



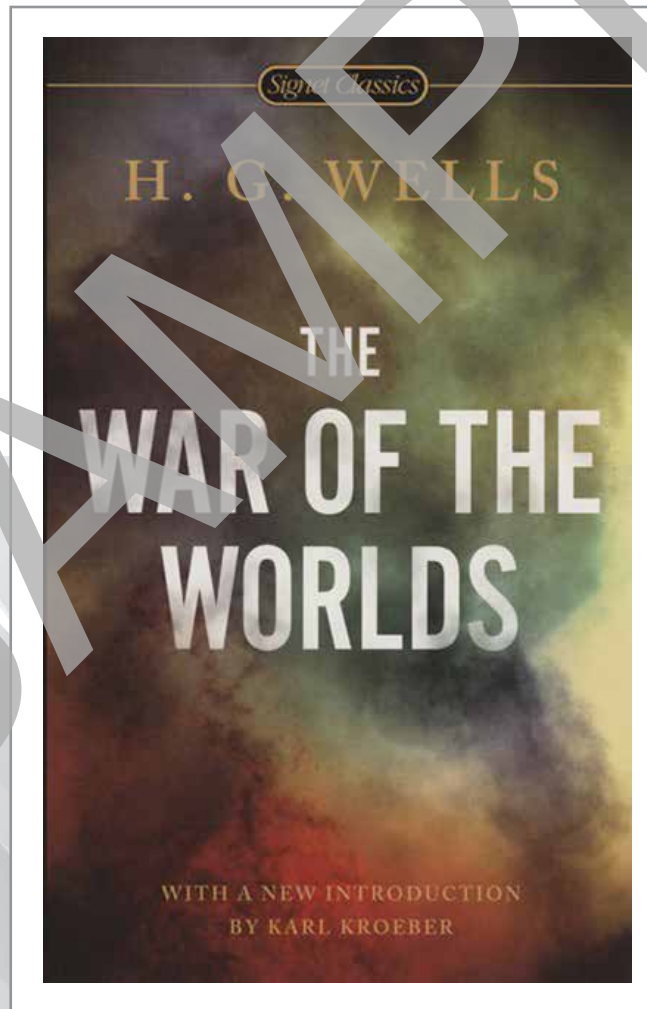
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **The War of the Worlds**

Isaac Asimov



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# The War of the Worlds

Isaac Asimov

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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3901 Union Blvd., Suite 155

St. Louis, MO 63115

[sales@novelunits.com](mailto:sales@novelunits.com)

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## Table of Contents

Summary.....	3
Characters.....	3
About the Author .....	4
Initiating Activities.....	5
<b>Book One, Seventeen Chapters</b> .....	6
Each section contains: Summary, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
<b>Book Two, Ten Chapters</b> .....	13
Each section contains: Summary, Vocabulary, Discussion Questions, and Supplementary Activities	
Post-reading Discussion Questions .....	18
Post-reading Extension Activities.....	19
Assessment.....	25
Glossary.....	26

## Skills and Strategies

### Writing

Compare/contrast, poetry,  
journal entries, reflection,  
summary

### Literary Elements

Characterization, simile,  
metaphor, setting, theme, plot  
development, allusion,  
personification

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, dramatizing, music,  
presenting

### Vocabulary

Target words, definitions,  
application

### Comprehension

Cause/effect, predicting

### Thinking

Research, compare/contrast,  
analysis, critical thinking, current  
events

### Across the Curriculum

Art—caricatures, sketch

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**Genre:** Science Fiction

**Setting:** England; late 1890s

**Point of View:** first-person

**Themes:** fear, survival

**Conflict:** man vs. extraterrestrial beings

**Style:** narrative

**Tone:** pessimism (human nature, the future)

**Date of first publication:** 1898

## Summary

An unnamed narrator recounts the tale of the invasion of England by Martians. When the unsuspecting and disbelieving humans realize their country has been invaded, they struggle to survive amidst the chaos and confusion. Using devastating weaponry, the Martians stride unchecked through the country but are ultimately defeated by their lack of resistance to human diseases. The book is divided into two sections. Book One, "The Coming of the Martians," tells of the Martians' triumphant invasion. Book Two, "The Earth Under the Martians," tells of the struggle to survive after Martians overtake the country and the ultimate demise of the Martians. Note Wells' "prophetic" correlation of the Martians with industrial robots and the descriptions of gas warfare and laser-like weapons.

## Characters

**narrator:** unnamed, ordinary citizen; intellectual, writer of philosophical material; married; survives

**narrator's wife:** survives

**Ogilvy:** well-known astronomer; observes launching of first missile from Mars but believes he is seeing a shower of meteorites or a volcanic explosion; does not believe anything manlike can live on Mars; initially attempts to communicate with Martians and dies

**Henderson:** London journalist; sends telegram about invasion to his newspaper; dies with Ogilvy

**Stent:** Astronomer Royal; dies with Ogilvy

**the curate:** self-centered assistant clergyman who becomes the narrator's companion in the struggle to survive; believes Martians are God's ministers of punishment

**narrator's younger brother:** narrator reveals part of tale through brother's experiences; brother escapes to Belgium

**Mrs. Elphinstone and her sister-in-law, Miss Elphinstone:** refugees from London; narrator's brother assists them in escape

**the Martians:** creatures who exist inside monstrous metal machines; use Heat-Ray weapons and poison gas

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## Book One

### Chapters 1-3, pp. 3-15

Astronomers observe an unusual, great light on Mars but are unconcerned because they believe no life exists on the planet. A cylinder, identified as “the Thing” falls to earth. Sounds emanate from the object, and a group of men investigate.

