experiment continues the next night, but differently. Moon-Watcher starts to receive visions meant to stimulate his brain. This eventually leads to him unconsciously using a rock to kill a wild pig, even though he did not understand that he could eat it.

Over time the tribe starts hunting wild animals using simple tools - horns, teeth, rocks and even manage to kill a leopard that was hunting man-apes for a long time. This next day, when he approaches the river, the crystal is gone. Instead of the crystal he spots a group of man-apes he encountered daily. But instead of the usual exchange of empty threats, he decides to use his new tools and kills their leader, which leads Moon-Watcher to realization that he can now control his life and the world around him.<sup>17</sup>

The second part - TMA-1, starts much later with Dr. Heywood Floyd leaving the Earth for the Moon, due to a recently established quarantine there. After his arrival, he, along with a few other scientist, is briefed about a new anomaly on the Moon called TMA-1 - Tycho Magnetic Anomaly-one.

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<sup>15</sup> p. 6, Clarke, Arthur C., *2001: A Space Odyssey* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>16</sup> p. 10, Clarke, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> p. 19, Clarke, *ibid.*

During a satellite scan of the Moon, an anomaly was found in the Tycho crater. When a team was sent to excavate the source a black monolith is found and after establishing its age (three million years) it is considered "*a first evidence of intelligent life beyond Earth.*"<sup>18</sup>

After reaching the Tycho crater, the team starts to study the monolith, but without much success.

Only when the "morning" comes and sunlight reaches the artefact, a sudden "electronic shriek" is heard, before the monolith goes dormant again.

Part 3 - Between Planets starts later with the ship, Discovery, on its way to Saturn, the assumed target of TMA-1's signal. Due to the length of the mission only two of the crew out of hibernation - David Bowman and Frank Poole, who are supposed to, with the assistance of the ship's A.I., Hal, navigate the ship to Saturn.

However, due to a secrecy of the mission, neither Bowman or Poole know about TMA-1, or the real goal of the mission, which later leads to catastrophic results. But during the third part of the book, the mission still continues as planned, including quick surveys of asteroid field and later Jupiter, whose gravity is used to accelerate Discovery's journey further.

Part 4 - Abyss starts with Poole's birthday and Hal's subsequent discovery of a fault in the ship-to-Earth communication system. Since Hal cannot find the source of the problem, Poole, using a space pod, ventures outside the ship to replace a faulty relay.

While the replacement is successful, later examination of the relay finds no fault even after rigorous testing. But a few days later, the situation repeats itself, when Hal reports the same malfunction again. Since there is again no detectable problem, Bowman decides to contact Earth for further instructions. But, during the conversation, the communication system fails, as Hal predicted.

When Poole goes outside to replace the relay, his space pod malfunctions and crushes him against the ship before floating away with his body. Bowman, after a moment of panic decides to wake up the rest of the crew since he no longer trusts Hal, but before the procedure is completed, the ship's hangar door open and Bowman is forced to flee into an emergency shelter.<sup>19</sup>

Finding a spacesuit there, he moves back into the ship, only to find out that the rest of the crew was killed before they were woken up. With the knowledge that he cannot trust Hal, Bowman finds him mainframe and manages to turn him off.

Later, since Bowman is the only crewmember, Dr. Floyd finally briefs him on the real goals of the mission, including the uncovering of TMA-1. Furthermore, he explains the reason for Hal's malfunction - a conflict between his programming and his orders to keep the mission secret from Bowman eventually forced him to try to disable the communication with Earth and later to get rid of the crew so he could continue the mission without lying.

In Part 5 - The Moons of Saturn Bowman finally arrives to his destination - Saturn's moon Japetus and after days of surveying he finds the target of TMA-1 signal - another, but much larger, black monolith, instantly named TMA-2. After days of study, Bowman decides to take a space pod and examine the monolith close-up. When he reaches the monolith, however, his

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<sup>18</sup>p. 45, Clarke, Arthur C., 2001: *A Space Odyssey* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>19</sup> p. 107, Clarke, *ibid.*

pod starts getting drawn into the obelisk and with a final transmission "*it's full of stars!*"<sup>20</sup> Bowman disappears inside.

After a journey through unknown parts of space Bowman's pod lands in what appears to be a hotel room. After some examination of his surroundings he manages to find water and food and decides to go to sleep on the bed.

During his sleep he is examined and probed by the monolith creators who have developed beyond physical bodies and is slowly changed into something between human and the immaterial aliens -

a Star-Child. In this form what used to be Bowman returns back to Earth and watching it from space starts thinking what to do next.

## 2010: Odyssey Two

*2010: Odyssey Two* first came out 1982 and was heavily influenced by recent space exploration-related events - mostly the landing on the Moon and the footage from Voyager 1 probe. Clarke was forced to choose between scientific accuracy and consistency of the story and chose the first option, which leads to discrepancies between the two stories, mainly the fact that the story moved from Japetus back to Jupiter's moon Io.

Part 1 - Leonov starts with Heywood Floyd, now retired from cosmonautics, in conversation with his Russian counterpart, Dr. Moisevitch. Discovery II, the American ship meant to recover its predecessor would not be ready before Russians managed to launch their own ship - Leonov, which

is the reason why Moisevitch comes with an idea of a joint mission and hopes that Floyd manages to convince his government.

The mission is approved and Leonov leaves Earth with its Russian crew accompanied by three hibernating scientists from America, including Dr. Floyd and Dr. Chandra - the inventor of Hal who has joined the expedition in hopes of repairing him.

In Part 2 - Tsien Dr. Heywood is woken up prematurely in order to help with a new problem - the Chinese managed to launch their own ship, Tsien, that will be able to reach Io before Leonov, and even though such an action would be illegal, there are concerns that they would board *Destiny* and take its data anyway.

As expected, Tsien reaches Jupiter sooner, but instead of trying to reach Io, Tsien lands on Europa. After a while, Floyd finds out why - Tsien will be able to use water from Europa and turn it into more than enough fuel to reach both *Destiny* and later the Earth.

This scenario never comes to pass - at night Floyd is woken up to a signal from one of Tsien's crew - there is life in the oceans of Europa and the sea creature (apparently a form of hybrid of octopus and a coral) was angered by their light and destroyed the ship. The survivor - professor Cheng, knowing that he was dead anyway decided to send the message about the creature to Leonov, hoping that Dr. Floyd receives it.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> p. 137, Clarke, Arthur C., *2010: Odyssey Two* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>21</sup> p. 35, Clarke, *ibid.*

At the beginning of Part 3: Discovery Leonov finally reaches Jupiter. While distressed by the events on Europa, the crew manages to reach Io and board Destiny. After re-powering the vessel, Dr. Chandra starts with repairs and a "therapy" of Hal while the rest of the crew focuses on the monolith, now called Zagadka - the Big Brother.

Part 4 - Lagrange continues later, with Hal mostly functioning and the crew planning their survey of the Big Brother with the last of Discovery's space pods. But, even through a number of attempts the monolith stays dormant.

In Part 5 - A Child of Stars David Bowman, now a Star-child returns to the Solar system. When he reaches the Earth, he starts examining it, starting with his mother, but also contacting other, seemingly random people, usually through an illusion of an alien.

Later, on his way to Jupiter, Bowman realizes that everything he's doing is not of his own volition - he is still subtly controlled by the aliens in a continued experiment. Realizing this, he also discovers their next plan and the danger to Leonov and decides to warn them even though the alien forbid it.

During Floyd's nightshift, Bowman takes over Hal and warns him that they need to leave in fifteen days. When Floyd points out that they cannot leave that soon Bowman only repeats his message and emphasizes the importance of their departure.

Part 6 - Devourer of Worlds starts the next morning when Floyd shares the message with the rest of the crew. While most of the crew is unconvinced, some of them start to have doubts and even begin planning possible ways to leave early.

The crew is finally convinced when one night the Big Brother suddenly disappears from Io. It is decided that Leonov must leave immediately and a new plan is put forward - Destiny will be used as an additional engine that will give the other ship a boost necessary to leave and then stay on Jupiter's orbit until it can be retrieved.

While the plan is successful, the crew finds out that the monolith reappeared, but this time on Jupiter, and what's more, it seems to be multiplying itself. By the time Leonov manages to get past the last of Jupiter's moons the monolith's managed to cover the whole planet and caused it to turn into sick grey colour from its usual orange.<sup>22</sup>

In the last, seventh part - Lucifer Rising, while the monoliths are finishing their work, Bowman returns to Destiny to use Hal to send a final message to the Earth. He succeeds, but only a short while before the ship is destroyed.

The monolith's turned Jupiter into a new star - Lucifer, causing it's moons to slowly became habitable. In the end Leonov receives Hal's final message: "*ALL THESE WORLDS ARE YOURS - EXCEPT EUROPA. ATTEMPT NO LANDINGS THERE.*"<sup>23</sup>

## 2061: Odyssey Three

Part 1 - The Magic Mountain starts in year 2061, with Floyd being 103 years old - his age being one of unexpected benefits of hibernation - awaiting his medical examination before he can board Universe, a new space-liner on its journey to attempt a landing on Halley's Comet.

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<sup>22</sup> p. 128, Clarke, Arthur C., *2010: Odyssey Two* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>23</sup> p. 137, Clarke, *ibid.*

At the same time, Rolf van der Berg, a refugee from African revolution living on Ganymede - one of the now habitable moons of Lucifer goes over his knowledge of Europa, that is still largely unexplored due to Bowman's warning from 2010. Even though he knows that he will most likely never set foot on Europa, he still tries to spend some time researching it, especially one of its mountains - Mount Zeus.<sup>24</sup>

In Part 2 - The Valley of the Black Snow, Universe reaches the Halley's Comet and its passengers, including Floyd start taking turns walking on the comet's surface, while the crew starts its studies. But, not long afterwards, Universe receives a message that their sister ship, Galaxy crashed on Europa with Floyd's grandson on board.

Part 3 - European Roulette starts a little before that - Van der Berg is contacted by the ship's captain due to their fly-by of Europa and joins the mission. While the mission has some small problems early on, the major one appears when Chris Floyd, Dr. Floyd's grandson, finds explosives in a crate meant for scientific equipment, which is later explained by its owner, although not to captain's complete satisfaction.

The real problem comes later when one of the ship's stewardesses, Rosie, forces the navigator to land on Europa close to Mount Zeus. While the ship lands mostly in one piece it gets too damaged to be able to leave again and unexpectedly Rosie commits suicide right after landing.

Part 4 - At the Water Hole shifts back to Universe, where the crew along with Floyd plan a rescue mission for Galaxy and manage to find a solution that would allow them to arrive to Europa in three weeks instead of three months, which is grudgingly accepted and put in motion.<sup>25</sup>

Part 5 - Through the Asteroids describes the long journey of Universe through the Solar system. Due to the involvement of Europa, Hal's message from 2010 and Floyd's contact with Bowman are discussed. At night, Floyd has a dream in which he encounters another black monolith, but only a small one - a minilith.<sup>26</sup>

In Part 6 - Haven Galaxy is now safely moored to dry land of Europa and the crew managed to repair the ship enough to provide a safe shelter. Afterwards Floyd and van der Berg come up with the idea of using a ship's shuttle to study the nearby Mount Zeus. The flight there is successful, but when the team comes closer to the mountain they find the probable reason for Galaxy's abduction - the whole mass of Mount Zeus is a huge diamond.

