



H.G. WELLS

The
WAR
of the
WORLDS

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Book brief

- 1 Set in southern England at the start of the 20th century, this science fiction novel by English author H. G. Wells was an immediate success.
- 2 This novel is one of the earliest stories about a conflict between humans and an extraterrestrial race.
- 3 The story is told by an unnamed protagonist in Surrey and his younger brother in London, as southern England is invaded by Martians.
- 4 In his novel, Wells gives a clear picture of late Victorian suburban culture, when the British Empire had become the largest Empire in the World. He also draws on the common fear known as the 'end of the age' when people believed that something terrible would happen at the beginning of the new century.
- 5 Main themes in the novel include imperialism, war and conflict, and the destruction of civilisation.

H.G. Wells

The War of the Worlds

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Main Characters



The narrator's wife

A well-educated woman of the same social class as her husband.



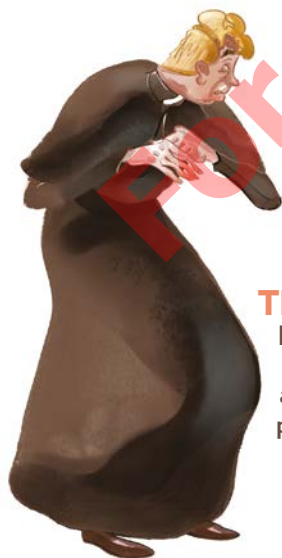
The Narrator

The protagonist of the story, he's a philosophical writer.



The narrator's brother

Younger than the narrator, he's studying medicine at university.



The Curate

He sees the Martians as a kind of punishment from God.



Mrs and Miss Elphinstone

The wife and younger sister of a surgeon.

The Martians

Advanced beings
that invade
Earth.



The Soldier

A soldier who
is a gunner
in the army.



Henderson

A journalist from
London.



Ogilvy

A famous
astronomer
and friend
of the narrator.



Reading Comprehension

B1 Preliminary

- 1 Read about *The War of the Worlds*. Choose the best answer, A, B, C or D to complete the text.

The War of the Worlds is the classic story of a Martian invasion. In the story, the narrator (1) _____ Mars as an old planet, close to its end. The Martians (2) _____ to invade Earth and (3) _____ everything from it that they need. Soon cylinders from space fall from the sky and (4) _____ in areas around southern England. One is found near the narrator's hometown. Nobody (5) _____ to be particularly worried at the start. Then, the Martians begin to use their terrible Heat-Ray that destroys (6) _____ it touches. Soon, everyone realises that the Martians are (7) _____ more powerful and intelligent (8) _____ they first thought, and they (9) _____ try to find a way to escape (10) _____ these terrible aliens.

- | | | | | |
|----|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------|
| | A action | B invasion | C adventure | D attack |
| 1 | A describes | B tells | C draws | D speaks |
| 2 | A think | B design | C plan | D arrange |
| 3 | A carry | B bring | C catch | D take |
| 4 | A reach | B get | C land | D arrive |
| 5 | A seems | B looks | C decides | D shows |
| 6 | A nothing | B everything | C something | D anywhere |
| 7 | A very | B too | C so | D much |
| 8 | A than | B what | C since | D as |
| 9 | A both | B all | C every | D more |
| 10 | A from | B away | C by | D through |

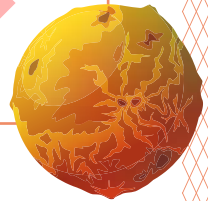
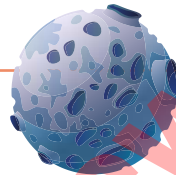
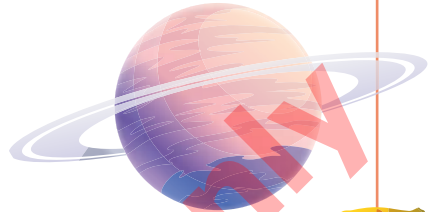
Online Research – Pair Work

21st
Century
Skills

2 How much do you know about our solar system?

Work with a partner and answer the following questions.
Use the Internet to help you.

- 1 How many planets are there in our solar system?
- 2 Is the sun a planet or a star?
- 3 What kind of planet is Pluto?
- 4 Which planet is closest to the sun?
- 5 Which planet is farthest from the sun?
- 6 What is the planet Mars known as?
- 7 Which is the hottest planet in our solar system?



Listening

- ▶ 2 3 Listen to the start of Chapter 1 and decide if the following sentences are true (T) or false (F).

