

H. G. Wells

The War of the Worlds



free Audiobook



H.G. Wells

The War of the Worlds

Illustrated by Paolo D'Altan





Member of CISQ Federation



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Contents



CHAPTER 1	<i>The falling star</i>	8
CHAPTER 2	<i>The cylinder opens</i>	18
CHAPTER 3	<i>The fighting begins</i>	29
CHAPTER 4	<i>What happened in London</i>	43
CHAPTER 5	<i>The Earth under the Martians</i>	53
CHAPTER 6	<i>What we saw from the ruined house</i>	64
CHAPTER 7	<i>The stillness</i>	74
CHAPTER 8	<i>Dead London</i>	88
CHAPTER 9	<i>Devastation and joy</i>	98
DOSSIERS	H.G. Wells	4
	The Planet Mars	38
	Orson Welles' radio dramatisation of <i>The War of the Worlds</i>	82
	Cinema: <i>War of the Worlds</i>	105
ACTIVITIES	Before you read	7, 17, 28, 42, 52, 63, 73, 87, 97
	The text and beyond	14, 24, 35, 49, 59, 69, 79, 94, 103
	After reading	107

PRELIMINARY

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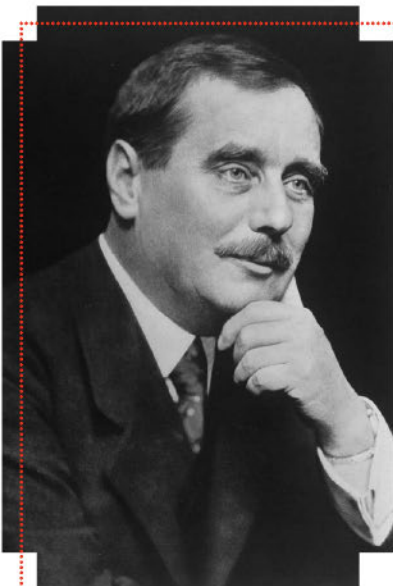
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n. track



THE STORY IS FULLY RECORDED.



H.G. Wells

Herbert George Wells was born in Bromley, in the south of England. He was often unwell as a child and his parents worried that he might die at a young age, like his older sister. The family had a shop and his father made extra money by playing professional cricket. When Wells was thirteen, his father fell off a ladder and broke his leg. With no income¹ from

cricket and money needed for doctor's bills, the family was bankrupt.² Wells' mother became a housekeeper at a country house and Wells became an apprentice.³ He hated it and at the age of sixteen he got a job as a teacher's assistant. Wells became a passionate reader and when he visited his mother he was able to read books in the library of the country house. He loved the work of Jonathan Swift and Voltaire. Eventually Wells won a scholarship to what is now the Royal College of Science, in Kensington, London. He studied with Thomas Huxley, a supporter of Darwin, and spent most of his free time editing the student magazine. Wells got a job as a science teacher in a small private school and later found regular work as a journalist and theatre critic. He published his novel *The Time Machine* (1895) in instalments⁴ in a small evening newspaper. This novel brought him success and fame.

-
1. **income** : money received annually for a job.
 2. **bankrupt** : unable to pay debts.
 3. **apprentice** : a person who learns a trade.
 4. **instalments** : a novel published in several parts.

Wells is known as one of the founding fathers of science fiction, but he preferred to call his work 'scientific romances'. Examples of his work in this genre are *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and *In the Days of the Comet* (1906). He also wrote humorous novels, which were partly autobiographical, describing the social conditions at the end of the 19th century: *Love and Mr Lewisham* (1900), *Tono-Bungay* (1909) and *The History of Mr Polly* (1910).

Behind his imagination and inventiveness lay his passionate concerns for man and society. Wells supported socialist ideals and explored issues of class in his novel *Kipps* (1905), which was one of his favourite works.

Wells was a member of the Fabian Society, a British socialist organisation, and became active in politics. He visited Russia in 1920 and 1934 and met Lenin and Stalin.

Wells wrote until the very end of his life, but his feelings became darker. In his novel *The World Set Free* (1913) he described a Utopia after the invention of a bomb which caused mass destruction and in his essay *Mind at the End of It's Tether* (1945) he considered the end of humanity.

Comprehension check

1 Answer the questions.

- 1 In what way did Wells' family have financial problems?
- 2 What subject did Wells teach? Why could this have been useful in his writing?
- 3 How was his novel *The Time Machine* published?
- 4 What did Wells like to call his science-fiction work?
- 5 Who did Wells meet in 1920 and 1934?
- 6 How did Wells feelings become darker towards the end of his life?