In the beginning of Part 7 - The Great Wall the team gathers samples from Mount Zeus and realizes that the crash site of Tsien is also close. When they arrive to the site, they find only skeletons, and not of the crew, but of the ship itself - all metal from it somehow disappeared.

On their way home they discover something even more interesting - igloos. After flying closer, Chris and van der Berg find a city of a sort - igloos, murals, even solar collectors. More importantly, after landing, Chris sees his grandfather and even speaks with him, even though van der Berg sees nothing.

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<sup>24</sup> p. 14, Clarke, Arthur C., *2061: Odyssey Three* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>25</sup> p. 69, Clarke, *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> p. 82, Clarke, *ibid.*

Realizing that they do not have enough fuel, they land the shuttle closer to Galaxy in order to wait until Universe arrives. Here Chris reveals that the apparition of Floyd told him about the igloo inhabitants and how they ran into water after Floyd and other warned them.<sup>27</sup> They realize that the warning was necessary - their water-based fuel was leaving behind oxygen, which would be poisonous for an organism that evolved in sulphur-based atmosphere of Europa.

Four days later, Universe arrives and Chris and Floyd meet again after a long time, even though they cannot find any explanation for what Chris saw down on Europa. After submitting their finding from Mount Zeus it is found out that it is sinking, and quite rapidly - by the time Universe came, they could only see a last few meters sinking.

Part 8 - The Kingdom of Sulphur serves as an epilogue of a sort. Bowman and Hal greet Floyd - a copy of the real Floyd that was created by the minilith to help them. They reveal that Lucifer was created so that the inhabitants of Europa - Europeans - could get out of the frozen ocean and evolve further.

Bowman reveals to Floyd that they need his help - they have been studying the original monoliths and using what they learned to help the races that were evolving here in order to survive whatever comes next.

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<sup>27</sup> p. 99, Clarke, Arthur C., *2061: Odyssey Three* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)



# Characters

## Moon-Watcher

Moon-Watcher, a man-ape living on primeval Earth, is the protagonist of the first part of the first book, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. While not necessarily the most important character in the series, Moon-Watcher still plays a vital role in the story and in evolution of mankind.

In the book, Moon-Watcher has a role of being a link between man-apes and modern human, or more accurately Australopithecus and Homo Habilis, which is supported by the book itself.

First of all, the first part of *2001* take place in Africa - the "birthplace of mankind", where the skeletal remains of Australopithecine were found. Secondly, the time - 3 million years ago would roughly match, considering that first Homo Habilis are dated into 2,6 million years in the past. And finally, Moon-Watcher is said to be about five feet tall (circa 1,5 meters), which is the estimated height of a male Australopithecus.<sup>28</sup>

In the story, Moon-Watcher is the leader of one of the tribes living in Africa. His name is derived from the fact that, like some of the other man-apes, observers the sky at night, further discerning him from other animals.

At first Moon-Watcher is almost like any other man-ape - a strict herbivore who ventures to gather food every day so he could survive another night. However, this changes when one of the crystal monoliths arrive and chooses him for evolution.

After the crystal starts changing him, Moon-Watcher slowly turns from a simple, day-to-day surviving creature, into a future-oriented omnivore. Moon-Watcher is the first to kill another creature, both an animal and later another man-ape. He is also first to think about carrying food with him to his cave for later consumption. And most importantly, he is the first to use a tool.<sup>29</sup>

To summarize, Moon-Watcher's role in the story is two-fold. One - he is used to introduce the monoliths, and through them the role the incorporeal aliens played in the evolution of mankind.

Secondly, Moon-Watcher symbolizes the basis of the evolution itself - adaptation. Moon-Watcher's actions allowed him easier survival in his environment, which in turn gave him a chance to turn his focus from day-to-day survival to long-term planning.

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<sup>28</sup> p. 2, Clarke, Arthur C., *2001: A Space Odyssey* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

*Britannica: Australopithecus*: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Australopithecus>,

*Britannica: Homo Habilis*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Homo-habilis>

<sup>29</sup> p. 12, Clarke, *ibid.*

## David Bowman

David Bowman, an American astronaut and captain of the spaceship *Destiny* is the main protagonist of *2001: A Space Odyssey* and the only character who appears in all books of the series (while it could be argued that Hal does too, he is only mentioned in *2061*).

In *2001*, Bowman was asked to lead the mission due to his education. Unlike the rest of the people on the expedition, Bowman is considered a constant student - a jack-of-all-trades - while not considered a specialist, he is educated in astronomy, cybernetics and space propulsion systems.<sup>30</sup>

But, other than his education, there is practically nothing else to be said about Bowman - no past events, no relationships or personality quirks that would make him stand out from the other characters. Even during the critical moments - Hal killing Poole, Bowman "killing" Hal, learning about the real purpose of the expedition, his journey through the monolith, etc. - there is no reaction, just Bowman continuing to work through with the same single-minded focus he had before, as if nothing happened.

This, while somewhat strange in comparison with books of other authors, can be simply explained - Bowman has no personality because he does not need a personality. Bowman's role is to act as an intermediary to give out scientific facts to the reader, and more importantly to act as next stepping stone in evolution, similarly to Moon-Watcher.

In fact, there are many similarities when it comes to Bowman and Moon-Watcher when it comes to evolution - both are probed for information by the aliens, both are chosen for further evolution, and, even though Bowman's accelerated evolution into the Star-Child is more dramatic than Moon-Watcher's subtle one, they both end up thrown into their new life without having any idea what should the do.

This is further supported by endings of their respective parts - "*he was the master of the world, and he was not quite sure what to do next. But he would think of something.*"<sup>31</sup> and exactly the same sentence at the end of the book, after Star-Child returns to Earth<sup>32</sup>.

Later in the series, Bowman appears again, still looking for his new purpose. While it is stated more than once that the aliens still watch him and even urge him to unconsciously act the way they want him to, he is still able to use Hal to warn Floyd about the imminent threat from Jupiter in spite of being ordered not to.<sup>33</sup>

When Jupiter turns into a new star and destroys *Destiny*, Bowman somehow manages to save Hal from destruction, so that he would not have to work alone. This repeats later, in the third book when he uses the minilith to "copy" Floyd.

At the end of the third book, Bowman reveals to Floyd the nature of experiments with evolution that were going on in the solar system and his belief that the monoliths may no

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<sup>30</sup> p. 63, Clarke, Arthur C., *2001: A Space Odyssey* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>31</sup> p. 18, Clarke, *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> p. 160, Clarke, *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> p. 100, Clarke, Arthur C., *2010: OdysseyTwo* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

longer work correctly, seeing the destruction of Jupiter fauna in favour of advancing Europeans as its first sign and deciding to make sure it does not happen again.<sup>34</sup>

## Heywood Floyd

Dr. Heywood Floyd, an American scientist and later an astronaut appears in the first three books of the series, first as a secondary protagonist in *2001* and later coming back as the main character of *2010* and *2061*.

Floyd first appears in the second part of *2001* when he travels to the Moon base in order to study the TMA-1 - the anomaly which is later revealed to be the first monolith. After the discovery, Floyd becomes the leader of the space program sending *Destiny* to Saturn (or, in later books, Jupiter) and it is also him who finally shares the information about the monolith with Bowman.

In *2010* Floyd gets a bigger role, as one of the astronauts on *Leonov* send to Jupiter with the purpose of recovering *Discovery*. Unlike Bowman, Floyd actually gets at least some personality, mostly through his messages to his wife and son, but also by conversations with the rest of the crew, which was not possible (or required) in *2001*.

His critical moment appears near the end of *2010*, shortly after he gets a message about his wife wanting a divorce. During his nightshift, Floyd is contacted by Bowman and instructed to leave Jupiter in fifteen days.<sup>35</sup> After this Floyd eventually manages to convince the crew of *Leonov* to leave and helps with the preparation of an escape plan.

Floyd's appearance in *2061* is again limited and seems to mostly serve as an ending to his story. While he appears in more than one part of the book, it is his grandson, Chris, who is actually important to the story, with Floyd going back to the role of a supporting character.

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<sup>34</sup> p. 110, Clarke, Arthur C., *2061: Odyssey Three* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>35</sup> p. 100, Clarke, Arthur C., *2010: Odyssey Two* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

# Symbols and Motifs in Space Odyssey

## Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) in *Space Odyssey* is represented by HAL9000 supercomputers, more specifically Hal, the computer of the spaceship *Destiny*, and Sal, Hal's female counterpart on Earth, both invented and developed by Dr. Chandra.

Unlike Marvin from *The Guide*, Hal can be more easily likened to a more "classical" AI, primarily due to the fact that he actually turns against other people on *Destiny*. Both Hal and Sal are also more computer-like and logic oriented than Marvin, probably due to fact that they were programmed to assist with science projects.

But, unlike AI in other science fiction works, Hal does not rebel against humanity - yes, he kills most of his crew, but not some belief of being abused, enslaved or underappreciated, as is usually the case in science fiction, but because he has developed a psychosis, or at least a computer version of one.<sup>36</sup>

Such an occurrence is very unusual, possibly even unique in science fiction - usually when an AI decides to start killing people without being ordered to it is because one of two reasons - either they rebel or they come to the conclusion that the logic offers no other alternative.

While it could be argued that the second reason applies to Hal, it would be wrong - when he starts killing his crew it is not because of some logical reasoning, but simply out of panic which blinds him to any other possible course of action.

His psychosis develops due to a conflict between his programming - a scientist and a partner to the crew - and his orders to lie his captain. Not being able to reconcile his orders with his programmed desire to search for truth Hal slowly starts degrading to the point when he intentionally sabotages communication with the Earth to stop the need for lie. And only when this plan fails he is forced to start killing the crew to get rid of both his guilt and the need to lie.

The fact that Hal was capable of developing a psychosis, or even the fact that he even had any psychology shows that unlike many other authors Clarke saw AI as equal to organic life, as is also evidenced by Hal's "evolution" to the immaterial state, similar to Bowman or the immaterial aliens.<sup>37</sup>

In fact, Clarke seemed to push forward a notion that the next possible step in human evolution would come through cybernetics or even through downloading human minds into computers. This is perfectly shown in the chapter about the alien's own evolution from bodies, through computer minds to their present immaterial state, as well as several other mentions during the story.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> p. 119, Clarke, Arthur C., 2001: *A Space Odyssey* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>37</sup> p. 133, Clarke, Arthur C., 2010: *Odyssey Two* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>38</sup> p. 130, Clarke, Arthur C., 2001: *A Space Odyssey* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

## Evolution

Evolution is a theme that runs throughout the whole series of *Space Odyssey* - almost everything important to the story somehow ties to some extent to evolution, and not just human evolution, there are at least three alien races whose evolution was somehow mentioned in the story.

Some of the first symbols of evolution are the crystal monoliths, both the crystal one that appears on primeval Earth and later the black ones found on the Moon and on Jupiter. All of these monoliths were created by the aliens to help them experiment with evolution of humanity, Europeans and most likely other species on different planets.

The crystal monolith that appears in Africa has two functions - to act as a scanning device, capable of assess the native life forms and to help the best candidates with evolution by uplifting them.<sup>39</sup>

Black Monoliths are a little more complicated, either due to different design, or possibly technological gap between the two types. Unlike their crystal counterparts, black monoliths are "Swiss army knives"<sup>40</sup>, as one member of Leonov's crew calls them - they are capable of acting as a signal beacon (TMA-1), transportation (Big Brother) or terraforming devices (Lucifer) and possibly more.

