# Norby: The Mixed-up Robot Short Guide

## Norby: The Mixed-up Robot by Isaac Asimov

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# Contents

# Overview

Jeff Wells is an accident-prone young man who finds himself caught up in a conspiracy to turn the solar system into an empire. Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot begins with his having turned the kitchen computers into chaos while trying to use the Space Academy's computers to teach him Martian Colony Swahili while he sleeps. Even Space Command's Admiral Yobo, who likes Jeff, is upset by this turn of events; he likes eating. Thus Yobo sends Jeff away from the Space Academy for awhile, but he lends Jeff enough money to buy a teaching robot—one that will help him learn Martian Colony Swahili.

Life looks bleak to fourteen-year-old Jeff, who is devoted to joining Space Command and who normally earns good grades, but it becomes downright weird when he purchases a used robot in Manhattan. He is drawn to a strange little figure that is lodged in a barrel that once held "Norb's Nails." Once he has purchased the queer robot, he discovers that it was rebuilt using some alien parts found on an asteroid and that the robot used some kind of telepathic powers to make Jeff want to buy him. Jeff dubs his new robot Norby after "Norb's Nails." Norby is far from a quiet, submissive robot—which he is supposed to be. Instead, he argues with Jeff constantly, whines about tiny inconveniences, and surprises Jeff with his independent behavior. Then the real trouble starts.

# About the Author

J anet Asimov was born Janet Jeppson on August 6, 1926, in Ashland, Pennsylvania, to John Rufus Jeppson, a physician, and Rae (nee Knudson) Jeppson.

She attended Wellesley College from 1944 to 1946, then Stanford University in 1948, where she received her bachelor's degree. She then attended the College of Medicine at New York University, earning her M.D. in 1952. She interned at the Philadelphia General Hospital from 1952 to 1953. From 1953 to 1956, she was a resident in psychiatry at Bellevue Hospital in New York City. In 1955, she began postdoctoral studies at the William A. White Psychoanalytic Institute, ending them in 1960. She began private practice in 1956. From 1967 to 1971, she served as assistant director of clinical services at the William A. White Psychoanalytic Institute, and from 1974 to 1982, she was the Institute's director of training.

Janet Asimov published her first short story in Saint magazine in 1966.

About the same time, she began work on a story featuring the robot Norby, but she did not get far with it. When she married Isaac Asimov on November 30, 1973, she found herself caught up in her husband's literary associations. In 1974, she published her first novel, The Second Experiment. Later, the publisher Walker & Co. asked her for a children's book. The result was a story featuring the robot Norby, Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot. Isaac Asimov retyped the book on his word processor, helping with the plot. He continued to help his wife with the plots of the Norby books, although she did most of the writing. As the Norby series has progressed, the books have become longer and more complex, with increasing sophistication of characterization and themes. It is too soon to tell whether the series has ended with Isaac Asimov's death in 1992.

Janet Asimov's husband Isaac Asimov was born between October 4, 1919 and January 2, 1920. Two different calendars were in use in the region where he was born, neither of which matches the calendar commonly used in Western societies, which is why even Asimov himself was unsure of his birthday. He chose to celebrate it on January 2. He was born in Petrovichi, U.S.S.R. to Judah Asimov, then head of a food co-operative, and Anna Rachel Asimov. In 1923, the Asimovs moved to Brooklyn, and in 1926, Judah Asimov opened his first candy store. Isaac avidly read the magazines for sale in the store, making sure that the magazines still looked new when he finished with them so that they could still be sold. Asimov became a naturalized United States citizen in 1928.

In 1935, he attended Seth Low Junior College. From 1936 to 1939, he attended Columbia University, earning a Bachelor of Science degree. From 1939 to 1941, he attended graduate school at Columbia University, receiving a master's degree in chemistry. World War II interrupted his studies. In 1942, he became a chemist at the U.S. Navy shipyard in Philadelphia, and that same year he married Gertrude Blugerman. He served in the army from 1945 to 1946, then in 1946 returned to his graduate studies at Columbia, earning a Ph.D. in chemistry in 1948. The next year, he became a teacher of biochemistry at Boston University School of Medicine. Although he

loved teaching and his engaging lecturing style endeared him to students, he had problems with other faculty who were jealous of his publications. His department chair seemed to believe that Asimov was wasting his time writing, and by the mid-1950s Asimov was essentially relieved of his duties as a teacher.

