

The War of the Worlds Study Guide

The War of the Worlds by H. G. Wells

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Introduction

H. G. Wells's science fiction masterpiece *The War of the Worlds* was originally published in *Pierson's* magazine in 1897 and was issued as a novel the following year. A century later, it has never been out of print. The story has become an integral part of our culture, frequently retold in graphic novels and films. In 1938, it became part of one of the greatest and most horrifying media events of all times. The Mercury Theatre on the Air, headed by twenty-three-year-old Orson Welles, broadcast over the radio an adaptation of the book that was so realistic that it caused widespread public panic, mob violence, and looting. Until the night of that broadcast, few people realized the power of broadcast media to make whole populations feel powerless when faced with breaking events.

Like the radio program, much of the novel takes its power from appearing to be real. Wells, who had an intense interest in science from an early age, created his Martian invaders with a strict sense of the laws of biology and physics. They are not super beings, but bodiless heads, barely able to move because the atmosphere of Earth is so much thicker than that of their own planet. Still, their advanced intelligence gives them the power to create powerful weapons, such as Heat-Ray guns that can level whole towns, tripods with hundred-foot legs that give them mobility, and even flying machines, which, in 1898, were beyond human technology. Humanity has entered into space exploration since this novel was published, and many of the specific details are no longer of concern. But there will always be uneasiness about the unknown and curiosity about what might happen when people of Earth contact lives from other worlds.

Overview

The War of the Worlds has always held a special fascination for young readers.

The novel's action is relentless, and the book is suspenseful to the very end. In the novel, Wells sets forth some of his ideas about humanity's place in the universe, about the evils of foreign conquests, and about human nature. At no time in *The War of the Worlds* is Wells overbearing or preachy. Instead, his presentation stimulates new ideas in his readers and inspires their imaginations.

Furthermore, *The War of the Worlds* is the novel that inspired many of the popular science-fiction stories of the present day and set in motion a whole sub-genre of alien invasion stories. Wells's insistence on the accuracy of the novel's background details—from a scientific explanation of the astronomical relation between Earth and Mars to place names in the English countryside—has been an important standard for later science fiction.

Author Biography

Herbert George Wells was born on September 21, 1866, in Bromley, Kent, in England. His father was a shopkeeper and a professional cricket player with the Bromley team; his mother was a part-time housekeeper. When Wells was seven, he was injured while playing with a friend of his father. He broke a bone in his leg and was forced to spend two months in bed. He looked back on this as a lucky turn of events, as it was then that he developed the habit of reading.

Because his family did not have much money, Wells became an apprentice to a draper at age thirteen, working twelve-hour days. He was determined to become educated, and earned a scholarship to Midhurst Grammar School by agreeing to function as a student teacher. He entered the Normal School of Science at South Kensington when he was eighteen and studied under famed biologist T. H. Huxley. After college, he took a position teaching, but a bout with tuberculosis forced him to become bedridden again. It was then, while reading constantly, that he decided that he did not want to be not a teacher but a writer.

In 1891, while making money by grading lessons for the University Correspondence College at Cambridge, Wells published several short stories in *Science Schools Journal*. These stories were later collected to make his first novel, *The Time Machine* (1895). Next followed a series of science fiction classics that are read to this day and often adapted to films, including *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). The widespread popularity of these books, all published when the author was barely thirty, gave him an income that would make him financially comfortable for the rest of his life.

As he aged, Wells's books concentrated more and more on scientific and philosophical matters. He became a leading voice in the Fabian society, which was a socialist movement. His first marriage ended in divorce, and his second, to one of his students, was an "open" marriage: his wife knew about his many affairs, including at least one that resulted in a child, and raised no objection, though his lifestyle hurt his public image. After World War I (1914—1918) he wrote books about social order, such as *The Outline of History* (1920) (one of his most famous works) and *The Common Sense of World Peace* (1929). He lived to the age of seventy nine, having spent much of his life as one of the world's most famous authors. Wells died on August 13, 1946 after a prolonged illness.