No matter their current function, they are undeniably connected to evolution. TMA-1 activates only when humanity is evolved enough to find it. Big Brother is instrumental in Bowman's uplifting to Star-Child. And Jupiter's transformation to Lucifer allows the evolution of Europeans.

With Lucifer and Europeans comes another frequently mentioned symbol in the book - fire. Fire, most likely based on theory popularized by Richard Wrangham, is supposed to play great role in evolution of any intelligent species - with fire comes cooking and since cooking multiplies the nutritious value of food, it is not necessary to gather as much raw ingredients which allows more free time. And free time allows the brain to concentrate on other things than food and that is when the brain starts to evolve.

This is also the reason for the creation of Lucifer - the "primeval" Europeans were trapped under ice, something that Clarke's aliens saw as an obstacle preventing the Europeans in developing intelligence since making fire is impossible underwater, which lead them to the creation of Lucifer.

There is also an interesting parallel connected to Lucifer's creation - by igniting Jupiter, its own primitive life forms - Jovians (also unable to create fire due to them being airborne) were destroyed in the process, allowing the Europeans to continue their own evolution.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Uplifting is a term commonly found in science fiction used to describe forced or at least accelerated evolution, usually by genetic modification (like in *Island of Doctor Moreau*), but also through cybernetics, sharing of technologies or just assistance with research and education.

<sup>40</sup> p. 127, Clarke, Arthur C., *2010: Odyssey Two* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

<sup>41</sup> p. 111, Clarke, Arthur C., *2061: Odyssey Three* [pdf, online], available at: [docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU](https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B1eDU1Baw8VATGVia013VIZkSFU)

While not as drastic, it could be compared to human evolution, specifically to the extinction of the Neanderthals - most of the theories on the subject agree on their inability to adapt, either to climate changes, new illnesses, or their new "neighbours", homo sapiens.

Among other symbols are of course the characters of the series, most importantly Moon-Watcher and Bowman, but possibly even Hal and Floyd. Moon-Watcher is obvious - a man-ape who is uplifted by the crystal monolith, taught how to use tools, hunt and kill. Bowman is also easy, being the first human to be uplifted by the aliens.

Hal and Floyd are the only ones who are also uplifted, by not by the aliens or a monolith, but by Bowman himself. Hal, after being saved from being destroyed along with Destiny joins Bowman and while his abilities are not fully revealed, it can be deduced that they are around the same degree as Bowman's since he apparently exists at the same level of existence and is capable of at least partially use monoliths. The same can be expected of Floyd. While the story ends shortly after his duplication by Bowman was revealed, Floyd manages to contact his grandson as an apparition back on Europa, in the same fashion as did Bowman to him back on Leonov.

In summary evolution is undeniably the main topic of *Space Odyssey* - starting with Moon-Watcher and ending with Floyd, there is at least some reference to evolution, either of human, alien or even AI species in every part of the series.

## Politics

While perhaps only peripheral to the main story, I believe that Clarke's political situation made for *Space Odyssey* is still interesting enough to mention.

Due to the book's publication in 1968 it is not surprising that the Cold War influenced the politics inside the story. In Clarke's universe, the Cold War has never ended, maybe just somewhat subsided.

While the arms race shifted into space race, it seems that the competition has turned into almost friendly one - the Moon base is divided into two parts - American and Russian one, and the people involved in space research seem to be able to cooperate without any animosity as is obvious with the crew of Leonov.

But while the relations between USA and USSR are probably better, the space race received at least one another competitor - China, who seems to be unwilling to cooperate with either of the original players.

The main reason why I believe that the politics here is important to mention is because of the story's setting in the future. While setting the story to forty years later, Clarke kept the same political climate that was really in his time, either because he did not see it as important to the story, or because he could not predict its developments like he could with science.

Either way it puts his work into somewhat unique position. Most science fiction stories set in future are either utopian - perfect, peaceful societies, mostly known from *Star Trek* or dystopian - destroyed, decaying or at least corrupt like in *1984*.

Clarke on the other hand seemed to expect that humanity, while making great strides when it comes to science and medicine, would not be able to move from the stalemate that existed in 1960s.

# Douglas Adams

## Biography

Douglas Noel Adams was born on March 11 1952 in Cambridge, England. His parents, Janet and Christopher were forced to relocate from Cambridge, just six months after their son's birth and his family continued to live on the fringe of London.<sup>42</sup>

When Adams was five years old, his parents divorced. Along with his mother and sister, Adams moved to Brentwood in Essex where he attended school where he discovered his affinity for writing which led to his work in the school magazine.

In 1970 he was awarded a scholarship at St. John's College in Cambridge. Before starting his studies though, he decided to travel by hitchhiking for a year during which he got the initial idea for writing *The Guide*.

A year later, in 1971, Adams started his university studies. Studying English, he again showed his affinity for writing, especially for a comedy genre. In addition to his written works, he also created several short sketches that were very well received.

Right after college, he was offered work by one of Monthy Python crew, Graham Chapman, who was impressed by his sketches. Adams, a long-time fan of Monthy Python, accepted and continued to work with him for about a year.<sup>43</sup>

After their collaborations failed, Adams took off to write alone, but did not have much success. For several years he had to change jobs - including a bodyguard or a janitor on a poultry farm, and continued to write only in his free time.

Eventually, in 1977 he was offered a chance to co-write an episode of Doctor Who for BBC. During this time he was working on his last attempt at writing - *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Fortunately for Adams, Terry Jones (also from Monthy Python crew) was impressed by his work and managed to convince the right people.

*The Guide* was aired for the first time in March 1978 and its success pushed Adams to write the first book of the series. During his life he continued his work in BBC, writing 6 episodes of *The Guide* radio play and five more episodes of Doctor Who.

Adams also managed to write books outside of *The Guide's* universe. He wrote a satiric detective novel *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency* or a "dictionary", *The Meaning of Liff* that uses existing name-words and assigns them a new meaning.

Near the end of his life, Adams expressed his regret that he did not manage to write a sixth part of *The Guide*, feeling that his original ending was unsatisfactory. Unfortunately, he managed to put together only scraps of the plot before his death on May 11 2001.

Fortunately, these scraps were not lost and were eventually published in 2002 in his biography *The Salmon of Doubt*. Furthermore, later, Eoin Colfer - author of *Artemis Fowl* series - was given a permission to put together the sixth book. The novel, *And Another Thing ...* was published in 2009, and despite the initial objections of fans the book was well-received by fans and critics both and is generally considered as a worthy addition to the series.

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<sup>42</sup> p. 4, Adams, Douglas, *Losos Pochyb*, Praha: Argo, 2008

<sup>43</sup> p. 6, Adams, *ibid.*

# The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

## The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (book)

*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* is the first of five books of the same-named book series named after a guide book introduced in the story, which is supposed to serve as a source of all knowledge. It was first published in 1979 by Pan Books based in London and in covers the first four parts of a radio program written by Douglas Adams.

The story begins on Thursday with a house in the West Country and its owner Arthur Dent who is the main character of the series. Day ago he found out that his house was about to be destroyed so that a highway bypass can be built on its place. After spending last night complaining and drinking in a local pub, he forgets about the demolition, only to remember about it when he notices a big yellow bulldozer in front of the window while recovering from severe hangover. To protest against the demolition, he decides to lie down in front of the bulldozer.

Meanwhile Ford Perfect arrives to persuade Arthur to accompany him to the local bar, where he later informs him that he in fact comes from a small planet near Betelgeuse, that he works as a field researcher for the *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (*the Guide* from now on) and that the Earth will soon be destroyed. However, Arthur is confused by him and his behaviour and doesn't believe him. In the meantime "several dozen huge yellow chunky slablike somethings, huge as office blocks"<sup>44</sup> close to the Earth. These are actually starships piloted by Vogons meant to demolish the planet so that an express hyperspace route can be build through the system. After a while Arthur hears strange noises and runs out only to find out that his house is being destroyed. Ford follows him after buying some peanuts. When he catches up with him in the ruins of his home vogons finally arrive. He quickly finds out his towel and his hitchhiking device and tries to get them out of the planet.

In the meantime Vogons begin to broadcast that the Earth needs to be destroyed and that they should have voice their, complains about the announcement of the demolition posted on Alpha Centauri. Shortly after this, they destroy the planet and silently vanish into hyperspace.<sup>45</sup>

Next follows a short chapter introducing two new main characters of the story – Zaphod Beeblebrox, the newly elected Galactic president and Trillian, his girlfriend who left the Earth with him not long ago. The scene begins on deserted planet Damogan, with Zaphod driving his boat from Easter Island (Easter meaning small, flat and light-brown) to an island called France<sup>46</sup>, where the spaceship the Heart of Gold is going to be revealed. It is also revealed that the presidential function has no political meaning or power, but is supposed to draw attention from the real ruling power. Only six people know this and they chose Zaphod because of his ability and enjoyment of drawing attention on himself. They didn't know

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<sup>44</sup> p. 28, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>45</sup> p. 34, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> p. 36, Adams, *ibid.*



however, that Zaphod become the President so that he could steal the Heart of Gold, which he does, right after revealing this fact to the public.

Then we are taken back to the vagon ship. We get a slight insight into the vagon vile, bureaucratic society, learn about their homeworld and the fact that the evolution looked upon them once and ran away, leaving them to die out, only to survive by pure stubbornness.<sup>47</sup> We also learn that Ford and Arthur were able to board the leading ship thanks to Dentrassi ship cooks who like to annoy Vogons. Here Arthur gets introduced to *the Guide* for the first time and gets his own Babel fish – a symbiotic organism living in its host’s ear and translating every language heard – so that he could understand vagon language. During following argument about destruction of the Earth they both get caught by vagon security and lead to the Vagon leader, so that he could read them his poem. Vagon poetry is classified as the third worst in the galaxy – while their first creations were attempts to prove themselves as civilized beings, now their poems are created only to torture others.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of Arthur’s and later Ford’s best attempts they still get sentenced to be shot out in space from the vagon ship. They are actually saved by improbability field caused by the Improbability Drive of the Heart of Gold, which used the high improbability of such happening. Right after boarding they experience events such as transformation into penguins or limb losing created by the same engine, until the ship finally returns to normality and the ship’s robot Marvin takes them to the Zaphod and Trillian. During their meeting it is revealed that Arthur already knows both Zaphod and Trillian from a party that took place in London six months ago and that Ford is actually Zaphod’s semicousin.

Eventually they continue to their previous destination, which is revealed as Magrathea – a legendary lost planet and former home of planet building industry. While Ford and Zaphod argue if the planet really is Magrathea, a recording confirming the fact that this planet is really a Magrathea starts and states that the planet is closed for business and asks them to leave. After second and third warning their ship is targeted by guided nuclear missiles. The recording also blocks their computer so the crew tries to lose missiles by manually driving the ship, forcing Arthur to start the Improbability Drive just second before the impact even though no one knew what was going to happen. A moment later, they wake up on newly redecorated bridge and find out they haven’t moved at all, but the missiles were transformed into a bowl of petunias and a very surprised-looking whale.<sup>49</sup>

In the end they manage to land on the planet and all five of them leave the ship to look around. After a while they see a crater caused by an impact of a falling whale-turned missile and find an entrance into the interior of planet on the bottom of it.<sup>50</sup> While Arthur and Marvin stay on the surface, Ford, Zaphod and Trillian descend into the tunnels, where Zaphod reveals that he doesn’t really knows why he does, just knows that he is supposed to do it and confesses that he apparently cauterized some of his own brain cells shortly before they are put under by gas.