	T	F
The Martians started watching Earth in the late 1800s.	☒	☐
1 Most people agreed that there was some form of life on Mars.	☐	☐
2 Everybody was looking forward to the expected Martian arrival.	☐	☐
3 Mars isn't as big as Earth and it has existed for much longer.	☐	☐
4 The Martians were coming to Earth to learn new technologies.	☐	☐
5 Astronomers first noticed strange things happening on Mars six years before.	☐	☐
6 The Martians came to Earth on a peace mission.	☐	☐

Before the War

Mars is the fourth planet from the sun, and it has a very thin atmosphere.

- ▶ 2 Nobody knew that during the last few years of the nineteenth century, a higher intelligence on Mars was watching Earth. Nobody actually believed that there was life on Mars, but there was. They were watching us like the way we humans study monkeys or other less intelligent forms of life. Nobody could imagine what was going to happen to us early in the twentieth century.

Mars is smaller and much older than Earth, and the Martians had no more resources¹ left, resources that they could find on our planet². They were planning to come and get them, destroying us as they did so.

Six years have passed since astronomers³ on Earth first noticed something strange, but they didn't realise what it meant. Gases suddenly started exploding from Mars, I saw them at my astronomer friend Ogilvy's observatory⁴, but like everyone else, we didn't realise that these were the Martians on their way to Earth, on what seemed a peaceful night like any other. ■

1 **resources** (here) things needed to live

2 **planet** Earth and Mars are examples of planets

3 **astronomer** a person who studies planets and stars

4 **observatory** a room or building from where you can watch planets and stars

The War of the Worlds

▶ 3 Ogilvy thought the objects might be meteorites¹, or that maybe a volcano² had exploded on Mars. The same thing happened for the next ten nights, but nobody on Earth tried to explain what was going on. The newspapers wrote about volcanoes on Mars, while the Martians got nearer and nearer day by day. Everyone carried on doing what they always did, including me. I remember that at the time, I was busy trying to learn to ride a bike. Everything seemed so safe and peaceful.

Then, one night, a falling star was seen over Winchester. Hundreds must have seen it and thought it was an ordinary falling star, because nobody went to find out more about it that night. However at sunrise, poor Ogilvy went to investigate³, and instead of a meteorite, he found a large metal cylinder on Horsell Common. There was an enormous hole where it had landed, and it was so hot that Ogilvy couldn't get near it. It was almost buried under the sand, but the top of it, sticking out above the sand, was turning slowly, and Ogilvy could hear sounds coming from inside

A bike called the 'safety bicycle' became popular in the 1880s and 1890s. Before this model, the most popular one was a bike with a high front wheel called the penny-farthing.

Winchester is a city in Hampshire, South East England.

Horsell Common is between the villages of Woking, Ottershaw and Horsell in Surrey, southwest of London.

1 **meteorite** a piece of rock or metal that falls to Earth from outer space

2 **volcano**



3 **investigate** try to understand

it. Thinking that there were men trapped¹ inside, Ogilvy ran to Woking for help. The first two people he met thought he was mad. Then he saw Henderson, a London journalist, in his garden and told him what he'd seen. It took a minute or two for Henderson to understand, then the two men hurried back to the common, where the cylinder was still lying in the same position. This time though, there were no sounds coming from inside, and the top had stopped turning. There was now a thin circle of bright metal between the top and the body of the cylinder. They thought the men inside might be dead, and since they could do no more, they went back to town, where Henderson immediately sent a telegraph to his newspaper in London. Indeed, I read about it in my Daily Chronicle and immediately left my home to go to Horsell Common.

When I got there, I found a crowd of about twenty people around the huge hole, staring² quietly at where the cylinder lay.

I climbed into the hole, and looking at it closely, I was convinced³ that it'd come from Mars, and that it held lots of information from this planet

The telegraph is an electrical device used to send messages over long distances and was the fastest way of communicating in this period.

The Daily Chronicle was a British newspaper from 1872 to 1930.

1 **trapped** unable to get out

2 **stare** look at something for a long time

3 **convinced** certain



A metal cylinder lands on Horsell Common.



Maybury, a village in Woking, is where H. G. Wells lived while writing this story.

but not any living beings. I was impatient to see it opened, but since there was nothing I could do, I decided to walk back to my home in Maybury. However, I returned in the afternoon after reading in the newspapers:

‘A MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM MARS,’
‘Remarkable Story from Woking’

The title, Astronomer Royal, was first given to an important astronomer by King Charles II in 1675. His position is to inform the king or queen about astronomical events.

This time there was a much bigger crowd, and Ogilvy, Henderson, Stent (the Astronomer Royal) and several workers were trying to dig the cylinder out of the sand. Stent was standing on the cylinder, red in the face, and he seemed very annoyed. Ogilvy saw me in the crowd and asked me to go and see Lord Hilton, the owner of the land, to ask him to remove the crowd, as they were making their work more difficult. I was more than happy to help in any way I could. Lord Hilton wasn't at home, but I was told he'd arrive soon by train, so I went to the station to meet him.