#### Vocabulary

mortal (3)	nebular (3)	attenuated (4)	heath (9)
incrustation (10)	cylinder (11)	astronomical (13)	oxide (14)
extraterrestrial (14)			

#### Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the facts and the assumptions about Mars in the last years of the nineteenth century. *(Facts: Mars revolves around the sun at a mean distance of 140,000,000 miles, receives barely half of the light and heat from the sun as received by earth, is scarcely one-seventh the volume of earth, and apparently has water and air. Assumptions: some believe no life exists on Mars, others believe that, if any life exists, it is inferior to earth's inhabitants; Mars is nearer its end than earth. pp. 3-4)*
2. Analyze the anomalies that astronomers observe on Mars and the astronomers' speculation. *(They observe a great light and jets of fire heading towards earth, a flame each night for ten nights. The astronomers speculate that meteorites might be falling or a huge volcanic explosion occurring, but are unconcerned because of the belief that no, or inferior, life exists on Mars. pp. 5-7)*
3. Discuss the first falling “star”: where it lands, what Ogilvy observes, observers' conclusions. *(It is seen early one morning rushing over and above the countryside; falls on Horsell Commons, making an enormous hole and lying almost buried in the sand; a huge cylinder with a diameter of about thirty yards; hear a stirring noise inside and see circular top rotating, indicating something is inside. Conclusions: men in the cylinder, half roasted to death and trying to escape; silence leads to conclusion that the cylinder contains dead men from Mars. pp. 9-12)*
4. Analyze the reaction of the people to the cylinder. Compare with the way people today react to unusual occurrences such as the impending eruption of a volcano. *(A crowd of people gathers, curious and impatient to see it opened; carnival-like atmosphere with food and drinks; oblivious to any danger. Today: people often do not take news seriously and refuse to leave their homes until too late. pp. 13-15)*

#### Supplementary Activities

1. Have students research and report on one or more of the following: European conquest of Tasmania (p. 5), invention of bicycle (p. 7, narrator learning to ride), the story of Pandora's Box (p. 14, impatience to see cylinder opened).
2. Have students apply the saying, “the calm before the storm” to the statement, “It seemed so safe and tranquil” (p. 8). Discuss the students' predictions about events to follow.

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3. Analyze the literary devices: **Similes**—they were scrutinized and studied...as a man with microscope might scrutinize transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water (p. 3); creatures who inhabit earth...as alien and lowly to them [Martians] as monkeys and lemurs are to us (p. 4) **Metaphor**—earth: morning star of hope (p. 4)

## Chapters 4-6, pp. 16-25

Martians emerge from the cylinder, and a crowd gathers to watch. Streams of fire from the Martians' Heat-Ray decimate the humans they touch.

### Vocabulary

terrestrial (17)  
deputation (20)

aperture (18)  
parabolic (23)

apex (19)

intimation (20)

### Discussion Questions

1. Describe the creature that emerges from the cylinder and discuss the events following its appearance. (*As the cylinder opens, observers see something grayish and billowy stirring within and two luminous disks resembling eyes, followed by something resembling a coiling gray snake and, finally, a big gray, round bulk the size of a bear. The creature has two large eyes, a rounded head with the semblance of a face, a dripping mouth, Gorgon groups of tentacles, and a covering of oily brown skin. Terror and curiosity grip the narrator and other observers, and a shopman who falls into the pit dies. A deputation of men attempts to communicate with the creatures. The Martians use a Heat-Ray that emits a stream of fire, and eventually 40 people die from the flashes of flame. The narrator escapes in terror. pp. 17-23*)
2. Discuss the methods of communicating the news and compare with today's technology. (*The news is first spread to surrounding communities by word-of-mouth. Stent and Ogilvy, who died in the first onslaught, had earlier telegraphed the news and asked for the assistance of soldiers. Today: cell phones, national on-the-spot news teams, e-mail, etc. pp. 23-25*)