Meanwhile Arthur meets an old native called Slartibartfast who takes him to the factory where Magratheans are building a second Earth and reveals to Arthur that both Earths were

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<sup>47</sup> p. 42, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>48</sup> p. 53, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> p. 102, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> p. 108, Adams, *ibid.*

ordered and operated by mice (here we also learn that mankind was the third most intelligent Earth specie, after mice and dolphins who managed to leave the Earth shortly before its destruction). Later he shows Arthur two recordings of an ancient alien race that wanted an answer to the question of Life, the Universe and Everything, so they created a supercomputer to find the answer. The computer – the Deep of Thought – actually finds the answer, but it takes seven and a half million years. After its creator’s descendants learn that the answer for their question is 42, they naturally get angry until the computer explains them that while the answer is correct, they don’t know the question. To learn it however, they need to build a new computer of a size of a planet with biological, live components and will be named the Earth.

Somewhere else on Magrathea, Trillian, Zaphod and Ford wake up inside a planet catalogue and shares with them that he was visited by former President of the Galaxy who told him about the Heart of Gold and convinced him to steal it. To do it however, he needed to become new president, but to do it, he needed to lock his memories of it inside his brain, so he wouldn’t be exposed during his campaign, and now, he doesn’t know why he did it and what is he supposed to do with it.

Next, all four of them get together in a room where they are given meal by two mice who were taken by Trillian from the Earth when she left. The mice are actually a new form of the aliens looking for the question. While trying to take Arthur’s brain to get the question from it, planetary alarm goes off, allowing Arthur and the others to escape the room. After running a while, they got into a computer room where they are attacked by two police hunters sent after them. For a while the two groups alternate between talking and shooting, until policemen suddenly drop dead because their life support system got somehow blown up.

On the surface, they find the policemen ship and Marvin next to it. After a little inquiry, Marvin reveals that he got into the talk with the ship computer, explained it his view on the Universe, which lead to the computer committing suicide.

The book then ends with the Heart of the Gold and its crew leaving the planet in search of food, specifically the Restaurant at the End of the Universe.

## The Restaurant at the End of the Universe

*The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* is the second instalment of the series and takes its name from a restaurant located at the actual end of the Universe featured in the book.

*The Restaurant* was published by the Pan Books like the first book and first came out in October 1980 in Great Brittan and a year later in the USA.

*The Restaurant* begins shortly after the end of the first book with a Vogon captain being instructed to destroy the Heart of Gold, which they have just located. At the same time, on the Heart of Gold, is Zaphod trying to remember why he decided to became the President of the Galaxy and why did he decide to lock this knowledge away, because it kept distracting him from enjoying his life to the full. However, his reverie is interrupted by Ford, who bursts into his cabin to warn him about Vogons.

At yet different part of the ship is Arthur, unsuccessfully trying to order some tea from a machine supposed to be capable of creating a wide variety of drinks matched exactly to

one's wishes, but always ends up serving "a liquid which was almost, but not quite, entirely unlike tea"<sup>51</sup>. This prompts him to launch into explanation about tea and tea-leaves, India, China, milk and history of East India Company, which afterwards forces the machine to think about the problem with the help of the ship's main computer.

When Arthur arrives at the ship's bridge he finds the rest of the crew trying to manually control the ship, because the main computer doesn't have enough memory since it's trying to solve Arthur's tea problem. To solve their problems with the ship and Vogons Zaphod comes up with a séance, to summon his great-grandfather to help them.

The séance works and after a short quarrel about Zaphod's life, it is revealed that the main reason for his brain surgery and becoming the president was to steal the Heart of Gold and use its new Improbability Drive to find the person who actually runs the Universe, while the president serves only to divert attention from them. In the end the great-grandfather decides to help Zaphod and sends the ship elsewhere. When the ship reappears Zaphod and Marvin are gone and the ship seems to be in a dark space, only occasionally swaying, but with the main computer and all its other systems still off.<sup>52</sup>

At the same time, Zaphod appears on a planet called Ursa Minor Beta, sitting in a café short way from the headquarters of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. Thanks to these experiences, he starts getting more information from the locked parts of his brain which lead him to seek out a man named Zarniwoop who should be working in the Guide's building.

After a short conversation about himself and news of his apparent death with the receptionist he is directed into an elevator where he is joined by Marvin who appeared here at the same time as Zaphod. When they finally arrive to the correct floor the building comes under attack by government robots looking for Zaphod. While Zaphod continues to Zarniwoop office with a hitchhiker who waited for him, Marvin is left behind to stop a heavily armed tank-drone, in which he succeeds by tricking it to angrily destroy the floor under itself.<sup>53</sup>

On the way to Zarniwoop's office, the hitchhiker, Roosta, reveals that Zaphod is being taken to planet Frogstar along with the whole building, so he could be subjected into the Total Perspective Vortex - a torture device meant to destroy its victim's mind and soul. Roosta disappears after leaving Zaphod with an advice to leave by a window instead of taking a door.

Once the building lands, Zaphod is led to the Total Perspective Vortex, which is revealed as capable of showing the person inside their own insignificance in comparison with the entire Universe. It, however, proves to be ineffective on Zaphod, who emerges out unharmed and proceeds to eat a piece of cake that was used to power the machine.

Since the guardian needs to report this failure, Zaphod starts running away and finds his way to a building full of derelict spacecraft. On one of the ships he finds Zarniwoop who was waiting for him there. He explains that since Zaphod exiting the building through the window, he entered an artificial Universe where Zarniwoop was hiding and turns it off. When they enter the real Universe that looks exactly the same Zaphod finds out that due to the Improbability Drive the Heart of Gold was made smaller and placed in Zaphod's pocket.

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<sup>51</sup> p. 178, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>52</sup> p. 197, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> p. 212, Adams, *ibid.*

Once Zaphod reunites with the rest of the crew on the bridge he orders the computer to take them to the nearest place where they could eat which results in him, Ford, Trillian and Arthur to disappear again, leaving Zarniwoop and Marvin Behind.

They reappear at the floor of Miliways, the Restaurant at the End of the Universe - a restaurant located in a far future just a short time before the Universe ceases to exist so that it's guests can enjoy the sight of the End after eating their meals. Inside they are met with a variety of famous people and alien beings, including their main course - talking cow-like animal, who looks forward to be eaten and later the Great Prophet Zarquon, who timed his second coming too late and arrives just a few seconds before the Universe ends.

Shortly after dinner they receive a phone call from Marvin who has been waiting for them for several millennia at the restaurant's parking lot. Once there, Zaphod decides to leave the Heart of Gold behind and steal another ship.<sup>54</sup> Together with Ford they decide on a sleek, completely black ship which as they later find out is completely black both inside and outside.

Once aboard the ships starts to move somewhere back in time on its own and the completely black controls do not work. Eventually the ship moves back into its real time and heads directly into a near star as it was programmed to. During a frantic search of the ship Arthur manages to find a faulty transporter. Since it needs to be operated manually, Marvin is left behind while the others escape through without knowing where they are being sent to.<sup>55</sup>

Arthur and Ford wake up on a Golgafrinchan ark ship full of cryogenically frozen people. After they are taken to its captain, they find out that their ship, the B ark, was sent out of their planet since it was becoming unliveable, or so they were at least told. The B ark, in fact, was filled with useless, incompetent people and left by the rest of the Golgafrinchans and programmed to crash into a planet, instead of landing on it.

After the landing, which in the end didn't kill the crew of the ship, Ford and Arthur leave the Golgafrinchans in order to find a place from which they could contact some ship that could get them from the planet.

In the meantime, Zaphod and Trillian wake up at the bridge of the Heart of Gold which Zarniwoop uses to get them to the place where the person who runs the Universe lives. After landing they find a man living in a hut with his cat. Zarniwoop tries to ask him questions, but the man only gives answers that revolve about the uncertainty of everything and the importance of one's perception. In the end he admits that he is sometimes visited by people who ask him questions, but also admits that these memories might be just a figment of his imagination since other people may not exist and the past could happen differently. During the conversation Trillian and Zaphod leave Zarniwoop in the hut, and agreeing that the Universe is in good hands they return to the Heart of Gold and fly away, leaving Zarniwoop behind outside the hut, since the man inside decided that the outside is not real and started talking to his table to gauge it's reactions.

During their journey Arthur and Ford come across the native people of the planet - friendly, primitive people who leave them fruit for leaving them alone. After long journey north they came across a glacier which had an autogram of its designer, Slartibartfast, inside of it and come to realize that the planet they are on is in fact Earth.

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<sup>54</sup> p. 272, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>55</sup> p. 288, Adams, *ibid.*

Later, they return to Golgafrinchans to see that they did basically nothing during their time away - they declared a war on a uninhabited continent and paused their research of a wheel until it was decided what colour it should have. While Ford informs them that the natives started dying out after their landing, he gets pulled into a series of useless discussions after which he informs them that the planet will be destroyed in two million years and angrily storms away.

He finds Arthur trying to teach the natives scarbble, in order to evolve, but informs him that it's useless since they will die out and the evolution of humankind will actually come from Golgafrinchans. While they talk one of the natives take the Scrabble letters and use them to write forty-two. This inspires them to try to have Arthur take the letters and blindly make a sentence out of them in hopes that the question to the Life, Universe and Everything was still in his brain, even though the planet's program was disrupted. The question he forms in the end says: What do you get if you multiply six by nine?.<sup>56</sup>

They are found laughing by two Golgafrinchan women who followed Ford in order to find out more about the two million years. Ford eventually says that it doesn't matter and after a few hours of talking Arthur decides to throw his Guide into a river, saying that he won't need it anymore.

## Life, Universe and Everything

*Life, Universe and Everything* is the third book of the series and is named after the question about Life, Universe and Everything introduced in the first book. The third book was published by Pan Books like the previous two and first came out in 1982.

The story picks up five years after the events of *The Restaurant*. Arthur lives in a cave - Ford left four years ago and Golgofrinchans, after being decimated during a winter left for a vacation a year later and never came back.

This morning Arthur wakes up and loudly announces that he has decided to go mad. He is however surprised by Ford who returns to tell Arthur that he managed to locate a disturbance in space-time continuum that could help them get of the planet. When they reach the location they find out that the disturbance brought in a sofa that should get them back if they manage to catch it.

After several attempts they manage to get on it and suddenly find themselves in London, at Lord's Cricket Ground during a match of the Australian series in 1980s, two days before the Earth the destruction of Earth. After a while Ford notices a masked starship nearby and the two of them are soon approached by its pilot, Slartibartfast who asks them to meet him on board in two minutes.

During that time another ship appears and releases out a group of white robots who start killing people on the field with weapons that looked exactly like cricket equipment. While Arthur and Ford run to Slartibartfast's ship, the robots steal the Cricket trophy - ashes from an ancient cricket stump, and leave in their ship.

