

15 December 2022

Dear Douglas Adams,

Ever since I read your very funny science-fiction novel, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, and all its sequels (I especially like *So Long, and Thanks for All the Fish*, by the way), I have been pondering the meaning of the universe. At the most inconvenient times, like during my English midterms, I find myself wondering, "Is 42 really the answer to everything, or is Mr. Adams' fictional computer Deep Thought mistaken?" *The Hitchhiker's Guide* is a bizarre and thought provoking book. I chuckled for months about the improbable events, about the horrible Vogon poetry, about whether Trillian is an American woman, an extraterrestrial alien woman, or something completely different.

I loved how you emphasized small themes in small ways. The small themes are easy to miss but when I catch them on re-reading, they change my view of the story and maybe the world. For example, my favorite scene in your book was in Chapter 28. You quickly summarized a whale's thoughts as it understood its identity while falling through space, and then its life ended in a matter of seconds. I read this scene many times. The whale's life may seem trivial and short, but it highlights a main theme in the book: how we bring meaning to our own lives in the universe, and how we should value life each day and each moment.

Your book also emphasized the value of acquiring new information and making new discoveries. You made me want to learn and laugh at the same time. Laughter can help us connect. Reading your book made me feel connected to the characters and to you as a writer. Although it's easier to relate to some characters than others, I feel like I know the characters you created. Are your characters all aspects of you? Do all writers base characters off reflections of themselves?

My favorite character is Marvin, the Paranoid Android. I found Marvin's dark humor, melancholy, and determination quite sad and wonderful at the same time. Marvin travelled the universe and lived for hundreds of millions of years, and then, even at the end of the universe, he had failed to find any intelligent life. Sometimes after a long week at school and in the middle of holiday shopping, I know how he feels.

Zaphod is a very spontaneous character. He may seem incredibly stupid, but this helps him fool the universe. His stupidity hides real cleverness. Arthur Dent represents the average person facing incredible galactic events and somehow making sense of it all. Ford Prefect is eccentric and adventurous and doesn't even seem to even be in one place at any one time. Trillian travels through space and time but somehow still seems down-to-earth (which is in fact impossible because the earth was destroyed early in your book). She offers sensible insight, kindness, and hope in the middle of mad adventures.

Another important lesson of your books is that our environment can help us change. For example, Arthur stays true to himself throughout the novel but at same time gains confidence, sharpness, and wit. By the end of the novel, he is no longer just scared, doubting himself, and making jokes about himself, but he acts and makes changes for himself with his own well-being in mind, as I now do too.

Sincerely,
Adele