

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

The War of the Worlds

by H. G. Wells

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BOOK I
THE COMING OF THE MARTIANS

CHAPTER THE FIRST
The Eve of War

1. The title of Book I, “The Coming of the Martians,” tells the reader immediately that this book will be fiction and that it will be a novel of one kind of fiction: the genre known as science fiction. The author, H. G. Wells, has mixed reality with fiction in this first chapter. Re-read the chapter specifically to find other points which you believe are true as opposed to fictional. Make a list of eight facts and the page on which each is found. An example is given below.

Chapter the First: True Things:

- A. Mars revolves around the sun 140,000,000 miles from Earth.
2. This novel is written from a first-person point of view. The narrator does not have a name, nor does he seem to be scientifically trained. The reader learns much from him about signs of Martians before the first missile is on its way to Earth but still is 10,000,000 miles away. Imagine that you are a science writer for *The New York Times* and recognize the unusual occurrences in the night sky. Write a brief story warning people that it appears that something dangerous is taking place. The headline of your story would be, “Could There Be Something Out There?”
3. H. G. Wells uses some harsh words about how we on Earth have been “ruthless” and brought “utter destruction” to animals and other humans. Although this novel was written over a hundred years ago, do you think Wells is right? Do you think what he wrote has been continuing to go on since that time? Begin your paragraphs with the following sentence:

Considering how we on Earth treat...

CHAPTER THE SECOND

The Falling Star

4. A mere “falling star” turns out to be something more exciting. The friend of the narrator, Ogilvy, is the first to see the strange object which has fallen to Earth on Horsell Common. Early in the morning, he runs to the nearest town to get help because he thinks there may be men inside the crashed object. Imagine you are running that morning after Ogilvy has gone for help. Imagine also you have a disposable camera inside your windbreaker pocket. You are alone when the top of the object opens and two Martians put their heads out, not seeing you at first. You pull out your camera and click away. They then see you and pop back inside the object, screwing the top back down. Complete the conversation you would have with your most trusted friend about the treasure you have inside your camera:

You: You are never, never going to believe this!

5. The author of this novel is English, and for that reason some of the vocabulary might be unfamiliar. Below is a list of words from the first two chapters. Look up their meanings, noting whether the word is a noun, a verb, or another part of speech. Beside each word, write its definition and part of speech.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. infusoria | 6. shunting |
| 2. nebular | 7. waggoner |
| 3. bison | 8. potman |
| 4. dodo | 9. public-house |
| 5. chronometer | 10. insensible |

CHAPTER THE THIRD

On Horsell Common

6. This chapter describes the day on Horsell Common as the townsfolk and those in nearby towns become aware that something strange has fallen to Earth. A small crowd has gathered around the site of the cylinder in its pit. Think about how different the day would be in any small town in America if a similar object had fallen into the main part of town in the present day. In a detailed paragraph, relate what you think all those differences would be. Include among your considerations of what would happen in present day America:
- a) how large the crowds would be
 - b) whether the police would be there
 - c) whether federal government officials would be there
 - d) what role tv and radio would play
 - e) how much secrecy would be involved
 - f) how the townsfolk would be treated by the authorities
 - g) additional interesting points
7. No one seems to be very afraid of the strange happening of a large, unfamiliar object burrowing into Earth on Horsell Common. What would your reaction be if you were the first person to see what Ogilvy saw? Write your feelings in detail as an imaginary diary entry. If you think you would not have any fears, tell why you would not, or write what you think a harmless explanation of the phenomenon would be. Begin your entry as follows:

Entry for____: That big metal cartridge just falling out of the sky like that and landing down near the park...

CHAPTER THE FOURTH

The Cylinder Opens

8. One can hardly imagine more horrible creatures emerging from the cylinder in the sandy pit than the ones described in this chapter. That description is what H. G. Wells imagined in the late 1800's. Now it is your turn to play author and imagine another type of monster that might have emerged from the crashed cylinder. Describe your creature in terms of color, height, size, sounds, lips, eyes, fur/skin, behavior, smell, etc. Your first sentence could be:

I cannot believe my eyes! Oh, please, NO!

9. You will remember that a man from the town has fallen into the pit and cannot get out. He is still in there when the creatures emerge from the cylinder. The narrator, from his hiding place in the woods, thinks he should go back to try to help the man, but he states, "My fears overruled." Complete the following dialogue you might have with a classmate about whether the man is a coward or whether he just is realistic in knowing that there is nothing he could do to save the man.

You: I feel really terrible about that man.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH

The Heat-Ray

10. All those who are going to the deep sandy pit on Horsell Common are going there unarmed. Even though the time is the late 1800s, many people would own and use hunting rifles and even dueling pistols. Do you find it surprising that the group of townsmen who approach the Martians carrying a white flag do not think that it might be a good idea to be armed? Imagine you are the father or mother of one of the men of the white-flag group. Write the conversation you would have with him and the group before they try to confront the Martians. You could begin your conversation with this statement:

Think about it men, they might be armed. Why don't...

11. The narrator has never before seen anything like the Heat-Ray weapon and its horrible results. The author, writing in the late 1800s, had also never seen or heard of a weapon like the Heat-Ray before. Wells, in his description of this weapon, is almost a prophet of the type of laser-like and automatic weapons that exist today. What are your feelings about weapons in general? You could begin your paragraph with:

Hand weapons, whether they are knives or hunting rifles, ...