When they reach the ship they find out that it looks a lot like an Italian bistro, both inside and outside and filled with fake furniture, fake food and robotic waiters - all components of a

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<sup>56</sup> p. 345, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

Bistromathic drive - a drive that uses numbers written on bistro checks, since they seem to use different mathematics than the rest of the Universe and thus allow a ship to travel in higher speeds than normal hyperspace engines, which, according to Slartibartfast allows them to reach an ancient curse of the Galaxy that became a threat again.

On a planet where mattresses came from (everything in Universe was found to grow somewhere, thus making any manufacture obsolete - mattresses are sentient, friendly creatures, that are hunted, dried out and exported to the rest of the Universe for sleeping) a young mattress come across an old, damaged robot that is revealed to be Marvin. He explains that since his replacement leg got stuck he has been walking in a circle for 1,5 million years.

Near the end of their conversation a ship of white robots appear, steal Marvin's replacement leg a disappear again, only to reappear moment later to take rest of Marvin with them and leave the planet for good.

In another part of the galaxy, the Heart of Gold is aimlessly floating in space. Zaphod, after finishing his "mission" for finding the ruler of the Universe falls into deep depression over the fact that he has no idea what to do next. Sometime during his days of moping Trillian gives up on cheering him up and departs the ship leaving Zaphod alone.

Unspecified amount of time later Zaphod encounters white robots aboard the ship. Zaphod manages to engage them in conversation which reveals that the robots came aboard to steal a part of the Improbability Drive to complete a key that will release their masters and after stealing it they shoot Zaphod and leave.

Back on the ship, the Bistromath, Slartibartfast starts playing a document about the Krikkit Wars, which somehow later reformed from a latent memory as the game cricket in England. The people of Krikkit are shown as friendly, simple people who, thanks to a dust cloud around their planet and their sun, believed that they are alone in the Universe, because there were no stars on their sky. That is until a spaceship crashed on their planet.<sup>57</sup>

Within a year the people of Krikkit managed to build and launch their first ship capable of reaching the space. Once they managed to get past the dust cloud they were able to see the rest of the Universe and shortly after decided that it needed to be destroyed since it did not fit with their previous believes.

Sometime later thousands of worlds are attacked by Krikkit warships, stripped of useful resources and destroyed by white robots fighting with by launching ball-like grenades and bombs by hitting them with their clubs. After they manage to kill about two "grillion" people they are finally stopped by placing Krikkit inside of Slo-Time field which would infinitely slow the time inside and locked so it could be opened only from the outside. While the locking is successful, a single Krikkit warship attempts to steal the key, only to be lost along with the key in space-time, seemingly destroyed.

After the documentary Slartibartfast reveals that in order to reach the last piece of the key first, they need to go to a party where it seems to be located.

Arthur however doesn't reach the party, instead he materializes alone in a cave. Here he is confronted by a monster, Agrajag who diverted him there. Agrajag reveals that he plans to kill him, to avenge himself for all his deaths Arthur caused. He reveals he was the pot of petunias

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<sup>57</sup> p. 418, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

that he made appear in the first book, he was a rabbit he killed to make a bag out of his skin on prehistoric Earth, a man who died of heart attack on cricket match after being surprised by Arthur's appearance on the field and dozens of other reincarnations Arthur somehow killed. He reveals that this is his last reincarnation so he decided to take his revenge on him. However after finding out that his death in Stavromula Beta hasn't occur yet, he panics but tries to kill Arthur anyway. He doesn't succeed, instead gets crushed by a statue of Arthur when he leaps after the real one.

While Arthur runs away, the mountain starts to fall apart. He manages to get out, but starts falling from the mountainside. Before he falls down however he is surprised by noticing his old travel bag which distracts him enough to start flying - the trick to start flying is, according to the Guide, missing the crashing down, and manages to find his way to the flying party they were looking for.<sup>58</sup>

Inside the party they are reunited with Trillian who has somehow found her way there and start looking for the last part of the key. The party is interrupted by a sudden appearance of the Krikkit robots who attack the guests and steal a trophy for "the Most Gratuitous Use of the Word Belgium"<sup>59</sup> before they leave the mostly destroyed party which prompts Arthur and others to leave too.

When they arrive to the lock, they find out that they are too late, since the robots have already assembled the key and destroyed the field around Krikkit. Zaphod, miraculously surviving the shot runs out of the warship to stop them, but gets quickly dispatched by a nearby robot and left behind the leaving ship, only to be recovered by Trillian and Ford.

Back on ship Slartibartfast tries to convince the rest of the crew to follow him and land on Krikkit, so they could come up with another plan - everyone follows him, except for Zaphod, who managed to recover the missing piece of the Improbability Drive and leaves on the Heart of Gold.

Meanwhile the rest of the crew lands on Krikkit and are soon set upon by locals. Trillian manages to convince the still friendly population to take them to their leader so they could discuss their plan on destroying the Universe.

Above the planet, Zaphod returns and infiltrates one of the robot factories. Inside he finds the remains of the ship that crashed on Krikkit and discovers that it should have never been able to fly on its own. Before he gets a chance to think about it, he is forced to hide from two Krikkit commanders who are debating the fact that the robots seems to be very depressed and unenthusiastic lately.

This is revealed to be caused by Marvin, who was connected to their main computer and somehow passed his depressed view of life onto the robots. When Zaphod finds him, Marvin informs him that he managed to stop robots from killing him and shows him Trillian who is trying to convince the Krikkit leader to stop their plan.

Trillian reveals that this whole thing was one big conspiracy - their world cut of the rest of the Universe by the dust cloud, the fake spaceship, or the fact that they were able to improve their technology by thousands of years practically overnight, including building a bomb that was supposed to destroy everything. All this, according to Trillian, was set in motion by a

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<sup>58</sup> p. 456, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>59</sup> p. 470, Adams, *ibid.*

computer, Hactar, who was instructed to create an ultimate weapon by its creators eons ago, but failed. Before she manages to convince them however, one of the elder instructs a robot to detonate the bomb. The robot hits the bomb with its club, but instead of exploding, it just hits a wall and gets dented.

Sometime later Trillian and Arthur arrive to the location of the computer, trying to get explanation. Hactar informs them that he was really responsible for everything Trillian said but only because it was his original purpose. The fact that he failed again doesn't bother him and is actually looking forward to being destroyed. Trillian and Arthur return to the Heart of Gold and Hactar is destroyed by a vibration field.

Days later they find out about a man, Prak, who, due to an incursion of Krikkit robots, was given too much of a truth drug and was now forced to tell only the truth, but in its absolute and final form without being able to stop, leading people around him to go mad.

Thanks to the Improbability Drive, they manage to find Prak, who starts laughing uncontrollably after meeting Arthur. Later it is revealed that he is laughing so much that it would eventually kill him. Eventually, Arthur manages to ask him about the question for 42, to which Prak answers that "*the Question and the answer are mutually exclusive. Knowledge of one logically precludes the knowledge of other. ....The Question and the Answer would cancel each other out and take the Universe with them.*"<sup>60</sup> Right before his death he manages to reveal to Arthur a name of a planet that should hold the last message of God to creation.

While Arthur is intrigued by it, in the end he decides to stay on Krikkit and finally settle down, spending his time practising his flying skills.

## So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish

*So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish* is the fourth book of the "trilogy" and is named after the final message that dolphins left behind before leaving the Earth shortly before it was destroyed by the Vogon fleet. The first edition was published in 1984, again by Pan Books.

The story begins on Earth with a man (who is much later revealed to be Arthur) descending from a ramp of a spaceship he hitched a ride on. Since it's raining he tries to hitch a car on a nearby road, but is being ignored until finally a Saab stops and its driver invites Arthur inside.

On a far away planet, Ford is in a bar, trying to convince the bartender to allow him to pay with his American Express card. After a lengthy debate with the bartender, Ford decides to bribe him by writing an article about his bar - something that Guide contributors are forbidden to, unless they are threatened, or they really want to.<sup>61</sup>

After he leaves he decides to look up his contribution on Earth that got reduced by editors on *Earth: Mostly Harmless*, right before a database update happens. However, after the update happens, his contribution shows up in full - pages of restaurant, bar and sightseeing recommendations, tips for surviving and best food available - even though it was all supposed to disappear due to the planet's destruction. Reinvigorated, he realizes that he has some unfinished business and leaves the planet.

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<sup>60</sup> p. 517, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>61</sup> p. 534, Adams, *ibid.*



Meanwhile Arthur talks with the car driver, Russell, about the woman who is sleeping in the back of the car. The woman is in fact Russell's sister - Fenchurch, who, according to him is completely mad, ever since the "mass hysteria" eight years ago, when the whole population of Earth hallucinated about alien ships trying to destroy the planet.

When he arrives to his village he finds out that everything is mostly the same way it was when he left, including his own house. Inside he finds a box with a fishbowl inside with "So Long, and Thanks...." carved inside of, which he promptly uses as a new home for his Babel fish.

The next morning he realizes that he cannot get Fenchurch out of his head and tries to find her by inquiring in nearby hospitals, although without any success. Slightly disappointed he leaves for the local pub.

Following day while driving he encounters Fenchurch hitchhiking on a road. Offering her a ride, she accepts and Arthur drives her to a train station where they try to make a conversation, but are unable to due to constant interruptions and when the train arrives Fenchurch has to leave, but not before exchanging numbers with Arthur so they could finish their talk. When he gets home he finds out that he had a wrong number and so is unable to call her.

Since he cannot find her, he decides to buy a computer, so he could pinpoint the location of the cave where he used to live during his time on prehistoric Earth. After several tries he comes up with an approximate location and drives there, only to find out that house where Fenchurch lives is in that exact spot. Fenchurch, while surprised, decides that they should take a walk in the Hyde Park, but warns him that there is something wrong with her and challenges him to figure out what it is by evening.

During their walk they quickly grow close and Fenchurch reveals that eight years ago she came up with something that would solve everything that is wrong with the Universe but due to her collapse that caused her to believe that the Earth was destroyed forgot everything and now feels like she is missing something important and also reveals that all the dolphins suddenly disappeared.

In the evening Fenchurch decides they should go back to her house so she could show him what's wrong with her. Before they do however, she tells Arthur that she believes that something terrible happend to him too, which is why she feels so close to him. She also produces Arthur's Guide out of her bag, saying that she found it in her brother's car.

Once home Fenchurch eventually reveals that her legs don't reach the ground, leaving her floating slightly above it. Arthur, after seeing this decides to show her how to fly, which she eventually manages and they spend most of the night in the air.

Following day they decide to find out what happened to the dolphins and after couple day they manage to track down a man in Los Angeles who might know something. The man, Wonko the Sane, while slightly insane shows them an exactly the same fishbowl Arthur and as we get to know Fenchurch have and finally see the complete inscription "So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish". He reveals that these bowls are farewell gifts from dolphins and advices them to try to listen to it. When the do they find out that the destroyed Earth was replaced by a new one funded by dolphin's "Campaign to Save the Humans".<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> p. 645, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

On their way home Arthur remembers Prak's last words about God's Last message and Fanchurch convinces him to go looking for it with her. While waiting for a ship to hitch they are surprised by Ford who arrives to Arthur's house. During three days he manages to mostly recover from his travel sickness and agrees to help them of the planet.

When they manage to leave Earth they find their way to the planet with the Last message which appears to be a popular pilgrimage across a desert. On their way they come across heavily damaged robot who they find out is what is left of Marvin who came to look for the Last message too and decide to help him reach it.