I went back to the common at sunset. There was an even bigger crowd then. I heard Stent shouting, ‘Keep back! Keep back!’ as the top of the cylinder turned, opened, and fell to the ground.

The War of the Worlds

I think everyone expected to see a man come out, or at least something like a man. I know I did. Suddenly two bright, round eyes appeared, then something like a little snake, about as thick as a walking-stick, waved in the air towards me, then another and another. A woman behind me let out a terrified scream, and everyone started moving backwards, but I couldn't take my eyes off the cylinder. Something big and round, about the size of a bear, was rising painfully out of it. Its oily, brown skin shone like wet leather in the setting sun. It had a kind of face. There was a V-shaped mouth that quivered¹ under the enormous eyes, but there was no chin. The Martian was breathing heavily with every slow movement. Suddenly the monster vanished² as it fell into the pit³, and then another one appeared at the top of the cylinder. For a moment, I couldn't move, then I started running like the others and we hid behind some trees nearby. Something thin rose up from the pit, with a circular disc like a mirror at the top. What could it be? Then, there was no movement, and in the sunset, all I could see was a small group including Ogilvy, Stent and Henderson, going

1 **quiver** shake

2 **vanish** disappear

3 **pit** a large hole in the ground

H.G. Wells

People usually
wave a white
flag as a sign
that they
come in peace.

towards the pit waving a white flag¹, to try and communicate with the Martians.

Suddenly a strong light appeared, and bright green smoke rose into the air along with a hissing² noise. Then, one of the large creatures³ rose out of the pit and the hissing became a long, loud humming⁴ noise. Without warning, everything around started to catch fire⁵, as if hit by an invisible⁶ ray⁷ coming from the creature. The group with the white flag fell to the ground as this ray of blinding heat passed over them. It continued, hitting people, trees, anything in its path. Black smoke rose from the ground as everything it touched was left burning. Then, as suddenly as it'd begun, the Heat-Ray stopped, and I ran away terrified, lucky to be still alive. 

Think

How would
you feel if
you met an
alien?

1 **flag**



2 **hissing** a sharp 's' sound
like that of a snake

3 **creature** a living thing

4 **humming** a long, low
sound like that of a bee

5 **catch fire** start to burn

6 **invisible** that cannot be
seen

7 **ray** stream of light or heat



The Martians
start to come
out of the
cylinder.



Reading Comprehension

1 Put the sentences in order (1-8) as they happen in Chapter 1.

- A ☒ 7 Gases suddenly started exploding from Mars.
- B ☐ The Martians killed people with their Heat-Ray.
- C ☐ Henderson sent a telegram to his newspaper in London.
- D ☐ A Martian fell into the pit.
- E ☐ The newspapers wrote about volcanoes on Mars.
- F ☐ Ogilvy found a large metal cylinder on Horsell Common.
- G ☐ Ogilvy and others went towards the pit waving a white flag.
- H ☐ Several workers tried to dig the cylinder out of the sand.

Reading Comprehension

B1 Preliminary

2 Complete the text from Chapter 1 with one word for each space.

Suddenly two bright, round eyes appeared, then something (1) _____ a little snake, about as thick as a walking-stick, waved (2) _____ the air towards me, then another and another. A woman behind me let (3) _____ a terrified scream, and everyone started moving backwards, (4) _____ I couldn't take my eyes off the cylinder. Something big and round, about the size of a bear, (5) _____ rising painfully out of it. Its oily, brown skin shone like wet leather in the setting sun. It had a kind of face. (6) _____ was a V-shaped mouth that quivered under the enormous eyes, but there was no chin. The Martian breathed heavily with every slow movement.



Speaking – Pair Work

21st
Century
Skills

3 Discuss the following questions with a partner.

- 1 What do you think of Wells' description of the Martian?
- 2 What would you add or change to the description of the Martian?
- 3 What other films have you seen with aliens?
- 4 Do you like sci-fi films? Why? / Why not?



Vocabulary



2030 Agenda - Goal 12

'Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.'

4 A At the start of the story, we're told that the Martians invade Earth because they've finished all the resources on their planet. Complete these sentences about Goal 12 with the words in the box.

use • sustainable • impact • waste • resources •
environment • aims • objectives

- 1 The _____ development goal that describes how we should look after our _____ is Goal 12.
- 2 This goal _____ to promote an efficient _____ of resources.
- 3 One of its _____ is to reduce _____.
- 4 It also aims at reducing the _____ that economic activities have on our _____.

4 B Have a class discussion on the following:

'We can all do something to help our planet by choosing a sustainable lifestyle.'

You might like to use these words: save • recycle • reuse