



# The Last Book in the Universe

By Rodman Philbrick

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This fast-paced action novel is set in a future where the world has been almost destroyed. Like the award-winning novel *Freak the Mighty*, this is Philbrick at his very best.

It's the story of an epileptic teenager nicknamed Spaz, who begins the heroic fight to bring human intelligence back to the planet. In a world where most people are plugged into brain-drain entertainment systems, Spaz is the rare human being who can see life as it really is. When he meets an old man called Ryter, he begins to learn about Earth and its past. With Ryter as his companion, Spaz sets off an unlikely quest to save his dying sister -- and in the process, perhaps the world.

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## **The Last Book in the Universe** By Rodman Philbrick Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Like the hero from his last novel, *REM World*, Philbrick's latest misfit protagonist embarks on an adventure in a fantastic--and often frightening--alternative world. Spaz, an abandoned epileptic, lives on postapocalyptic Earth, destroyed long ago by an earthquake. The gray sky rains acid, the food is largely "tasteless protein chunks" and the creation of "mindprobes," virtual reality movies implanted directly in the brain, is destroying what's left of civilization. When Spaz learns that Bean, his foster sister, is dying, he begins a forbidden journey to see her. Ryter, a wise old man, accompanies Spaz and outwits most of their foes; he also ultimately teaches Spaz the value of keeping stories alive. The author creates some fascinating characters, such as the Monkey Boys, a brutal band "as wild as the paint on their faces"; Lanaya, a genetically improved girl whom Spaz and Ryter rescue; and the Furies, assassins who work for the boss of the "underworld traders." Once they find Bean, Lanaya--in return for saving her life--takes them to the one place where Bean stands a chance of survival, Eden. This biblical allusion, plus allegorical references to the *Odyssey* (the ending echoes James Joyce's monologue for Penelope), is not fully developed, and some of the episodes are a bit abrupt (e.g., the encounter with the Monkey Boys and the Furies). But Philbrick's creation of a futuristic dialect, combined with striking descriptions of a postmodern civilization, will convincingly transport readers to Spaz's world. Ages 10-14. (Nov.)

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From School Library Journal

Grade 5-8--Spaz, a boy who lives on the fringes of his surreal future world, partly because epilepsy prevents him from using the mind probes most people use to blot out reality, sets out on a classic quest to save his ill foster sister. To do so, he must cross forbidden territory and face frightening gangs and their leaders. He picks up companions as he travels: Ryter, a philosophic old man whose treasure is the book he is writing despite knowing that books and reading are of the past; Littleface, a young almost speechless child; and Linnea, a "prove" (genetically improved person). In saving his sister, Spaz learns about himself and his parentage. This action-packed story has some strong and provocative messages. It should prove popular among middle school listeners. Jeremy Davies' reading of Rodman Philbrick's text (Blue Sky Press, 2001) is very good. His soft, almost whispery voice usually suits the story well, but in the action scenes it is a little too subdued. This is a minor quibble. This is a good story to use with middle schoolers along with such titles as Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (HM, 1993) and Monica Hughes' *Introduction to the Game* (S&S, 1990). Public libraries will find it popular among science fiction fans as well as those wanting a good adventure story.

*Louise L. Sherman, Anna C. Scott School, Leonia, NJ*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 6-9. Although this owes a lot to such titles as Lois Lowry's *The Giver* and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, there is much to admire in Philbrick's tale of a postapocalyptic future. Gang member Spaz, a young epileptic, is ordered to rob an old man by the name of Ryter. Instead, he's befriended by the sympathetic, courteous gentleman, and when Spaz receives word that his foster sister, Bean, is dying, it's Ryter who leads him; Little Face, a young orphan boy; and Lanaya, a female "proof" (genetically improved human), on a dangerous journey to Bean's side. Lanaya takes the group to her home in Eden, an idyllic proof community, much different from the dangerous, toxic Urbs where "normals" live. When her plea to allow the group to stay in Eden is denied, the others return to the Urbs, where Ryter is brutally murdered and Spaz and Bean are separated. Despite the dark turn of events, however, there's stubborn hope and strength of conviction in the book's moving conclusion, and Philbrick has created some memorable characters in this fast-paced

adventure, which will leave readers musing over humanity's future. *Debbie Carton*  
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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Stefanie Roach:**

Book is usually written, printed, or created for everything. You can understand everything you want by a guide. Book has a different type. To be sure that book is important issue to bring us around the world. Close to that you can your reading ability was fluently. A guide *The Last Book in the Universe* will make you to possibly be smarter. You can feel considerably more confidence if you can know about anything. But some of you think this open or reading some sort of book make you bored. It is not make you fun. Why they may be thought like that? Have you in search of best book or acceptable book with you?

#### **Sophia Whitfield:**

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#### **Helen Williams:**

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#### **Jonathan Hickman:**

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