When they finally do, they find the message is in fact written in blazing letters across a mountainside. After they help Marvin reach the observation post he manages to read out "*We apologise for the inconvenience*". He manages to say: "*I think, I feel good about it*" right before he shuts down forever.<sup>63</sup>

## Mostly Harmless

*Mostly Harmless* is the fifth part of the series and is named after Ford's article for the Hitchhiker's Guide's - "*Earth: Mostly Harmless*". It was first published in 1992 and was the final part of the series until 2009 when the sixth book, *And Another Thing....* written by Eion Colfer came out. While originally intended to be the ending for the series, Adams always felt the need to continue with a sixth book, mostly to end the series on a more "upbeat note".<sup>64</sup>

Unfortunately, he was never given a chance and in the end the sixth book had to be written by Colfer and published on the 30th anniversary of the first book.

The story begins with Tricia (an alternate version of Trillian) who moved to New York for better job opportunities. While waiting for an interview for a job as a reporter she is approached by an astrologist she interviewed earlier. During their following conversation Tricia reveals that she feels that she missed her opportunity when she had a chance to leave the planet with Zaphod and confesses that she feels that she is wasting her knowledge of astrophysics. Later she is finally asked for an audition in a morning show, but doesn't get the job and decides to go back to England.

The night she comes home she is woken up by a spaceship that lands on her lawn. The aliens reveal to her that they have been monitoring the Earth for some time, especially her. Tricia, who decides to make an interview with them finds out that they enjoy watching game shows and listening to Elvis Presley, who they believe, was very likely really taken by aliens. Later they tell Tricia that they came to retrieve her and take her to the tenth planet of the Solar system, Rupert, where they have lived for years.

The reason for choosing her was her interview with the astrologist - the aliens hope that using astrology they could remember their names and mission, but since horoscopes are made for Earth, they need someone who could recalculate them for Rupert.<sup>65</sup>

Next we get to see Ford, sneaking through the new building of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. The reason for sneaking was the fact that he would never be let in due to his writing

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<sup>63</sup> p. 668, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>64</sup> *Children's author to write sixth instalment of Hitchhiker series - News, Books*, The Independent: London. 17 September 2008

<sup>65</sup> P p. 721, Adams, *ibid.*

methods and financial records, thus forcing him to break in every time he came. On his way he realizes that the building's structure changed - while the location of the Guide's headquarters changed often, the internal layout of the building remained the same, until now.

The reason for this is, as he discovers, new management. As he learns from the new editor-in-chief the Guide has a new business plan. Instead of making millions of copies, they only make one that gets sold in multiple dimensions. Worse the Guide will no longer be cheap book for hitchhikers but a will only be sold to rich and influential and their copies in other timelines. Furious, Ford attacks and knocks out the editor and steals his Ident-I-Ezee - a combination of identification and credit card and escapes the office.

In the meantime Arthur Dent sits in a motel room, on a planet NowWhat - a swamp planet so uninteresting that even the original settlers left shortly after settling it. The reason why he came here was that this planet was actually Earth, or at least this dimension's version of it. He arrived to this dimension by accident - during a hyperspace jump a year ago Fenchurch disappeared from a seat next to him, which as he found out was caused by his shift to a different Universe. After seeing the state of this Universe's Earth he decides to continue travelling and leaves the planet.

Back in the Guide's HQ Ford continues moving to the building's most secure areas. After he reaches the building's main computer he tampers with it for a while and promptly leaves to go back to the editor's office. Here he is confronted by guards who throw him out of a window. During his fall he notices that the building has a thirteenth floor, even though the elevator didn't show any. He manages to break his fall and re-enters the building on the 13th floor where he finds the prototype of the Guide Mark II and that the Guide is now run by the Vogons.

Hoping to find some new purpose to life, Arthur left for a planet of seers and soothsayers, but finds out that the planet is being abandoned, since their services are no longer required. Trillian, or Trillian Astra as she is now called, became a time-travelling reporter, thus making the future telling obsolete. After travelling to another village he manages to find another seer who advises him to get himself a beach house, or some other place that would help him relax.

Deciding to take the advice, Arthur starts looking for a planet he could settle at, travelling from one world to another, paying for his trips by selling his DNA samples. After trying to settle on a number of worlds he eventually boards a ship that crashes, leaving Arthur the only surviving passenger.<sup>66</sup>

The story continues with a small spaceship landing near a village on planet Lamuella. Since the villagers have never seen a spaceship they start gathering around, led by their elder/religious leader/story teller Old Trashbarg, who, unlike others, was more annoyed than surprised because he did not foretell this event and would have to work on incorporating this in his ever-changing stories.

Eventually two women exit the ship - an adult and a child and after hearing the singing from the Sandwich Maker's hut start walking in its direction. The Sandwich Maker, sent here by the Almighty Bob, is revealed to be Arthur, who managed to amaze the population by his ability to make sandwiches after his crash some years ago, and the woman coming to him is in fact Trillian who came to Arthur with their daughter, Random.

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<sup>66</sup> p. 764, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

Trillian, as she explains, decided to have a child at some point and since Arthur was the only human donor available (thanks to his DNA payments for travel), he was chosen as a father. Since she had to time-travel a lot she had to leave her behind sometimes, causing Random to age strangely, leaving her at some point in her puberty, which in turn caused Trillian to look out Arthur and leave their daughter with him.<sup>67</sup>

Random lives with Arthur for three months suffering from mood swing, abandonment issues and the fact that Trillian had her only so she could have some semblance of life she could have, if she have not left with Zaphod.

After the third month Arthur receives a package addressed to Ford, but on his address. While he decides not to open it, Random takes the package to the crash site of Arthur's ship, hoping he would not follow her there. Here she finds Arthur's old Guide and takes it along with the package to a nearby cave and starts opening it.

The only content of the box appears to be a small black disc, that turns into a bird-like creature who introduces itself as this universe's Guide Mark II and after short calibration and following conversation offers Random a way to go home to Earth, since, thanks to his multiple space-time existences, it is able to do practically anything, demonstrated by summoning a spaceship that can take them to Earth.

Before Arthur manages to catch up, Random leaves in the ship. Disappointed he enters the cave where he finds his old Guide and surprisingly Ford Prefect. Ford explains that he was the one who sent him the package, hoping that it would be safe and then managed to find his planet after picking up a signal from his old Guide. After he landed however, he was knocked out by Random who stole his ship with the Guide Mark II.

Ford starts explaining that the Guide Mark II is responsible for a series of events that have led him here, and believes that everything, including him finding it in the first place was a part of some plan of the Guide itself.

When they come out of the cave they notice that the seasonal migration of Perfectly Normal beasts started. Since they suddenly appear at one end of Anhondo Plain and disappear on the other Ford deduces that they must be travelling through a dimensional drift which could help them leave the planet and decides that they need to ride them.

Back at Earth Tricia, after returning from visiting the aliens, Grebulons, starts working on her footage of the interviews she did with them, only to be interrupted by a call from her television studio who sends her to report on another ship. When she arrives she is greeted by Random who starts throwing rocks at her.

Meanwhile Arthur and Ford appear on a desert, next to a restaurant called The Domain of the King Bar & Grill. When they enter Ford asks to buy the spaceship he saw outside and is pointed in the direction of fat, balding man, who agrees before he enters the stage and starts singing *Love Me Tender*. The ship is revealed to be a pink, too-many-finned vessel with big EP monogram on the control panel.

Back at the Solar system the Grebulon leader uses a computer program from Tricia to help him remember their mission. Monitoring this is Vogon Captain who used the Guide mk. II to lure all the remaining humans to the last Earth which was soon going to be destroyed by Grebulons.

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<sup>67</sup> p. 789, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

Arthur and Ford manage to find Tricia and Random in a nightclub at the same time as Trillian does. Random, armed with a pistol starts angrily yell at Trillian before getting startled by a man leaving a toilet, accidentally shooting at Arthur, who manages to duck. The man behind him is shot instead of him and after his death Ford finds the man's calling card that says - "*Stavro Mueller, Beta*".<sup>68</sup> Realizing that this was the final reincarnation of Agrajag that was supposed to be killed by Arthur, he realizes that everything has finally come to an end and decides to just sit back with Ford on the stairs of the club while Grebulons start destroying the Earth.

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<sup>68</sup> p. 867, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

# Characters

## Arthur Dent

Arthur Philip Dent is the main character of *The Guide* and along with Ford the only character to appear in the whole series. He is described as "*about thirty as well, tall, dark-haired and never quite at ease with himself*"<sup>69</sup>, and spends most of the story still dressed in the bathrobe he escaped the Earth in.

Like many literary characters in the 20th century, Arthur can be classified as an antihero. Antihero is a protagonist, who is lacking in the usual heroic qualities, namely bravery, idealism or morality<sup>70</sup>, but, considering that even characters like Hamlet or Don Quixote are classified as such, it can probably be said that an antihero might just be a character atypical enough to distinguish themselves from the classical characters - which is something that Arthur definitely does.

Arthur's most distinguishing characteristic is, ironically, the fact that he is completely common and uninteresting - at least compared to the rest of *The Guide's* characters. The reason for this is easy to deduce - the reader is supposed to feel for Arthur, maybe even identify themselves with him.

He is very easy to relate to - he is not as smart as Trillian and Marvin, or as flamboyant and crazy as Zaphod - Arthur is just an ordinary guy, who gets (rather violently) torn out of his everyday life and thrown into an unknown universe armed only with his towel.

This inexperience also allowed Adams to introduce *The Guide's* universe more deeply than it would be possible with more experienced hero. While it could be argued that this is already done through the occasional notes and articles from *The Guide*, it is often Arthur who looks up the information. With the addition of numerous explanations from Ford, Zaphod or Slartibartfast, the reader receives a volume of additional information through Arthur, allowing them to better appreciate the book.

Another of Arthur's distinctive traits is his luck - both good and bad. Most of the time Arthur finds himself being thrown between good and bad situations starting with his escape from Earth. He finds out that the Earth is being demolished only to be saved just seconds before its destruction.<sup>71</sup> Later he gets thrown out of an airlock but instead of dying, he is picked up by Zaphod and Trillian.<sup>72</sup> Or being teleported away from a ship on a collision with a star only to get stuck on the primeval Earth.

In summary, Arthur's role in the book (besides being the main character) is two-fold: to get the reader to sympathize with him and allow them a better perspective into *The Guide's* universe, which would not be possible with a more interesting protagonist.

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<sup>69</sup> p. 17, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>70</sup> *Britannica: Antihero*, <https://www.britannica.com/art/antihero>

<sup>71</sup> p. 46, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> p. 70, Adams, *ibid.*

## Ford Prefect

Ford Prefect is the second main character introduced in *The Guide* and is the only character besides Arthur who appears in all five books. Ford has lived on Earth for about 15 years, after being stranded there, under a pretence of being an actor. In reality he is an alien hailing from Betelgeuse 5, coming to Earth to write an article for *The Guide*, where he works as a field researcher.

In the book, Ford appears to parody two literary motifs - "mentor characters" and the first contact. Some kind of a mentor character appears in basically every book with, especially if they have an inexperienced chief protagonist. Over the story this mentor parts knowledge and skills to the protagonist, helping him to survive and allowing him to continue along the plot.

For this comparison I'll take Thufir Hawat from Frank Herbert's *Dune* and *Harry Potter's* Dumbledore. Both are seen as old, experienced men, seemingly without any character flaws - they appear wise, intelligent, experienced, as is expected from men their age, but also possess other traits like bravery, morality or willingness to sacrifice themselves for greater good.