About the Author

By the time he died on August 13, 1946, in London, Herbert George Wells was admired as a prophet and as an important social philosopher who helped shape the modern world; but at his birth on September 21, 1866, his future seemed likely to be one of little education, poorly paying jobs, and anonymity. His father was a professional cricket player and shopkeeper, and his mother was a maidservant.

From 1874 to 1880, Wells attended Thomas Morley's Commercial Academy, and as a fourteen-year-old he was apprenticed first to a dry goods merchant and later to a druggist. When seventeen, he tried to become a teacher in a rural area, then in 1884 he won a scholarship to the Normal School of Science. He left in 1887 without obtaining a degree. In that year he fell severely ill, and his future seemed bleak. In 1891 he married his cousin Isabell Mary Wells, and the marriage foundered.

Out of these unhappy experiences emerged Wells's passions for science and social reform. Too sick to pursue regular work, Wells tried writing. In 1891 the *Fortnightly Review* published one of his articles. He quickly established himself as a promising new writer, although editors often found his scientific speculations confusing. The year 1895 was a significant one that set the pattern for the rest of Wells's life. He divorced Isabell, married Amy Catherine Robbins, and saw the publication of his first novel, *The Time Machine*, which he conceived after writing a series of articles on time travel. The novel was a best seller, and Wells's future as a successful novelist was assured, even though he was stung by suggestions that his scientific fantasies were not serious literature.

During the 1890s and early 1900s, Wells wrote the novels for which he is best known to young adult readers: *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, *The War of the Worlds*, *The First Men in the Moon*, and *Food of the Gods*. These scientific fantasies were fabulously popular, but Wells wanted to be taken seriously. Therefore, he wrote novels of social commentary, the first of which, *Love and Mr. Lewisham*, appeared in 1900. This novel and two others that focused on social criticism, *Tono-Bungay* (1909) and *The History of Mr. Polly* (1910), were greeted enthusiastically by critics. By the start of World War I, Wells's immense popularity and high praise from critics made him one of the most powerful men of letters of his day.

He was widely regarded as a sage who could foresee the future, and he took his eminence seriously. He devoted most of the last twenty-five years of his life to writing popularizations of science, to advocating his evolutionary view of history, and to trying to persuade world leaders to abstain from war. In 1933 Wells was elected president of the International Association of Poets, Playwrights, Editors, Essayists, and Novelists (the PEN clubs). In this capacity, Wells tried to use the PEN clubs of various nations to improve international understanding.

But Nazi Germany turned its branch into a propaganda organ of the government, and the Soviet Union's members did not share Wells's enthusiasm for unfettered free speech, which he regarded as essential for human progress.



In his later years, Wells became more cynical, predicted World War II, and believed that only a world-state that would emerge from a catastrophic war would be able to establish peace and protect the civil rights of human beings.

Such was his stature that his death in 1946 was regarded as the end of an era; the prophet had died at the beginning of the future he foresaw.



Plot Summary

Book 1, Chapter 1: The Eve of the War

The narrator of *The War of the Worlds* is never identified by name. He refers to a "great light" seen on the planet Mars in 1894, explaining that this was six years before the time when he is writing. Earth's astronomers were perplexed about what to make of it, he says, but later realized that it was the invading forces, being shot toward Earth as if out of a gun.

Book 1, Chapter 2: The Falling Star

People think that the first Martian ship is a falling star, then a meteor. An astronomer hears something within the metal tube that landed.

Book 1, Chapter 3: On Horsell Common

The narrator goes to investigate the crash site, where a crowd of spectators has gathered. Also there are several astronomers gathered.

Book 1, Chapter 4: The Cylinder Opens

The top of the cylinder opens, and the crowd scatters. A Martian, with huge eyes and flailing antennae, jumps out, and another looks out the top. One man who slipped into the crater that the cylinder made tries to crawl out of the hole, but the Martian grabs him and pulls him back.