In 1939, he published his first story, "Marooned Off Vesta" in Amazing Stories. In 1941, he wrote "Nightfall," regarded by many, if not most, other science fiction writers as the greatest science fiction short story ever published. During the 1940s, he wrote the novellas that would form the Foundation Trilogy. John W. Campbell, editor of Astounding, frequently pressed Asimov for new novellas in the Foundation series, and Asimov responded well to the test of his inventiveness, creating what some critics call one of the "cornerstones" of the field of science fiction. In 1950, his first novel, Pebble in the Sky, was published, followed by several others. In 1955, he was the Guest of Honor at the World Science Fiction convention. In 1958, he became a full-time writer.

Hugo Awards are given annually at World Science Fiction Conventions; these awards are determined largely by the voting of science fiction fans. Asimov received one in 1963 for his monthly science articles in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, a series he continued to write until his death. In 1966, he received another Hugo for his Foundation stories. He received Hugos for two of his novels, The Gods Themselves in 1973 and Foundation's Edge in 1983. He also received a Hugo for the short story "The Bicentennial Man" in 1977. The Science Fiction Writers of America give out annual awards for best novel, best novella, best novelette, and best short story.

These are called Nebula Awards. Asimov received one in 1973 for The Gods Themselves and another in 1977 for "The Bicentennial Man." The Science Fiction Writers of America also gave him their Grand Master award in 1987.

Asimov wrote a great deal of nonfiction, mostly science books. During the 1960s, nonfiction dominated his writing. In 1964, the American Chemical Society gave him the James T. Grady medal for science writing about chemistry. In 1967, he received the Westinghouse American Association for the Advancement of Science award for science writing.

The last twenty or so years of his life were busy ones. Asimov became legendary for his enormous production of books, numbering over four hundred by the time of his death. His subjects ranged from the Bible to literature to astronomy to biology to mystery fiction to science fiction. His jovial wit managed to make even the dullest of subjects come alive, and he helped to educate at least two generations of readers.

In 1972, he had a thyroidectomy, and ill health was to trouble him significantly off and on for the rest of his life.

In 1973, he divorced his wife and married Janet Jeppson. In the late 1970s, perhaps sensing how much his health was worsening, he began his autobiography, and in 1983, he had a triple bypass heart operation. The success of the operation seemed to give

him renewed vigor, and he appeared as a public speaker at many events, even though he had a severe phobia against traveling.

In 1988, he became president of the American Humanist Association, and he became an outspoken advocate of atheism. He argued that it was enough for a person to be all that his talents will allow him to be in one life; no supernatural forces were needed to urge human beings toward achievement.

This made him a controversial figure in his last years. He died of heart failure on April 6, 1992. He was among the most beloved of science fiction writers and is still known, as he was for decades, as the "Good Doctor" among writers and readers.

# Setting

Most of the events in Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot take place in Manhattan many years in the future. Manhattan has become a historical landmark and its Central Park has become a fairly safe place to be, although one should be careful about venturing into it at night. The Asimovs do not paint Manhattan in much detail. Much of it sounds like current-day Manhattan; on the other hand, the relative safety of the future Central Park does sound like science fiction. The police drive in flying cars; a few have personal force fields that protect them from attack.

Police stations have matter transmitters that break matter into molecules at one station and reassembles them at another: an expensive way to travel.

# Social Sensitivity

There is little social commentary in Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot. The novel features a careful mix of ethnic groups, suggesting a future society in which ethnic barriers to employment have largely disappeared. The society is not described in detail, but seems to consist of a somewhat benevolent government that encompasses several colonized planets in the solar system, as well as Earth. Space travel is commonplace, with people traveling from one planet to another for business and pleasure, and with others mining the asteroids for minerals. Not everyone is happy; Ing draws his followers from malcontents, but what makes his followers unhappy is not made clear.

An odd passage in Norby: The MixedUp Robot has Jeff being surprised that the "policeman" is actually a woman.

By 1983, when the book was published, women had made considerable inroads into police departments. It seems unlikely that in the future world depicted in the book woman police officers would be unusual.

