

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**The War of the Worlds**

by H. G. Wells

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Item No. 201018

# The War of the Worlds

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the reasons Wells is known as the “father of science fiction.” Include in your discussion Wells’ portrayal of:
  - alien life forms
  - the reaction of earthlings to the aliens
  - scientific and technological advances of his time
2. identify and discuss the prophetic nature of the Martian weapons Wells invents for this story.
3. comment on this theme: It is important to develop moral values along with technology.
4. discuss the following additional themes:
  - Humans are not necessarily the only intelligent, or the most intelligent, creatures in the universe.
  - God does not punish people for their wickedness by sending them life ending disasters.
5. infer information about characters and events when their meanings are not explicitly stated.
6. distinguish between first-person and third-person narration and cite examples of each in the novel.
7. point out the ways in which the author adds realism to the story, specifically, by:
  - repeated references to familiar places
  - presenting the narrator’s brother’s experiences
  - writing in a semi-documentary style
8. define irony and point out instances of irony in the book.
9. discuss how Wells uses
  - personification
  - metaphor
  - sensory images

# The War of the Worlds

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. What do the Martians in this story look like? In what ways does the narrator suggest they are similar to the way humans might appear in the future?
2. How would you describe the reaction of the humans to the first cylinder? What happens to change people's attitudes toward the aliens?
3. The narrator must hide from the Martians in the coal bin. He remarks that the Martians have learned to open human doors. Why is this kind of scene terrifying?
4. List three instances in the story in which humans seem to behave badly under pressure.
5. Support or refute the following statement: the narrator of the story is not a traditional hero.
6. Why do you think Wells portrays the narrator's companion in the ruined house as a curate?
7. For what reasons does the narrator at first think the artillery man is making good sense when he suggests they form an underground unit of humans to work against the Martians? Why does the narrator abandon him and the plans to travel to London?
8. What is ironic about the narrator's occupation?
9. Why does the author include references in the story to Tasmania and dodo birds?
10. Do you think the ending of the story leaves the human race any room for hope? What does the narrator think we have learned from the nearly catastrophic encounter with the Martians?
11. How do the Martians travel across space? Why does the narrator believe there are only ten cylinders?
12. Why is Wells considered to be the father of science fiction?
13. List four weapons of modern warfare Wells prophetically describes in the novel.
14. Locate a passage in the novel illustrating the author's switch from first-person to third-person narration.
15. Define the theory of evolution and explain how it influences Wells' vision of the aliens in this book.

**transient**—passing, short-lived  
**transverse**—crosswise  
**unanimity**—an agreement  
**unerring**—unmistaken, certain  
**unfathomable**—measureless  
**vulgar**—common, accepted  
**wrought**—caused  
**zenithward**—the highest point; upward

1. What is the “great disillusionment” referred to in the first paragraph of this story?

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2. Define “nebular hypothesis.” What evidence is there that life exists on Mars and is most likely “older” than life on Earth?

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3. What is the “last stage of exhaustion” described in this chapter? How has this “last stage of exhaustion” strengthened the inhabitants of Mars?

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### Chapter VII - How I Reached Home

#### Vocabulary

**abart**—[dialect] about  
**allay**—to calm  
**cope**—a coat  
**credit**—believe  
**denouncing**—condemning  
**erethism**—sensitivity, excitability  
**fantastic**—unbelievable  
**frantic**—crazy  
**haggard**—worn out, exhausted  
**inconceivably**—unbelievably, impossibly  
**incongruity**—a contradiction  
**modifying**—changing, altering  
**perplexed**—confused, puzzled  
**rashness**—a reckless haste  
**tempering**—heating  
**vividness**—clarity, clearness

1. In what ways does the trauma of the events on Horsell Common affect the narrator’s ability to think and function?

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2. Why does the narrator reassure his wife that the Martians will not come to their home? List the two reasons his reassurance is premature.

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1. What do you think is the author’s opinion of Londoners as described in the following passage?

“The majority of people in London do not read Sunday papers.”  
The habit of personal security, moreover, is so deeply fixed in the Londoner’s mind, and startling intelligence so much a matter of course in the papers, that they could read without any personal tremors.

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2. Why do you think Wells reviews the particulars of the invasion in this chapter from his brother’s point of view? Why did Wells switch from first-person to third-person narration for this chapter?

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3. What happens to finally throw all of London into a panic?

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## Chapter the Third - The Days of Imprisonment

### Vocabulary

**abbreviated**—shortened, cut off  
**anaemic**—weak, frail  
**atrocities**—an act of violence  
**charity**—understanding, mercy, compassion  
**clinkers**—unburned remnants  
**consequence**—wealth, means, position  
**contrivances**—contraptions, devices, gadgets, tools  
**dispositions**—personalities  
**efficacious**—effective, useful  
**enigma**—a mystery  
**importunities**—persistent crying or disturbances  
**loathed**—dreaded, hated  
**oscillated**—swung  
**spatulate**—broad, flattened  
**stout**—sturdy, bulky  
**vestiges**—hints, traces, signs  
**vitiating**—corrupted, weakened

1. How does the forced confinement magnify the differences between the curate and the narrator?

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2. What do the handling-machines make out of the clay in the pit?

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3. Why does the narrator stop spying on the Martians through the hole in the wall?

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4. What efforts does the narrator make to escape the house? Why does he quit trying?

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3. What finally kills the Martians? What is ironic about their death?

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4. Why does the narrator believe humans have earned the right to continue living on the Earth?

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5. How do you feel about the deaths of the Martians?

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