Book 1, Chapter 5: The Heat-Ray

Because the Martians do not seem able to climb out of the pit their ship is in, people crowd around again. A group of men approach the Martians with a white flag, signaling that they come in peace, but they are incinerated by a Heat-Ray that is fired at them.

Book 1, Chapter 6: The Heat-Ray in the Chobham Road

Word of the Heat-Ray spreads to the nearby towns of Cobham, Woking, and Ottershaw. Hundreds of people come to observe what is coming on. When the ray is turned on the crowd, it is unable to kill everyone because it is being fired from down in the pit, but two women and a little boy are trampled in the rush to get away from the Martians.



Book 1, Chapter 7: How I Reached Home

The narrator returns to his home, on the way hearing people talk about the Martian ship. His wife has dinner on the table. She has not heard anything about all of this until he tells her what he saw. The morning newspapers report on the Martians, but they say that they would never be able to threaten the planet because the Earth's gravity, much stronger than the gravity of Mars, would weigh them down.

Book 1, Chapter 8: Friday Night

While they can hear hammering sounds from within the pit where the Martians have landed, the army sends soldiers to surround the cylinder. A second cylinder from Mars arrives on Earth, landing not too far from the first.

Book 1, Chapter 9: The Fighting Begins

The day is like an ordinary Saturday, except that everyone is talking about the Martians. The Martians release the Heat-Ray across the countryside, and it reaches for miles around. The narrator rents a dog cart from his landlord to take his wife away from their home, which is too close to the invaders, to live with his cousin in Leatherhead, twelve miles away.

Book 1, Chapter 10: In the Storm

There is a thunderstorm when he tries to return. On the road, he encounters the Martians, mobilized in a pod that walks on three hundred-foot-tall legs. As he goes toward his house, he encounters the charred remains of people.

Book 1, Chapter 11: At the Window

From the upstairs window of his house, the narrator sees fires across the whole countryside, and several Martian tripods lumbering across the valley. He sees an artilleryman outside of his house and has him come inside; the man tells of how the Martians' Heat-Ray wiped out his army division.

Book 1, Chapter 12: What I Saw of the Destruction of Weybridge and Shepperton

The narrator and the artilleryman leave for London. They come across another army division and tell them of the destruction they have seen. They also come across refugees fleeing their homes. When the Martians arrive, the narrator is able to survive



their Heat-Rays by diving under water. One Martian pod is destroyed by artillery fire before the people are wiped out by the Heat-Ray.

Book 1, Chapter 13: How I Fell in with the Curate

The narrator floats downstream in a boat, scorched from the heating of the river water. He meets a curate who is turning crazy with panic and takes him with him toward London.

Book 1, Chapter 14: In London

Chapter 14 is about how the narrator's brother, a medical student in London, learned of the Martians. While battles are being waged against the Martians to the south, little news had reached the city: telegraph lines are down and observers are dead. There are rumors about the one Martian cylinder that has been destroyed, and refugees from the countryside tell stories about what they have seen. Finally, reports reach the city of the Black Smoke, which hovers near the ground and waterways and suffocates anyone whose lungs it seeps into.

Book 1, Chapter 15: What Happened in Surrey

The narrator and the curate watch the human military forces smashed by three Martian tripods using the Heat-Ray and the Black Smoke.

Book 1, Chapter 16: The Exodus from London

This chapter chronicles the attempts of the narrator's brother to escape from London. All trains are overcrowded, and the tracks are crammed with people trying to escape. The Black Smoke is traveling up the river from the south. The narrator's brother helps two women as some men are trying to steal their horse carriage from them, and they invite him to travel with them.

Book 1, Chapter 17: The Thunder Child

The narrator's brother and his companions have their horse taken away from them. They make it to the sea just as the Martians are approaching, but they manage to escape on a boat. A naval ship manages to destroy a Martian tripod before a flying ship that the Martians have made on Earth flies overhead, spreading the Black Smoke.