Ford is none of these things. While he does impart knowledge and skills to Arthur, he usually does it through his copy of *The Guide*, leaving most of the work to the book. He also lacks most of the characteristics I listed above, with experience being the only exception, and even that is debatable, considering that most of it comes from his hitchhiking and information from *The Guide* which is usually inaccurate at best and completely made-up at worst.

Also, while he could not be seen as cowardly, or corrupt, but he is described as extremely pragmatic, often prioritizing his survival and security over everything else, as seen in the third book where he's trying to convince Arthur and Slartibartfast to ignore the Krikkit threat and leave.<sup>73</sup> His another flaw would be his unending pursuit of having a good time as is illustrated a short while later when he decides to help against Krikkits when he learns that they need to go to a party.

But, despite all this he manages to teach Arthur how to survive in the Galaxy on his own, finds him a towel to take with him, gets him a Babel fish and later keeps them alive when they are stranded on prehistoric Earth, so his role as a mentor can be considered as successful.

The second parodied motif is the first contact. This starts with Ford's chosen name - Ford Prefect. While his real name is unknown, we it is revealed that he chose Ford Prefect after coming to Earth because he believed that cars were the dominant species of the planet.<sup>74</sup>

In every book or movie involving a contact with aliens I can think of, the aliens are intelligent and technologically advanced enough to correctly identify mankind as a dominant species. Ford on the other hand, while having access to superior technology, manages to make a critical mistake that leads to him naming himself after a car instead of choosing an unsuspecting name as he originally intended.

Also, in addition to parodies, Ford is usually the one who pushes the main plot of the book forward, usually in a way that somehow involves getting Arthur to or from Earth - he saves Arthur from Earth and introduces him to Zaphod, finds a way from prehistoric Earth, helps

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<sup>73</sup> p. 380, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>74</sup> p. 21, Adams, *ibid.*

Arthur and Fenchurch from Earth and finally send Arthur the new version of *The Guide* which leads them back to Earth at the end of the series.

## Zaphod Beeblebrox

Zaphod is introduced in the first book along with Trillian during his theft of the Heart of Gold, shortly after he was elected as the President of the Galaxy. Like Ford, who is his semi-cousin, he was born on Betelgeuse 5 where they grew up together.

While mostly human-like, Zaphod has a second head and a third arm. While it is unclear whether or not he always had two heads, his third arm was added later, to "improve his ski-boxing"<sup>75</sup>. Another distinguishing fact is his age - the day of the theft is the day of his 200th birthday.

As for his personality, Zaphod is possibly incomparable to any other literary character. During the story Zaphod is often described as adventure-seeking, attention-craving, flamboyant playboy, while in other cases he is seen as stupid, easily excitable, lacking common sense or sometimes even mad, all of which apparently makes him an excellent President of the Galaxy.

During the story he shows most of these characteristics, both the good and the bad ones - he steals the Heart of Gold so he could find Magrathea, looks for the answer to Life, Universe and Everything just because he thinks it is a great idea that would keep him famous and rich.

As for his stupidity, and possible madness, there is a possible explanation - his brain operation. At the end of the first book he reveals to Ford that parts of his brain - the part that knows why he wanted to become the President - is inaccessible, and while he obviously wasn't as bad as he is in the books as Ford observes a few times.

This leads to a possible parody concerning his character - a shadow government conspiracy. Some people (mostly in America) believe that their governments are only a front for a "real government" that rules, while the one they elected only exists to keep their attention away.

In *The Guide* this idea is pushed to ridiculous dimensions. The President of the Galaxy exists only to keep the attention away from the real government (a fact most people don't know or care about), something in which Zaphod excels and easily surpasses any diversions governments on Earth could ever hope to come up with.

Behind the President is the real ruler of the Galaxy who makes the decisions. But, unlike some commonly imagined corporation owners, media magnates or even the Illuminati, the ruler in *The Guide* is a man who lives in a small house with his cat without any knowledge of the rest of the Galaxy - in fact, he doesn't even know that he rules the galaxy, he only says "what comes to him when he believes that some people can hear him"<sup>76</sup>

In the end, Zaphod is the only main character who doesn't reach some kind of closure of his story (at least not in the original five books) and we only know that he left in the Heart of Gold after helping the others save the galaxy from Krikkit.

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<sup>75</sup> p. 40, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>76</sup> p. 325, Adams, *ibid.*



## Trillian

Trillian, Tricia McMillan, or later Trillian Astra is alongside Arthur the only surviving human in the Galaxy. Unlike Arthur, Trillian has left the Earth half a year before its destruction, right after meeting Zaphod at a party in Islington and taking up his offer to leave the planet with him.

Unlike the other main characters, Trillian can actually be considered "normal", meaning that she does not have any exaggerated traits or flaws like the other characters. This allows her to act as something of a grounding character for the group - when the others cause problems she is the one who shows up to solve them.

Trillian possesses many qualities her companions lack, or worse have too much of. She is smart - she has two doctorates, Mathematics and Astrophysics - which helps her to adapt to life in space much faster than Arthur. But she is not ridiculously smart as Marvin, which allows her to still appear sympathetic and non-condescending.

Another of her qualities is her level-headedness - this shows mostly in the third book, when she manages to convince the inhabitants of Krikkit not to kill them and later to stop their attack on the rest of the galaxy.<sup>77</sup>

Personality-wise Trillian is probably the least interesting character, but she manages to compensate this with her "big moments" during the story - probably the most important being her ability to uncover and foil Hactar's plan in the third book, introducing Random, her and Arthur's daughter in the fifth and of course being indirectly responsible for the final destruction of the last Earth at the end of the last book.

## Marvin

Marvin is introduced in the first book on page 79, when Zaphod orders him to bring Arthur and Ford to the bridge of the Heart of Gold. As a robot created by Sirius Cybernetics he is equipped with an artificial intelligence (AI) and a new GPP feature - Genuine People Personality.<sup>78</sup> The GPP, either due to being new, or in combination with his vast intelligence causes him to be constantly depressed and pessimistic to a point where he can convince other AIs to commit suicide just by talking to him.

In my opinion, Marvin parodies artificial intelligence that is found in classic, serious science fiction. Russel and Norvig, after comparing the most important definitions, come up with four basic features that would make a real AI: ability to act like human, think like human, think rationally and act rationally.<sup>79</sup>

Marvin meets all of these requirements: he sulks in dark corners of the ship like a depressed human might; he is capable of expressing his own opinions, if only to depress others and, during his

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<sup>77</sup> p. 489, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>78</sup> p. 81, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> Ch. 1, Russel, Stuart J., Norvig, Peter, *Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1995

"mission" to stop a tank-robot without a weapon, he is capable of coming up with a plan, and debating with the other robot long enough to force him to make a mistake and destroy itself.<sup>80</sup>

The parody itself therefore is not fit the definition, but in its execution - he parodies AI because all other AI in science fiction are not only "mentally stable", but usually if not evil, than at least shown as antagonistic - probably best known here would be Skynet, from *Terminator*, or robots from Asimov's *I, Robot* and Čapek's R.U.R.. But to stay in literature, I chose Frank Herbert's *Dune* and, perhaps more importantly, his sons, Brian Herbert's *Legends of Dune* trilogy.

In *Dune* we learn that Artificial intelligence, and in fact everything coming close to it is strictly forbidden and any attempt of creating it is harshly punished. The reason for this is *The Butlerian Jihad* - a war, that took place about 10 000 years before the events of the first book. The reason for the war is explained only as a response to a rebellion of self-aware machines who tried to enslave mankind.

Brian Herbert's trilogy focuses on the war and gives some more details - the war took almost a thousand years, the Earth was turned into a nuclear wasteland, shows the AIs as being who believe themselves superior to everything else, but most importantly cold, overly logical and evil.

Marvin, and actually no other AI or robot in *Hitchhiker* is depicted as evil - the closest come the Krikkit robots, but even their behaviour is explained by their programming, a programming that is later overridden by Marvin's depression, which rends them harmless.

Besides his depression, Marvin's another important characteristic is a complete apathy. While he manages to save the rest of the protagonists multiple times, he doesn't save them because he wants to, he is either ordered to, or it happens by accident, when he tries to kill some time, most notably in the first book where a computer kills itself after talking with him, which in turn kills a patrol that was trying to shoot Arthur and the rest.<sup>81</sup>

His apathy also includes a disinterest in his own survival, or his life at all - he is willing to stall the tank-robot without having a weapon, he stays behind on a ship falling into a sun and he spends millions of years walking in a circle while stuck in a swamp.

This could be explained by his own intelligence - he is meant to be 50 000 times smarter than a human which, according to Marvin, allows him to solve any problem in the Universe. But, since he is also equipped with the GPP he is capable of feeling bored and perhaps more importantly useless, since he already knows everything there is to know but is still forced to exist without any challenge for his intellect.

Only time when he diverts from his otherwise constant personality is in the fourth book, when he decides to look for God's Last Message. When Arthur and Ford find him he is ready to die, in fact he is angry about not being left to die in the desert, but after reading the Last Message, he appears to be almost happy about the contents of the message.

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<sup>80</sup> p. 212, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>81</sup> p. 167, Adams, *ibid.*

# Symbols and Motifs in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

## The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy is "*probably the most remarkable book ever to come out of the great publishing corporations of Ursa Minor .... and in many civilizations has already supplanted the great Encyclopedia Galactica as the standard repository of all knowledge and wisdom. ....*"<sup>82</sup>

This description, located in the book even before the story starts, would suggest that The Guide serves as the Galaxy's most popular and reliable source of information for the galactic inhabitants, and even Ford Prefect, a field researcher for the book seems to believe it.

But, as the story continues, this image starts to fall apart. While certainly informative, most of the information seems to revolve mostly around alcohol and leisure activities, rather than any real, usable information, as seen for example in the fourth book, when the article about Earth is updated and contains "*moving descriptions of surf on Australian beaches, yogurt on Greek Islands, restaurants to avoid .... bars to go everywhere. Pages, and Pages of it.*"<sup>83</sup>

While it could be said that it could and probably should be expected from a guide book, it is somehow strange from a book that advertises itself as being used as "*the standard repository of all knowledge*".

Another rather obvious flaw is its inaccuracy as it has "*many omissions and contains much that is apocryphal, or at least wildly inaccurate*"<sup>84</sup>. To counter this, "*The Guide is definitive. Reality is frequently inaccurate*"<sup>85</sup> became one of the company's main slogans

When it comes to why The Guide is still popular, even with these errors, two reasons appear: it is cheaper than other books and more importantly it has a comforting sign Don't panic on its back cover.<sup>86</sup>

The Guide is in many aspects similar to the Wikipedia - it is cheap (or free/donation funded in Wikipedia's case), it is extremely popular when it comes to quick access to information, the quality and length of their articles vary from topic to topic and lastly it is a combined effort of a number of people who might not even be suited or qualified to write such articles.

As for its symbolics, The Guide most likely stands for the attempts to understand the Universe and the necessity of more than one person to do it, but blown out of proportions of course. In the real world we also have tools to help us understand our surroundings - specialized encyclopaedias and magazines, schools and universities, or even satellites and small vehicles for explore other planets.