The characters

The narrator's
brother

The narrator's
wife

The narrator

The curate



The Martians

Before you read

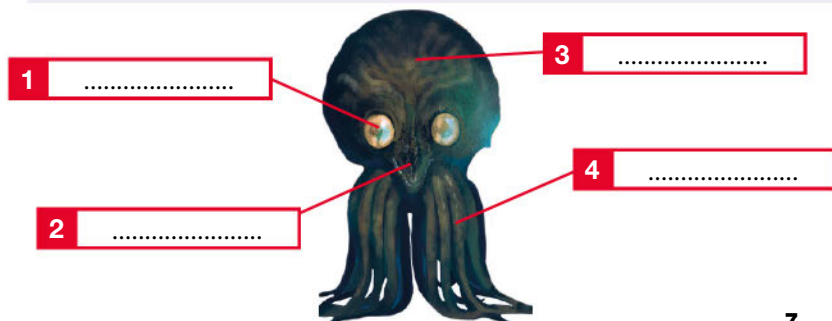
Vocabulary

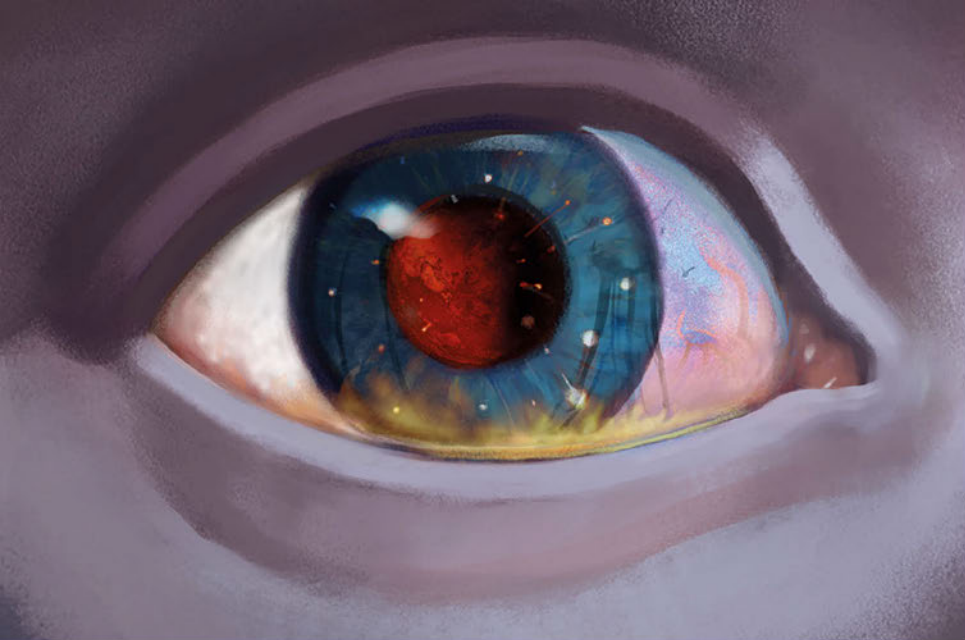
1 Match the words (1-15) to the correct meaning (a-o).

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Martian | a person who studies planets and stars |
| 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Mars | b a three dimensional shape |
| 3 <input type="checkbox"/> meteor | c the area outside the atmosphere of the Earth |
| 4 <input type="checkbox"/> space | d the second smallest planet in the solar system |
| 5 <input type="checkbox"/> meteorite | e a heavy weapon used in battles |
| 6 <input type="checkbox"/> astronomer | f a force that pulls and keeps you on the ground |
| 7 <input type="checkbox"/> cannon | g a high temperature |
| 8 <input type="checkbox"/> canister | h a creature which lives on Planet Mars |
| 9 <input type="checkbox"/> telescope | i a metal box |
| 10 <input type="checkbox"/> cylinder | j a cover for a container |
| 11 <input type="checkbox"/> volcanic explosion | k a rock from space that lands on Earth |
| 12 <input type="checkbox"/> heat | l when hot lava comes out of a volcano |
| 13 <input type="checkbox"/> flash | m a short sudden burst of light |
| 14 <input type="checkbox"/> lid | n looks like a shooting star |
| 15 <input type="checkbox"/> gravity | o an instrument to look at the stars |

2 Match the words to the parts of the picture.

tentacles oily skin disc-like eyes V-shaped mouth





chapter **one**

The falling star



I am a philosopher and a writer and in the last few years I have realised that intelligences, greater than man, are watching our world. Planet Mars is older than Earth and anyone living there is certainly more advanced.



track 02

There is air and water to support life on planet Mars, but it receives only half of the light and heat from the sun that Earth gets. However, most humans don't think space is a danger. Men often wonder if there is life on Mars, but they are certain that people living there are inferior to humans. No one thought that superior beings wanted to leave their planet and take control of Earth. No one knew that these superior creatures were already making plans.