# Literary Qualities

Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot is meant to entertain, emphasizing humor and adventure over characterization and theme. A careful reader will note puns throughout the novel, but most of the humor is generated by the word play between characters. For instance, when Norby tries to transmat Jeff, Albany, and himself to where Fargo is, the following ensues: "Norby, are you going to be able to get the doors open?" Jeff asked.

"In a minute. In a minute.

And—on the other side—we will find your brother." The doors opened, and they stepped out into a huge gray room. Overhead there was a section of glassite dome and beyond that a dim, rolling fog.

"Or maybe we won't," Norby said in a small voice.

"Where on earth—" said Albany.

"I don't think anywhere on Earth," said Jeff. "Norby! Where are we?"

"Is there a city named Titan anywhere on Earth?" Norby asked.

"A city named what?"

Norby pointed to a cabinet to one side with a sign on it in old Gothic print that was hard to read.

Jeff said blankly, "What does it say?"

"It's in Colonial German. That's another language I can teach you.

It would come in handy anywhere beyond the asteroids."

"Beyond the asteroids?" said Jeff in a shout.

"What does it say? I don't care if it's Sanskrit. What does it say?"

"It says 'Property of Titan outpost.' I figure Titan is a city in the German sector of the European Region and I just may have miscalculated a small bit."

"Titan," said Jeff in an exasperated tone, "is a satellite of Saturn, and you have miscalculated a whole lot."

"Are you sure?" Norby asked.

"It could happen to anyone."

There are no deep thoughts, here, but Norby's hardly ever getting things exactly right makes for good fun.

# Themes and Characters

The main characters of Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot are Jeff Wells and Norby. Jeff is a student at the Space Academy and hopes someday to join the Space Command and to invent a way for people to easily travel through hyperspace. A good-natured fellow, Jeff sometimes makes mistakes; the novel begins with his being in trouble for disabling the Space Academy's kitchens while trying to have a computer teach him Martian Colony Swahili. He is well matched by Norby, a robot with extraordinary, but hard to control, alien powers. Norby whines a great deal and talks too much, but he has an earnest good nature that makes him likable.

Neither Jeff nor Norby's character is developed in detail, but they are fun to read about, as they try to stop Ing's effort to seize control of the solar system.

Other important characters are Ing himself, the villain of the tale, Jeff's older brother Fargo, Admiral Yobo of the Space Command, and Albany, a Manhattan police officer. Ing is a terrorist who has created a private army with which he hopes to seize power in a coup beginning in Manhattan. He is a stereotypical villain, cruel, selfish, and humorless. On the other hand, Fargo has a devil-may-care attitude. He is careless with money, but is stouthearted and without fear.

Yobo seems to know Fargo well and is not surprised to find Fargo trying to put an end to Ing's schemes. The Admiral is a kindly man who sympathizes with Jeff's troubles; he is also pleased by Jeff's efforts to learn Martian Colony Swahili. He is a reassuring authority figure—someone who represents order in society—and he therefore serves as a counterbalance to the anarchic figures of Jeff, Norby, and Fargo, who are better at disorganization and mixing plans up than they are at creating order and calm. Albany also represents social order; she is a police officer who conscientiously enforces the law. Even so, she is attracted to Fargo's handsome charisma.

"Mixed-Up" may be the best way to describe the theme of Norby:The MixedUp Robot. Norby and Jeff create disorder where there was order. At first, Jeff mixes up the kitchen computers at the Space Academy. When he is paired with Norby, the two of them bounce around the cosmos, often unsure of where they are or of what they are doing. They bring a benevolent chaos to the carefully laid plans of Ing the Ingrate. The theme is not complicated, and it primarily serves as a source for humor and suspense; no one can tell what will happen next because Norby and Jeff could end up almost anywhere each time they try to help Fargo and thwart Ing. Somewhat more serious is the source of Norby and Jeff's mixing up: The disorder they cause stems from their efforts to find creative solutions to problems. The mixed up kitchen computers, Norby's flying like a missile with his antigravity abilities, and the transmatting hither and yon all stem from Jeff and Norby's quest to solve the problems they confront. The underlying idea is that sometimes mixing up is good; doing the unusual may provide ways of meeting new challenges.