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<sup>82</sup> p. 15, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>83</sup> p. 540, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> p. 16, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> p. 199, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> p. 16, Adams, *ibid.*

All of these "tools" however require multiple people to fulfil their purpose and these people usually need to have some qualification - authors need to have knowledge of their subjects, professors should know how and what to teach and people operating satellites also require some education.

The Guide, as stated above, is one of the most popular information sources in the galaxy and the reason is simple - like the Wikipedia, The Guide offers fast access to every possible information we could need to help us understand the world around us.

Therefore, the book also symbolizes the impossibility to understand everything by its own existence, specifically by its inaccuracy that is caused mainly by its own employees.

As I wrote before, every effort to help with the understanding of the Universe requires qualification and with its increasing size more people with said qualification, therefore an effort the size of The Guide would require massive (possibly unobtainable) amount of people. But looking at Ford, it is perfectly obvious that these people don't really have the qualification to inform the galaxy about anything else but where to get a good drink.

In short - the purpose of The Guide here is to show the impossibility of ever understanding the whole galaxy, simply because there would never be enough people and time to undertake such an enormous task.

## 42

The number 42 shows up for the first time in the first book, during a history recording shown to Arthur while on Magrathea.<sup>87</sup> In the recording, a race of "*hyperintelligent pandimensional beings*"<sup>88</sup> builds a supercomputer to find the answer to the life, universe and everything.

The computer is eventually able to find the answer, but, after seven and a half million years, the answer is revealed to be 42.<sup>89</sup> While its creators are understandably angry, the computer stands by its conclusion and explains that the answer does not make sense to them simply because they do not know the exact question.

Now the reference and parody here is quite obvious - the meaning of life. Most philosophies and religions have an idea or a theory about the meaning of life - living for a deity, accumulation of knowledge, creation of better future - but there is no universal answer. *The Guide* on the other hand has a universal answer, but this leads to another problem - that being the absence of the question.

The absence of the question is later explained in the epilogue of the third book. Prak, a man who was overdosed with a truth serum, reveals to Arthur that the question cannot be known. In fact it cannot even exist in the same Universe as the answer, since "*knowledge of one logically precludes knowledge of the other*" and "*the Question and the Answer would cancel each other out, and take the Universe with them*".<sup>90</sup>

At the same time however, 42 subtly reveals both the answer and the question, at least for the Earth and humankind. At the same recording where 42 is revealed as the answer, the

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<sup>87</sup> p. 142, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>88</sup> p. 132, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> p. 142, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> p. 517, Adams, *ibid.*

computer designs a new planet-sized computer containing biological components that is later revealed to be the Earth. Therefore - the answer to the meaning of life on Earth is to find the Question.

What is also worth mentioning here is the similarity to the *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. In it the Mad Hatter comes with a riddle: Why is a raven like a writing-desk?. To this day the riddle remains unsolved even though there were many theories, but none of them were confirmed by Carroll who also contributed by some answers of his own.

42 is similar, only the other way around - the answer is known, but the question was never revealed. And like Carroll, Adams also shared a few possibilities, but never confirmed any of them.

## Vogons

Vogons are the second aliens (first being Ford) introduced in the series, when their fleet arrives to the Earth to demolish it.<sup>91</sup> In *The Guide*, their race is described as "*one of the most unpleasant races in the Galaxy - not actually evil, but bad-tempered, bureaucratic, officious and callous*"<sup>92</sup> and continuous with a warning against their poetry and advises the best way to get a drink from them. Coming from a planet named Vogsphere, they serve here both as one of the series main antagonists and a parody of evolution.

Evolution, as a theory was first created by Jean Baptiste Lamarck, but is better known from the works of Charles Darwin. In his theory evolution, biological organisms develop better means to survival through their ability to adapt and reproduce, while the other, less successful species die out. This theory is generally accepted for alien species in Science fiction, which is also the truth for every alien race in *The Guide* with the notable exception of Vogons.

Vogons, according to *The Guide*, never went through the evolution. In fact, when "*the Vogons first crawled out of the sluggish primeval seas of Vogsphere, and had lain panting and heaving on the planet's virgin shores, ... it was as if the forces of evolution had simply given upon them there and then, had turned aside in disgust and written them off as ugly and unfortunate mistake.*"<sup>93</sup>

But, even though this happened billions of years ago, Vogons survived, even though they have never evolved again - in fact, they spurned evolution and managed to survive through sheer stubbornness and later by adapting their bodies with surgery.

While their race was forever stuck in this state, the rest of the planet continued evolving to make up for the error that was made with Vogons. But again, Darwin's survival of the fittest was disproved here, since the Vogons managed to successfully hunt and kill these "superior" creatures until they finally left their home planet.

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<sup>91</sup> p. 36, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>92</sup> p. 50, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> p. 45, Adams, *ibid.*

## Agrajag

Agrajag is a being (or multiple beings, depending on reader's opinions on reincarnation) that plays a small, but nevertheless still important role throughout the whole series due to his fate being tightly connected to Arthur.

While their name is not revealed until the third book, Agrajag already appears in the first one during his reincarnation as a bowl of petunias.<sup>94</sup> Reincarnation in *The Guide* seems to work similarly to the Hindu one - a person (or an animal) is constantly reborn again and again until they manage to reach a point where they finally die.

In *The Guide* are two notable distinctions (at least in Agrajag's case) - there appears to be no karma that would influence the next form of reincarnation and the rebirths are not successive, in fact some of the later reincarnations can be born before the previous ones.

According to Agrajag, all of his reincarnations were killed by Arthur, or at least because of him. In the first book, the bowl of Petunias is presumably destroyed by a fall through the Atmosphere of Magrathea. Sometime between the second and the third book, Arthur kills a rabbit-Agrajag so he could use his skin for a bag. Not to mention countless other only mentioned reincarnations - a cow, an ant, oyster, newt, fly or flea among others.

The two most important reincarnations appear in the third and the fifth book. In the third book, Agrajag appears in his "final form" - "a mad, fat bat" with "the most astounding collection of teeth, ... as if each came from a completely different animal."<sup>95</sup> Here he reveals all his deaths to Arthur with the intention of killing him for revenge. However, when he reveals his reincarnation on Stavromula Beta, he finds out that Arthur has not been there yet and therefore cannot die. In his fury he tries to kill Arthur anyway only to be accidentally killed by Arthur again.<sup>96</sup>

Stavromula Beta appears at the end of the fifth book. Here, Arthur and Ford find Random in a club on Earth, threatening Trillian and Tricia with a gun. When the gun accidentally fires, Arthur ducks only to find out that the bullet struck a man standing behind him. When examining him, Ford finds out that the man was Stavro Mueller, proprietor of the club Beta.

## Towel

*"A towel is just about the most massively useful thing any interstellar Hitchhiker can carry. Partly it has great practical value. You can wrap it around you for warmth as you bound across the cold moons of Jaglan Beta; you can lie on it on the brilliant marble-sanded beaches of Santraginus V, inhaling the heady sea vapours; ....., More importantly, a towel has immense psychological value. For some reason, if a strag (strag: nonhitchhiker) discovers that a hitchhiker has his towel with him, he will automatically assume that he is also in possession of a toothbrush, washcloth, soap, ...Furthermore, the strag will then happily lend*

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<sup>94</sup> p. 108, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>95</sup> p. 443, Adams, *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> p. 446, Adams, *ibid.*

*the hitchhiker any of these or a dozen other items that the hitchhiker might accidentally have "lost".*<sup>97</sup>

According to this *Guide* article, a towel should be one of the most important things everyone should have and every hitchhiker in the series indeed does have one - Ford, Roosta, later even Arthur.

But, while there are actually some instances when a towel is actually useful - like during Ford's infiltration of *The Guide's* headquarters in the fifth book<sup>98</sup> - it seems to be more of a symbol of a hitchhiker.

This is also supported by the fact that no non-hitchhiker character has one - Zaphod, Trillian, Slartibartfast, Zarniwoop. But, if a towel is actually such an all-important item for space-travel, why wouldn't everyone have one?

In the real world, a towel became something of a symbol among the fans of the series and since 2001 there is a tribute to the author called Towel Day - every year on May 25th (two weeks after anniversary of Adams' death) fans carry around their towels to commemorate the occasion.

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<sup>97</sup> p. 32, Adams, Douglas, *The Ultimate Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997

<sup>98</sup> p. 767, Adams, *ibid.*

# Conclusion

As of now, it should be rather obvious that the styles of *Space Odyssey* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* are markedly different, even though they are considered to belong to the same genre.

When it comes to plot and the overall story there are two main differences - in continuity and in the way their story is told. The storyline in *Space Odyssey* is quite linear and easy to follow - every part of the book is connected to both the preceding and the following ones and every story event happens gradually and is fully explained.

In *The Guide* the story is much harder to follow - many changes in the story are sudden and sometimes continue without explanations. In other instances the explanations are given but do not really make any sense. Then there are also chapters that act only as fillers, or additional information sources, rather than being a real part of the storyline.

These fillers are also quite common in *Space Odyssey* too, probably even more often than in *The Guide*. While the storyline in *The Guide* is what we could call "action-packed" - the story continues to unfold throughout the most of the book, *Space Odyssey* is much more tranquil and gradual.

In fact, there are whole sections of the book that are mostly irrelevant to the rest of the book - the daily routines of the crews of *Destiny* and *Leonov*, Floyd's family problems in the second book or the detailed descriptions of various cosmic phenomena.

But, as useless to the story as they may be, they have a purpose - they help with "anchoring" the story to its scientific background and thus helping the rest of the book to be more easily believable, at least from the scientific and technological point of view - a connection to reality *The Guide* lacks.

The characters of the two series are also quite different - while Arthur, Ford, Zaphod, even secondary characters like Random or Slartibartfast have developed personalities, quirks, background stories and sub-plots, even the main characters of *Space Odyssey* are quite bland and its secondary characters seem exist only to fill in positions necessary to advance the storyline.

But the biggest difference comes with symbols and motifs. In *Space Odyssey* everything is based on real scientific principles, theories or existing technology and every book in the series is updated according to the most recent findings.

*The Guide* however does not seem to be based in science at all, at least tries to appear that way. There are however instances where the science can be seen as a basis but used completely differently from the way we are used from other science fiction.

This is easily seen with Vogons as symbols to evolution - the theory of evolution was most definitely used in their creation, but, unlike *Space Odyssey's* aliens who went through an evolution similar to the human one, Adam's uses the theory the other way - instead of building on the theory he turns against it and creates a species that survived even without evolving.

This is also done with other non-scientific ideas - Agra-jag is a twisted parody of the belief in reincarnation and the great prophet Zarquon is a subtle jab on the idea of prophets and the second coming of Jesus Christ.



Another way of using science as a basis for the series is the parody of the genre itself - the parodied motifs are based in science, therefore the parody of it is through this connection based in there too.

Marvin for example, however ridiculous and unbelievable, is still an AI therefore based in science both through the existing scientific theory and through AIs in other science fiction. The Heart of Gold, or more precisely its propulsion unit - the Improbability Drive is still a type of a faster-than-light engine, also widely used motif and another existing theory.

In conclusion, I believe that *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* can still be considered to be a science fiction, even though it is like any other ever written. As a last point of consideration there is also the fact that parody is often used to belittle or criticize its subject, but *The Guide* does neither of those - instead it just adds another view of the science fiction genre and perhaps even opens it to additional readers who would be otherwise uninterested.

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