The climate on Mars was becoming too cold and the air was thin. This was why the Martians turned their attention to Earth.



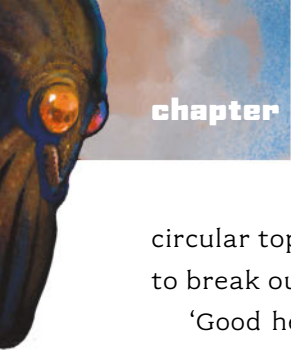
They looked across space with their instruments. They saw a warmer planet, green with vegetation and with narrow seas. They liked this rich planet called Earth.

For several years, astronomers have noticed strange lights on the surface of Mars and have described it as jets¹ of fire, like a gas flame. They didn't know that the jets of fire came from huge canons on Mars, which were firing canisters with Martians inside to Earth.

My friend Ogilvy, an astronomer, showed me the planet Mars through his telescope. I saw a red flash of fire from the distant planet. Ogilvy thought meteors were falling or the flashes came from a huge volcanic explosion. The newspapers wrote about these explosions, but no one seemed to be worried about this development and everyone went about their daily lives. My friend Ogilvy didn't believe there was anything man-like on Mars. One bright, clear night I pointed out the planets and stars to my wife. The sky seemed beautiful and safe. We had no idea what was coming.

One night there was a falling star. It fell in the country, quite near where I lived. My friend Ogilvy said it was a meteor and went out looking for it. He was shocked when he found a huge cylinder lying in an enormous sandy hole. It was almost completely buried² in sand and he was surprised by the size of the cylinder. It was about thirty metres across and it was still hot from the flight. Ogilvy wanted to have a closer look, but when he climbed into the hole, he heard sounds and saw the

-
1. **jet** : a thin stream of something like water or fire.
 2. **bury** : put under the ground.



chapter one

circular top of the cylinder moving. Someone inside was trying to break out.

‘Good heavens,’ said Ogilvy. ‘There are men inside who need to get out. They could be burned from the heat inside the cylinder and trying to escape.’ And suddenly he linked this huge thing that had fallen to earth with the flashes he had seen on Mars.

Ogilvy moved forward, but the heat was too strong. He had to get help. Ogilvy ran into town, but when he told people his strange story, no one believed him. Ogilvy had lost his hat and his appearance was so wild that most people thought he was a madman. Only Henderson, a London journalist, believed him.

‘Henderson,’ Ogilvy said. ‘You saw the shooting star last night, didn’t you?’

‘I did.’

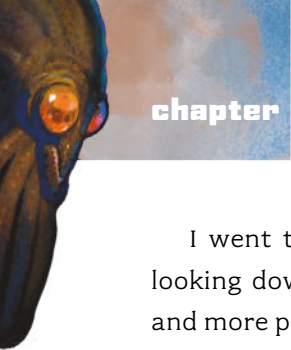
‘Well, it’s on Horsell Common now.’

‘So, a meteorite landed there?’ said Henderson.

‘It’s more than a meteorite. It’s a huge cylinder and there’s something inside.’ Ogilvy told Henderson what he had seen. The two men ran to Horsell Common and found the cylinder lying in the same position. Now they could see a thin circle of bright metal between the top and the body of the cylinder. As air entered or escaped there was a thin sound. The two men hit the burned cylinder with a stick, but there was no answer. The man or men inside were probably dead.

Ogilvy and Henderson went back to the town to get help. They ran up the street in the bright sunlight as shops and bedroom windows were opening. Henderson sent a message to London with the news and by eight o’clock a group of people went to Horsell Common to see the ‘dead men from Mars.’





I went there too and found a group of about twenty people looking down at the cylinder in the huge hole. Some went away and more people came. I climbed into the hole and thought I heard some sounds of movement. The cylinder looked old, but as I came closer I saw that the yellowish-white metal was not like any metal found on Earth. My mind was clear. This flying object had come from planet Mars.

The early editions of the evening papers had surprised London with the headlines:



By evening the crowd had become quite large. Men were digging³ in the hole and we could see most of the cylinder. The sun was setting and the large crowd looked black against the lemon-yellow of the sky. Stent, the Astronomer Royal, was there, asking the crowd to keep back.

A boy ran towards me. 'It's moving,' he said to me. 'It's turning and opening and I don't like it. I'm going home.'

There was a strange humming⁴ sound coming from the

3. to dig :



4. to hum : to sing with closed lips a sound like a bee.



cylinder in the hole and the crowd seemed very excited. The sun was in my eyes as the lid of the cylinder fell onto the ground. I think everyone expected to see a man, but a creature appeared with two great disc-like eyes. It had tentacles like little grey snakes. I felt suddenly cold and a woman screamed behind me. The expression on the faces of the crowd⁵ changed to horror and I couldn't move.

