I, ROBOT

Introduction:

Drill:	Write a definition for the word *robot*?

Discussion question prior to reading the novel:
1. What does a *robot* look like?
2. How does your definition of the word *robot* compare to these definitions?
3. What are some robots that you encounter on a daily basis?
4. How does our society use robots today?

Definitions for the term *robot*:

ro•bot (source - http://factmonster.com)

Pronunciation: (r**O**'b*u*t, -bot), —*n.*
1. a machine that resembles a human and does mechanical, routine tasks on command.
2. a person who acts and responds in a mechanical, routine manner, usually subject to another's will; automaton.
3. any machine or mechanical device that operates automatically with humanlike skill.

robot   *Robotics.* any mechanical device that can be programmed to perform a number of tasks involving manipulation and movement under autonomous control. Because of its use in science fiction, the term *robot* suggests a machine that has a humanlike appearance or that operates with humanlike capacities; in actuality modern industrial robots have very little physical resemblance to humans. (source - http://www.harcourt.com/dictionary/) In our class, we will require that for a machine to be a robot, it must be able to SENSE, THINK and ACT.

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Chapter One - Robbie

Discussion Questions

1. Describe Robbie's personality. What is his relationship with Gloria? Does Robbie have feelings?
2. If Robbie were a person, how old would he be mentally? Physically?
3. What is the First Law? Does Robbie obey the First Law?
6. How does Mrs. Weston feel about Robbie? How do you feel about Robbie?
7. When Gloria is looking for Robbie, she talks to the "Talking Robot" and with a simple question, the robot overloads and malfunctions. What happened and why?
8. How can robot labor affect the need for human labor? Why would a labor union object to this idea?
9. If you had a personal robot, do you think you would feel the type of attachment that Gloria had with Robbie? Is having a robot that much different than having a pet? Are attachments that you form at a younger age stronger than those formed as you get older?

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Chapter Two - Runaround

Keep in mind that when the story was written in the 1940's, humans did not venture out into space or set foot on the moon! Asimov had to envision what it would be like with very little data to support his descriptions. This story takes place in the year 2015, which technically is still the future! Will we reach Mercury by then, or will we still be trying to land on Mars?!

Discussion Question
1. Why is Speedy running around in circles?
2. Why are the second and third laws preventing him from returning from his mission?
3. How does this relate to your bot?

Chapter Three - Reason

Group Discussion Questions
1. Who is Cutie?
2. What is the dilemma with Cutie?
3. *Famous Historical Quote - René Descartes - "I think, therefore I am." (French philosopher and mathematician; born 1596; died 1650.)*
4. Cutie says "I, myself, exist, because I think."
5. Should Robots be "allowed" or programmed to think? What are some positive aspects? What are some negative aspects?
6. How do Donovan and Powell feel about Cutie as they leave the station?

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Chapter Four - Catch That Rabbit

Group Discussion Questions
1. Davy was described as "seven feet tall, and a half-ton of metal and electricity. A lot? Not when that half-ton has to be a mass of condensers, circuits, relays, and vacuum cells...: Why couldn't Davy be lighter?
2. Explain the following statement: "Human disorders apply to robots only as romantic analogies." (pg 86)
3. Describe the problem that Davy is having and what he does when he is suppose to be working.
4. How do Powell and Donovan figure out what Davy's malfunction is?
5. How does this relate to your bot?

Chapter Five - Liar

Discussion Questions
1. Who was Herbie?
2. Why did Herbie like reading the romance novels?
3. How did the 3 laws affect Herbie's behavior?
4. Describe the downfall of Herbie, what was his dilemma?

NASA Article about a talking and thinking robot!
http://science.nasa.gov/headlines/y2001/ast23jul_1.htm?list464409

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Chapter Six – Little Lost Robot

Discussion Questions
1. Who was Nestor 10?
2. How and why did Nestor 10 get "lost"?
3. What was so special about the 12 NS-2's on the asteroid (including Nestor 10)?
4. Why was the first law "modified" and how?
5. How was Nestor 10 found?
6. What is Nestor 10's reaction when he was discovered?
7. How does this modified first law relate to your bots?

Chapter Seven – Escape

Discussion Questions:
1. Who is The Brain?
2. What happened to Mike Donovan and Greg Powell?
3. How was the first law overcome/broken?

Chapter Eight – Evidence

Discussion Questions:
1. Who is Stephen Byerley?
2. Why are Dr. Calvin, Dr. Lanning, and Francis Quinn so interested in him?
3. Do you think this will ever happen?
4. What implications could this mean for humans?

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Chapter Nine – The Evitable Conflict

Discussion Questions:
1. What was the evitable conflict?
2. Why was it "evitable"?