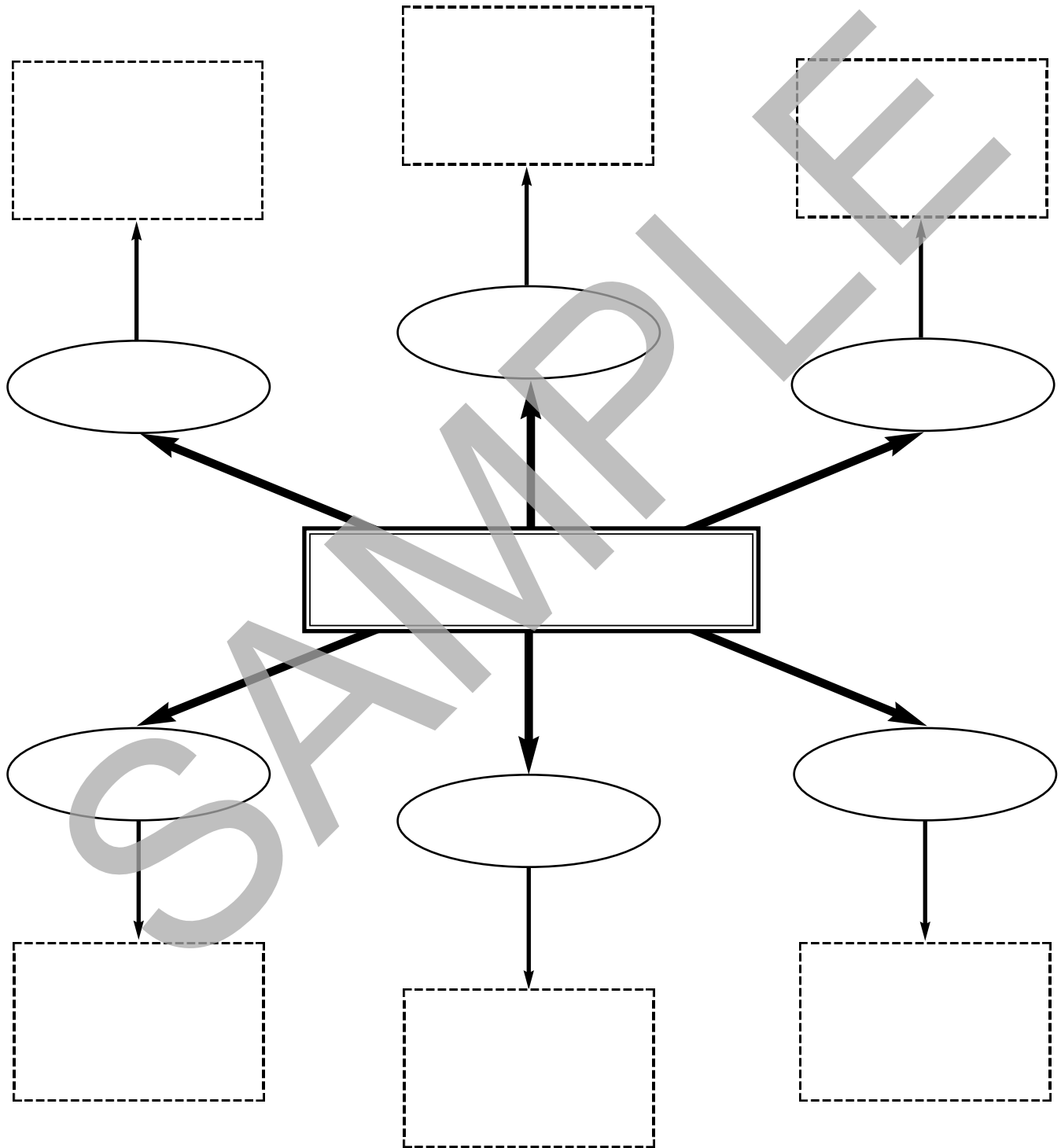
### Supplementary Activities

1. As a class, do a composite drawing of the creature that emerges from the cylinder.
2. Have students write an on-the-site news report about the landing of the Martians.
3. Note the literary devices: **Similes**—it glistened like wet leather (p. 17); the intense heat they project...much as the parabolic mirror of a lighthouse projects a beam of light (p. 23); they must have bolted as blindly as a flock of sheep (p. 25) **Metaphors**—I was a battleground of fear and curiosity (p. 19); beam of light: invisible hand (p. 24) **Allusion**—Gorgon (p. 17)

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## Characterization

**Directions:** Write a character's name in the center. Place in each oval an adjective that describes him/her. Fill in each rectangle with a supporting detail from the novel.



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## Novel Web Diagram

The diagram is a web centered on a box labeled "Novel Title". It branches into six main categories: Characters, Setting, Conflict, Possible Themes, Point of View, and Author's style and tone. The Setting box includes sub-sections for Date, Place, and Other. The Conflict box lists four types of conflict: character vs. character, character vs. nature, character vs. society, and character vs. self. The Point of View box has a blank line for input. The Genre box also has a blank line for input. The Possible Themes box contains a descriptive sentence about general statements the book makes about life.

<b>Characters</b>	<b>Setting</b> Date: _____ Place: _____ Other: _____	<b>Conflict</b>
main _____ main _____ minor _____ minor _____	<b>Novel Title</b> _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• character vs. character</li><li>• character vs. nature</li><li>• character vs. society</li><li>• character vs. self</li></ul>
<b>Possible Themes</b> (general statements the book makes about life)	<b>Point of View</b> _____	<b>Author's style and tone</b>
	<b>Genre</b> _____	