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Overcoming Prejudice in Isaac Asimov's *The Caves of Steel*

When faced with a seemingly improbable task, a person must decide whether to gear up for the challenge or give up without ever even trying. Isaac Asimov dared to cross the genres of science-fiction and mystery in 1954 to defy his editor's, John W. Campbell's, assertion that the two literary styles were incompatible. The end result, a novel entitled *The Caves of Steel*, proved the versatility of science fiction as a literary genre that could also explore the adaptability of humans to changing social conditions. For example, Elijah Baley, the protagonist of *The Caves of Steel*, manages to overcome his prejudice towards robots after prolonged exposure and interaction with Robot Daneel Olivaw, illustrating a human's capacity to dispel bias through a process of learning, understanding, and eventual acceptance. To comprehend Elijah's prejudice, the reader must first recognize how his childhood shaped his worldview.

Elijah's disdain for robots stems from his background growing up in an environment that suffers from overpopulation. The Earth that Elijah inhabits functions according to a rule of "[progressively] lowering ... the standard of living" to support an ever-increasing population (Asimov 20). Therefore, Elijah learns at a young age that humans struggle to survive under conditions of strained resources.