Book 2, Chapter 1: Under Foot

Book 2 chronicles "The Earth under the Martians." The narrator decides that the curate is too much trouble to stay with him, and decides to part ways. They arrive at London and find it deserted, but a strange red plant is growing everywhere: it is something that came with the Martians from their planet. The house where the curate and the narrator have stopped to look for food is nearly hit by a new cylinder arriving from Mars, and they are then stuck there because the Martians will see them if they leave.

Book 2, Chapter 2: What We Saw from the Ruined House

In the ruined house on the edge of the crater, the men watch the Martians build new machines, which look like themselves but have the mobility to attack the human race.

Book 2, Chapter 3: The Days of Imprisonment

Trapped in the ruined house with food supplies dwindling, the narrator comes to hate the curate, who complains constantly and eats and drinks, which makes him loud, threatening their hiding place. They watch the Martians take human prisoners and suck the blood out of them.

Book 2, Chapter 4: The Death of the Curate

When the curate panics and makes too much noise, the narrator hits him with a cleaver. A Martian reaches into the house with its tentacle: it comes close to the narrator but does not find him, and instead drags the curate's body away.

Book 2, Chapter 5: The Stillness

After fifteen days in the house, the narrator steps outside to find that the pit where the Martians were working is abandoned. Birds and dogs scrounge among the discarded skeletons of humans.

Book 2, Chapter 6: The Work of Fifteen Days

The narrator wanders through London and finds it deserted.



Book 2, Chapter 7: The Man on Putney Hill

The narrator meets the artilleryman from Chapter 12 who has a pragmatic idea for the regeneration of humanity. He plans to start a new society in the sewers, and they will adapt to the new reality of Martian dominance and focus on the disciplined struggle for life. Despite what he says, the man works little and wants to spend his time playing cards, drinking, and smoking.

Book 2, Chapter 8: Dead London

Wandering through the desolate streets of London, the narrator comes to realize that the Martian tripods are not moving. The Martians are dead. He explains that scientists later determined that they had no natural defenses for Earth's bacteria.

Book 2, Chapter 9: Wreckage

The narrator is driven nearly mad with the idea that he is the last man alive. A family looks after him until his delirium breaks. Then he goes home, sorrowful that he will not see his wife ever again, but she shows up there, thinking he is dead, and they are reunited.

Book 2, Chapter 10: The Epilogue

Once news of the Martians' demise spread, countries from all over the world send food and aid, and those who had survived by leaving return. The government believes that the Martians may have colonized Venus and that might satisfy their needs, but the narrator still is uneasy about whether they might try another attack against Earth some time in the future.



Book 1: Chapter 1, The Eve of War

Book 1: Chapter 1, The Eve of War Summary

The author describes what no one could have predicted that he will tell in this story. No one believed that Earth was being watched by intellectual beings, more specifically intellectual beings from Mars. There has even been a debate for sometime as to whether life could be supported in an atmosphere such that Mars had. Mars receives less than half the amount of light and heat from the sun than Earth does. Its gravitational pull is also much less than Earth's, but some scientists have overlooked the fact that Mars does have air, although it consists of different percentages of gas and water than Earth.

The author surmises that life on Mars began far before life on Earth. Mar's atmosphere started to cool, as the author predicts one day will happen to Earth. Its oceans have shrunk. Mar's inhabitants have started looking to other planets for resources and a new home. Earth's lush vegetation, abundance of water, and warmer climate has caused them to set their sites on our planet.

It began with a sighting of flaming gas coming towards Earth in the night. There was only a small note in one of the newspapers about the sighting. The author is a friend with a local astronomer, Ogilvy, who is very excited. The next night there is another flaming jet of gas from Mars to Earth.

Book 1: Chapter 1, The Eve of War Analysis

The introduction, or exposition, of *The War of the Worlds* seeks to introduce the subject matter to the reader. It is known that Earth will be visited by something from Mars. It is not known whether the visit is friendly or not but it is known that the author has lived through it as he tells the story first person in past tense.