# Topics for Discussion

1. Why does Jeff want to keep a robot that argues with him all the time?

2. Norby has rejected owners before Jeff, using his telepathic powers to urge them to return him to the used robot store. Why does he stay with Jeff?

3. When did you realize who Ing really is? How did you know?

4. Why does Norby constantly want to be reassured that Jeff loves him?

5. Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot is meant to be a funny novel. Is it?

6. If you had one recommendation to make Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot a better book, what would it be?

7. According to Norby, what is hyperspace?

8. Why does Ing want to control the solar system?

9. Is Jeff an interesting character? Is he outshone by Norby?

10. Why does Admiral Yobo like Jeff?

# Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Many science fiction books mention hyperspace. Who first came up with the idea of hyperspace? What role does hyperspace play in science fiction?

2. Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot is the first in a series of books that become more complex as the series progresses.

Read the other books and analyze how they evolve in depth and complexity.

3. The dragons that appear in Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot show up in later novels in the series. Who are the dragons? Where do they live?

4. Isaac Asimov played a key role in the development of robots as characters in literature. What does he do with robots in his stories? What are his Laws of Robotics?

5. Analyze the plot of Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot. Is it credible? Should it be more detailed? Less detailed?

6. Much of the humor in Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot depends on plays on words, such as Jeff Wells's brother being named Fargo, as in Wells Fargo.

Find more incidents of plays on words in the novel. Are they funny? How do they affect your appreciation of the story?

7. Are there other science fiction tales in which a human being is part nered with a robot? What are these tales like? Are any of the pairs like the partnership of Jeff and Norby?

8. Some scientists have suggested that sentient computers will replace human beings and will be the real explorers of outer space. Is this really likely? Can sentient computers replace human beings? When, if ever, will robots like Norby be built?

# For Further Reference

Asimov, Isaac. In Memory Yet Green: The Autobiography of Isaac Asimov, 1920-1954. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1979. Presents an exhaustively detailed account of his youth and early manhood. His avowed intention is to avoid interpretation as much as he can, and to provide as many unvarnished facts as he can, leaving interpretation up to his readers. Given Asimov's irrepressible wit, he does not quite succeed in presenting nothing but facts; his portrait of himself as a teen-ager, for instance, includes his self-absorption, his love of whistling, and fondness for cemeteries—he presents himself as a comic figure whose bizarre habits cause his parents endless concern. His own feeling about his eccentricities was that they were his property, and rather than causing him embarrassment, he treated them as special parts of himself. He notes, more than thirty years later, that his eccentricities are now thought of as colorful.

—— . In Joy Still Felt: The Autobiography of Isaac Asimov, 1954-1978. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980. It is as imposingly large as the first volume and focuses mostly on his literary career. According to him, writing is what defines him as a person; he lives to write. Again, his sense of humor livens up the narrative, making potentially dry accounts of how certain writings were inspired, written, and published entertaining and often enlightening. Fans of Asimov's work would likely find everything in this book interesting, explaining as it does how Asimov's best-loved writings developed. Scholars would find the wealth of detail to be helpful in their research.

——. "Science Fiction and I." In Asimov on Science Fiction. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981: 295-318. This book is a gathering of Isaac Asimov's essays on science fiction; the section "Science Fiction and I" is composed of five of his essays. These cover his thoughts about his own work in science fiction.

"Asimov, Janet." In Contemporary Authors. New Revision Series. Vol. 36.

Edited by James G. Lesniak. Detroit: Gale, 1992: 23-24. Brief summary of her life, with a listing of her publications.

Bernardo, Anthony J., Jr. "The Foundation Trilogy." In Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults. Edited by Kirk H. Beetz, et al. Washington, DC: Beacham, 1990: 1707-1712. This is an introduction to the basic qualities of Isaac Asimov's Foundation books.

According to Bernardo, the books reflect "scientific optimism."

Commire, Anne, ed. "Asimov, Janet."

In Something About the Author. Vol.

54. Detroit: Gale Research, 1989: 1-2.

Summarizes Janet Asimov's career.

Fiedler, Jean, and Jim Mele. "Asimov's Robots." In Critical Encounters: Writers and Themes in Science Fiction. Edited by Dick Riley. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1978: 1-22. Fiedler and Mele trace Isaac Asimov's development as a writer through his robot stories.

