



2001

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Characters Discussed

Moon-Watcher, a “man-ape” of the Pleistocene geologic era, hairy and muscular. At almost five feet in height, he is unusually tall for his dying race of cave-dwelling hominids and weighs more than one hundred pounds in spite of his tribe’s usual lack of nourishment. Of the first creatures to take notice of the Moon, he is the only hominid in the world to stand erect and one of the few having a glimmer of intelligence. He discovers the New Rock, which is in fact a monolithic probe of an extraterrestrial intelligence. It studies him in particular and inspires him to use a stone to kill a warthog, then to kill another hominid. Moon-Watcher’s tribe members become hunters to begin the evolution of humanity.

Dr. Heywood Floyd, the chairman of the National Council of Astronautics. A widower of ten years and father of three, he completed one voyage to Mars and three to the Moon before returning to the lunar crater Tycho to see a recently uncovered monolith there.

David Bowman, the first captain of the spaceship *Discovery*. At thirty-five years of age, unmarried, and holding a Ph.D., he is a veteran astronaut with the curiosity of a generalist and an almost photographic memory who reads avidly and enjoys many styles of classical music. A caretaker of the ship and its three hibernating scientists until the planned rendezvous with Saturn, he has to disconnect the rebellious HAL, a computer, to complete the mission as he understands it. Once in orbit, he exits the ship in an exploratory pod to examine a free-floating monolith, then enters a Star Gate and is swept across time and intergalactic space until being transformed by extraterrestrials into the Star-Child.

Frank Poole, the deputy captain of the *Discovery*. He is unmarried, like all the astronauts; experienced in his work; careful; and conscientious in sharing on-board duties with Bowman. Poole is murdered by HAL during an extravehicular activity.

HAL 9000, an acronym for Heuristically programmed ALgorithmic computer, the brain and nervous system of the *Discovery*. Faster and more reliable than the human brain, HAL “thinks” intelligently, speaks, navigates the ship, and monitors the life-support systems of the three hibernating scientists. Unlike Bowman and Poole, HAL alone knows the true nature of the mission: to locate the source of the radio signals to the monolith in Tycho. Created to be innocent and incapable of making errors, HAL tries to murder the humans on board when they threaten to disconnect HAL’s brain, the equivalent of death. HAL fails to kill Bowman, however, who then disconnects HAL.

Additional Information

The fascinating story of the making of the four-year, \$11 million film and its critical and popular reception is told in Jerome Agel’s *The Making of Kubrick’s 2001*, published in 1970.

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