Book 1: Chapter 2, The Falling Star

Book 1: Chapter 2, The Falling Star Summary

Then came the night where a falling star is sighted. It looks like any other falling star yet it is followed by a greenish gas. It is thought to be not a star at all, but a meteorite. The author sees it from the window in his study. No one tries to find the meteorite that night but Ogilvy is up early the next morning as he too saw the falling object and believes it is in the common, or park, at the apex of Horsell, Ogilvy, and Woking.

Ogilvy finds the fallen object in the common, near some sand pits. The object has dug a deep pit in the Earth from the force of its impact. Its shape is of a cylinder approximately 30 yards in diameter. The object is very hot to the touch, as is the air surrounding it. Ogilvy stood staring at it until he realizes that the top of the cylinder is slowly twisting off. The astronomer believes there to be a man in the cylinder trying to get out. The extreme heat must be roasting the man alive.

It is still quite early in the morning and Ogilvy runs back to the village to try to get help. He is very excited and the first couple of people whom he tries to recount his story to believe he is not in his right mind. He runs into Henderson, a reporter, who believes Ogilvy enough to accompany him back to the cylinder. They hit the cylinder with a stick and do not hear a response. They believe the man inside to be dead. The two head back to the village to get help. Word around the town is that there is a dead man from Mars in the common. The author hears this from the newspaper boy at nine in the morning and heads to the common to see for himself.

Book 1: Chapter 2, The Falling Star Analysis

Chapter two presents the realization that the fallen object from Mars is not a meteor. When it is thought to be a meteor it does not gain much attention. When the first person identifies it as something other than a meteor he is regarded as crazy. Even when others see it and confirm that it is not a meteor, it is printed in the local paper, but life goes on as normal. It does not seem as if most people regard a large cylinder from Mars as much of an event.

It is also believed that if someone is inside the cylinder than it has to be a man. The belief is that life on Mars would look like human life. This belief symbolizes how humans believe they are the superior beings and furthermore how members of one race of humans often believe they are superior to others. This also works for members of different classes, education level, sex, or nationality.



Book 1: Chapter 3, On Horsell Common

Book 1: Chapter 3, On Horsell Common Summary

By the time the author arrives at the common there are approximately twenty people there, staring at the strange cylinder. No one believes that anything is living in the cylinder. The author stays at the pit for two hours before heading back home. The early edition of the paper told Londoners that Woking had received a message from Mars. The author returns to the common to find many more observers. There are several men in the pit with tools trying to uncover the cylinder, including Ogilvy and Henderson.

Book 1: Chapter 3, On Horsell Common Analysis

The interest in the cylinder from Mars is increasing. No one believes that anything inside the cylinder has survived and no one foresees that the arrival of the cylinder could pose a threat. The reader is filled with suspense over the gradual unscrewing of the cylinder. The title, *The War of the Worlds*, predicts conflict. The fact that the people are not afraid of the Martian cylinder symbolizes how the citizens of England feel toward invasions from other countries. The airplane has not been invented, Great Britain's Navy is the greatest in the world, and the country is in essence a large island.



Book 1: Chapter 4, The Cylinder Opens

Book 1: Chapter 4, The Cylinder Opens Summary

The author returns again to the common at nightfall. The word from the observers is that the top of the cylinder is almost finished unscrewing. There are now two or three hundred people watching the cylinder. One man falls into the pit. The cylinder has opened. The Martian that appears does not look anything like man; instead it is a large grey-brown colored mass. It has disk shaped eyes and tentacle like appendages. It appears to me moving quite slowly then the author remembers that the gravity on Earth is much stronger than that on Mars making it difficult for the grey-brown masses to move. The first Martian fell from the top of the cylinder into the pit. Another Martian emerged.

The author runs to the far edge of the common. He is curious of the Martians but also fearful. The man that had fallen into the pit was unsuccessful in his attempts to climb out. The author believes he heard a scream from him after the Martian joined him in the pit.