—— . Isaac Asimov. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982. Fiedler and Mele offer a chronological study of Isaac Asimov's science fiction. They assert that one of the qualities that has made Asimov's science fiction special has been that he "was a scientist, and even in his earliest attempts at fiction, his interest in science dictated his method." This is a good introduction to Asimov's science fiction that should be especially helpful to students.

Gunn, James. Isaac Asimov: The Foundations of Science Fiction. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982. This is the most scholarly of the booklength studies of Isaac Asimov and is written with high intelligence. Gunn begins with a summary of Asimov's life and career, and then devotes himself to a study of Asimov's science fiction, emphasizing the robot stories. Gunn concludes that "Asimov's continuing presence in the field of science fiction has importance as a reminder not only of the past but of the way in which the past is a foundation for the present, and of the way in which the past can renew itself."

Hassler, Donald M. "Asimov's Ordering of an Art." In Comic Tones in Science Fiction: The Art of Compromise with Nature. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982: 87-96. Hassler compares Isaac Asimov to writers of the eighteenth century, arguing that for Asimov, the eighteenth century is a Golden Age. He further asserts that Asimov is conscious of literary history and of his antecedents and wishes to have the time of his own prime regarded as a Golden Age for science fiction. Thus he treats his own life as history: "Asimov understands his history and uses his history, but he is changed as a writer by his history."

——. "Some Asimov Resonances from the Enlightenment." In Science-Fiction Studies 15 (March 1988): 36-47. Here, Hassler discusses Isaac Asimov as a kind of eighteenth-century thinker, suggesting that he writes in the tradition of John Locke, "affirming the Lockean methodology of gradual accumulation," meaning that Asimov emphasizes the rationality of gradually accumulated facts and rejects the "absolute insights of intuitive or 'inspired' art."

Hunt, Caroline C. "David Starr, Space Ranger." In Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults. Edited by Kirk H. Beetz, et al. Washington, DC: Beacham, 1990: 1643-1649. Hunt examines Isaac Asimov's novel David Starr, Space Ranger as "quintessential 'space opera,'" where "good prevails over evil."

Lenz, Joseph M. "Manifest Destiny: Science Fiction and Classical Form."

In Coordinates: Placing Science Fiction and Fantasy. Edited by George E. Slusser, Eric S. Rabkin, and Robert Scholes. Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983: 42-48. Lenz examines how Asimov used Classical sources to

create a galactic empire and compares Asimov's empire to that created by Frank Herbert in Dune.

Manlove, C. N. "Isaac Asimov, The Foundation Trilogy (1951-53; serialized 1942-49)." In Science Fiction: Ten Explorations. London: Macmillan, 1986: 15-34. Manlove credits Isaac Asimov's Foundation books with giving science fiction a "fully epic dimension." He says the Foundation stories demonstrate Asimov's desire to find order in life, that the "dominant urge behind Asimov's work being the need to make life coherent."

Moore, Maxine. "Asimov, Calvin, and Moses." In Voices for the Future: Essays on Major Science Fiction Writers.

Edited by Thomas D. Clareson.

Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1976: 88103. Moore argues that "beneath the glib surface of Asimov's considerable output . . . lies an elaborate metaphorical structure that combines New England Calvinism with the Old Testament Hebraic tradition of the 'Peculiar People' to set forth a highly developed philosophy of mechanistic determinism with a positive ethic to justify it." She argues that in his science fiction Isaac Asimov has developed a "massive philosophy based on fixed fate."

Moskowitz, Sam. "Isaac Asimov." In Seekers of Tomorrow: Masters of Modern Science Fiction. Cleveland: World, 1966: 249-265. This book is treated by many scholars as a landmark in the development of studies of science fiction. In it, Moskowitz summarizes the lives of twenty-two science fiction writers; in several cases, these summaries were the first accounts of the lives of important writers. In "Isaac Asimov," Moskowitz emphasizes the role the environment of Asimov's life played in Asimov's development as a writer. For instance, he notes that while growing up in New York, "Isaac grew to love the masses of concrete and steel vibrant with the eternal hum of traffic." The images of concrete and steel are found throughout Asimov's work.

