

Patrick J. Kiger, « 10 Evil Robots Bent on Destroying Humanity », science.howstuffworks.com (adapted in 2018)

In science fiction, robots can be friendly, helpful machines – C-3PO from the "Star Wars" movie series [...] immediately come to mind.

But lest we humans become too complacent about the anthropomorphic super-powered mechanical servants that we fantasize about someday creating, it's important to remember the old saying that we should be careful what we wish for. The robots we envision as our tireless, loyal friends easily could morph into frighteningly formidable adversaries. And it wouldn't take much to flip the balance.

The great sci-fi author Isaac Asimov was among the first to recognize this unsettling risk. In his 1942 short story "Runaround," later republished in the 1950 collection "I, Robot," Asimov set forth what he called the Three Laws of Robotics, which were designed to protect us from our synthetic progeny. First: A robot may not injure a human being, or allow one to come to harm through inaction. Second: A robot must obey human orders, as long as they don't contradict the first law. Third: A robot must protect itself, but only to the extent that it doesn't conflict with the first and second laws.

But [...] [h]ere are [...] examples of fictional robots that have murder in their artificial hearts:

- [...] In the "Terminator" movies, the murderous machine is Skynet, a supercomputer network with artificial intelligence abilities, which Pentagon scientists in the mid-1990s create to run the nation's defenses. When Skynet, on its own, develops self-awareness, its makers try to shut it down, which leads the network to trigger a nuclear war in an effort to wipe out the species that it now sees as a threat. After the dust clears, Skynet creates an assortment of other robotic devices, including the Terminators, to hunt down and slaughter the remaining humans who stand in the way of its global supremacy. [...]
- In the fictional dystopia depicted in the "Matrix" trilogy of films directed by the Wachowskis in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the basic scenario is that reality is a computer-generated illusion, and that a giant artificial-intelligence network has taken over Earth and reduced humans to comatose husks deluded by data, who are kept alive only to provide body heat and electrical energy that can be siphoned off to power the network.
- Science fiction author Philip K. Dick was a master of the killer robot genre, partly because he imagined a future in which technology would become so advanced that the distinction between humans and machines would blur. [...] Dick achieved his greatest fame from the 1982 film "Blade Runner," based upon his novel "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep," which depicts a policeman (portrayed by Harrison Ford) in pursuit of a killer android named Roy (Rutger Hauer)
- The Marvel Comics Web site describes Ultron as "a criminally insane rogue sentient [robot](#) dedicated to conquest and the extermination of humanity." To which you might respond, "Well, OK, that sounds pretty negative, but surely he must have a few good points too." Not to disappoint you, but he doesn't. Ultron isn't a robotic slave driven into a rage by his servitude [...] or an avenging angel [...], who seeks to deter humans from their own evil nature. Nope, Ultron is just a thoroughly unredeemable mess of metal, who just hates people because, well, that's what it does.