A grey creature about the size of a bear got slowly out of the cylinder. Its skin was brown and oily and it had a strange V-shaped mouth and no chin. It stared at me with its dark eyes and its movements were slow and painful because of the difference in gravity. I looked at it and I felt fear and disgust.

People watching looked surprised, then horrified as another creature climbed out from inside the cylinder. With a thick cry it jumped into the hole and I ran away fast towards the trees. A man who had fallen into the hole was unable to escape. We heard a faint scream, then silence.

5. **crowd** : a large group of people.

The text and *beyond*

Comprehension check

1 PRELIMINARY For each question choose the correct answer (a, b, c or d).

- 1 The narrator is
 - a ☐ a scientist.
 - b ☐ an astronomer.
 - c ☐ an author and a thinker.
 - d ☐ an astrologist.
- 2 Planet Mars is
 - a ☐ hotter and brighter than Earth.
 - b ☐ colder and darker than Earth.
 - c ☐ the same temperature as Earth.
 - d ☐ cold and completely dark.
- 3 For a long time astronomers watching Mars have noticed
 - a ☐ parts of the planet burning.
 - b ☐ red flashes of fire.
 - c ☐ no light.
 - d ☐ blue flashes of fire.
- 4 One day something falls to Earth, it's
 - a ☐ a falling star.
 - b ☐ a meteor.
 - c ☐ a piece of rock.
 - d ☐ a huge cylinder.
- 5 When Ogilvy first tells people his story they
 - a ☐ think he's crazy.
 - b ☐ are scared.
 - c ☐ believe him.
 - d ☐ run to help.

- 2 Ogilvy and Henderson run for help. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)?

	T	F
1 Henderson and Ogilvy are sure that the men from Mars are dead.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 The cylinder is made from a metal found on Earth.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 An astronomer asks the crowds to come closer to the cylinder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 The cylinder begins to move and open.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 No sound is coming from the cylinder.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 The crowd is expectant but suddenly they become afraid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 3 Complete the sentences with the characters from the box. You can use some character more than once.

Henderson Ogilvy the narrator a boy a Martian

- thought other intelligences were watching Planet Earth.
- watched Mars through his telescope.
- didn't believe that anything living on Mars was like Man.
- thought a meteorite had landed on Horsell Common.
- climbed into the hole and heard sounds of movement.
- was afraid of the cylinder and decided to go home.
- stared at the narrator with its dark eyes.
- felt fear and disgust when he saw the Martians.

Predicting the story

- 4 In pairs, discuss the questions.

- Do you think the Martians are friendly or hostile? Why?
- What do you think will happen next?

Grammar

Comparatives

Planet Mars is **older** than Earth and anyone living there is certainly **more advanced**.

We use comparative adjectives to describe people and things.

We use *than* with a comparative when we compare two things.

Short adjectives with one syllable add *-er*:

cold – **colder**

Adjectives that end with a vowel and a consonant double the consonant and add *-er*:

big – **bigger**

Adjectives that end in *-y* change *-y* to *-i* and add *-er*:

heavy – **heavier**

Adjectives with two, three or four syllables add *more*:

excited – **more excited**

Some adjectives are irregular:

good – **better**

bad – **worse**

far – **farther**

5 Complete the sentences with the correct comparative adjective.

- 1 The Martians were (+, *advanced*) than the people on Earth.
- 2 The air is (+, *thin*) on Mars than on Earth.
- 3 Earth is (+, *green*) than Mars.
- 4 The cylinder was (+, *hot*) than Ogilvy expected and the heat (+, *strong*).
- 5 The cylinder was (+, *big*) than a meteorite.
- 6 The creatures' movements were (+, *slow*) and (+, *painful*) than the movements of people on Earth.

Before you read

Vocabulary

1 Match the words (a-f) to the pictures (1-6).

a hand in hand

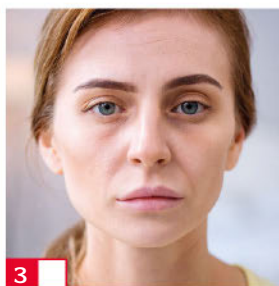
b side by side

c set on fire

d deadly white

e flag

f searchlight



2 Match the words (1-8) to the correct meaning (a-h).

1 ☐ still

2 ☐ dusk

3 ☐ strength

4 ☐ branch

5 ☐ restless

6 ☐ hissing

7 ☐ hammering

8 ☐ lightning

a part of a tree

b not able to stay still

c physical energy

d evening — before it becomes dark

e calm

f electricity in the sky

g the sound of a metal tool hitting something

h making a long s sound