Olander, Joseph D., and Martin Harry Greenberg, editors. Isaac Asimov.

New York: Taplinger, 1977. This book contains nine essays that discuss Asimov's use of metaphors, his characterizations, his science fiction mysteries, his Foundation books, and his robot stories. Taken as a whole, this book provides a good scholarly introduction to the major aspects of Asimov's science fiction.

Panshin, Alexei, and Cory Panshin.

"Shifting Relationships," "An Empire of the Mind," and "Man Transcending." In The World Beyond the Hill: Science Fiction and the Quest for Transcendence. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1989: 302-344, 520-566, and 567-647. The Panshins here offer an intellectual history of science fiction.

So massive is this book that its sections on Isaac Asimov alone provide a book-length introduction to Asimov's work. According to the Panshins, Asimov was the creator of important ideas that have become essential to modern science fiction.

In "Shifting Relationships," they discuss how Asimov worked with John W. Campbell, editor of Astounding, developing the short story "Nightfall" and other literary works.

In "An Empire of the Mind," the Panshins put Asimov's Foundation stories into the context of their time, suggesting sources for the stories, discussing what Asimov hoped to achieve in the stories, and analyzing their literary merits. Most of "Man Transcending" is devoted to how John Campbell coped with the effects of World War II, but the chapter also includes details about how Asimov's career fared during the war.

Patrouch, Joseph F., Jr. The Science Fiction of Isaac Asimov. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974. This book is a critical survey of Asimov's achievements in science fiction. Patrouch emphasizes how Asimov depicts the supremacy of reason over emotionalism. He sees this supremacy as an important general characteristic of science fiction, and finds it in the problem- solving characters of Asimov's fiction. About science fiction in general, he says, "Each of us is a conscious packet of sensations imprisoned in a specific body, place, and time not of his own choosing.

Science fiction frees us from that prison." Patrouch explores how Asimov frees his readers from the prison.

Platt, Charles. "Isaac Asimov." In Dream Makers: The Uncommon People Who Write Science Fiction: Interviews.

New York: Berkley Books, 1980: 1-7.

Platt provides a portrait of Isaac Asimov at home.

Toupence, William F. Isaac Asimov. Boston: Twayne (G. K. Hall), 1991. Although this book is part of the Twayne's Authors Series, it does not offer the broad overview of the author's achievements typical of other books in the series. Instead, it focuses on Asimov's science fiction only, providing little commentary on Asimov's many writings in other fields. Toupence analyzes individual works as contributions to a vast imaginative universe created by Asimov. He concludes, "Asimov's universe is therefore a superior one in terms of the qualities characteristic of science fiction as a literature of ideas." To Toupence, Asimov is a tolerant man who usually respects the beliefs of others, even though he sometimes becomes a caustic antagonist when he thinks science is being attacked with irrational views.

Warrick, Patricia. "Isaac Asimov Develops the Genre." In The Cybernetic Imagination in Science Fiction. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1980: 53-74.

"Isaac Asimov is deservedly regarded as the father of robot stories in SF," declares Warrick. "He has produced more robot and computer stories that any other writer, and the quality of his fiction is consistently high." Warrick examines the basic ideas that

underlie Asimov's robot stories, noting the importance of Asimov's optimism about future developments in technology.

Wilcox, Clyde. "The Greening of Isaac Asimov: Cultural Change and Political Futures." Extrapolation 31 (Spring 1990): 54-62. Wilcox examines how the social themes of Asimov's novels change as America and the world change from the 1950s to the 1980s.

# Related Titles

Norby: The Mixed-Up Robot is followed by several sequels. Whether the series will continue or not after Isaac Asimov's death is not certain as of the time of this writing, but the idea for the series was Janet Asimov's, and she is a skilled writer, so there is hope that there will be future Norby books. Each book in the series features a humorous adventure, with increasing sophistication of plot and characterization. For example, in Norby and the Queen's Necklace, Norby and Jeff travel back in time, mixing history up, and possibly changing the course of history by becoming involved in events that would lead to the French Revolution. In the most recent novel, Norby and the Court Jester, the evil Ing makes a mess of Jeff and Norby's vacation plans, and the duo, with the help of Admiral Yobo, have to save the planet Izz, as well as a princess in distress.

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