Book 1: Chapter 4, The Cylinder Opens Analysis

Chapter four serves the purpose of describing the Martians. The crowd is, for the first time, fearful of the Martians. It may be that they are fearful because the Martians look different than humans. Again, this represents the superiority that humans feel over the creatures. Since they do not look like humans and move awkwardly people do not believe that they can be of intelligence. Before the scream from the pit is heard there is no real reason to fear the slow moving creatures.



Book 1: Chapter 5, The Heat-Ray

Book 1: Chapter 5, The Heat-Ray Summary

The author stays in the common with hundred of other observers. They are spread out, and some have taken cover behind bushes. They watch the cylinder for any movements. Some venture closer to the pit and another group tries to wave a white flag, a sign of nonresistance.

Suddenly a flame shoots up from the pit, followed by black smoke. A shape rises from the pit and a hissing sound is heard. Suddenly the men on the common burst into flames. They appear to have been charred to death. Trees are also set on fire and burn into nothing but black ashes. The author stands and watches the destruction, stunned. He suddenly snaps back into reality and feels great fear. He turns and runs.

Book 1: Chapter 5, The Heat-Ray Analysis

The heat-ray, a new weapon, is introduced,. This weapon is unlike anything humans have seen before. It kills without warning since the heat is not visible. This is the first time the Martians have proved to be something to fear. They have begun to kill and destroy. The author is torn between fascination with the Martians and their unique weapons, and fear for his life.



Book 1: Chapter 6, The Heat-Ray in the Chobham Road

Book 1: Chapter 6, The Heat-Ray in the Chobham Road Summary

Humans still do not know how the Martians killed people with their heat-ray. It was not a flame of fire, or light, but rather a beam of invisible heat, which shot from the weapon.

Forty people were killed by the Martian's heat-ray in the common. Word has still not reached many people past the immediate community of Woking.

Book 1: Chapter 6, The Heat-Ray in the Chobham Road Analysis

In Chapter six, the author introduces the use of flashback in the narrative order. It's use reminds the reader these events happened in the past and the author has lived through them; therefore, less suspense for the life of the author is felt than for the other characters. The author switches between narrative order flashback, and chronological order throughout the rest of the story. Flashback is used to fill in his narrative with facts and heresy, he learned after the fact.



Book 1: Chapter 7, How I Reached Home

Book 1: Chapter 7, How I Reached Home Summary

The author runs from the common and the reach of the Martian's heat-ray. Exhausted and afraid, he runs until he can run no longer. Staggering, he makes his way back home and runs into a group of people, asking them if they have heard any new news from the common. The group of people seems to think too much fuss has been made about the cylinder, but they have not heard about the heat-ray and the deaths.

He makes it back home to his wife. After telling her his story, she becomes very afraid. He assures her that the Martian's move very slowly so they are in no danger. He wonders out loud if the Martian's are as frightened of humans as the humans are frightened of them. Perhaps they had not expected Earth to be inhabited. He assures his wife, and himself, that one artillery shell in the pit would kill them all.

Book 1: Chapter 7, How I Reached Home Analysis

Even after the killings at the commons, many regard the Martians and their object from space rather unremarkable. The killings do not interrupt everyday life, as people are trusting of the government to take care of the situation. This raises the suspense as the reader can predict that calm will soon give way to great action and conflict. The fact that the Martians do not move very fast is also comforting to the people, the thought being that if they do not get too near the pit they will not be harmed. The people of England are comforted in their perceived superiority over the Martians. This is symbolic of many forms of discrimination. Even though the inferiority of a certain group of people has been disproved, those holding them will continue their beliefs.



Book 1: Chapter 8, Friday Night

Book 1: Chapter 8, Friday Night Summary

Henderson, the journalist, had sent a telegram to London reporting the unscrewing of the cylinder. The subject of the telegram was thought to be so unbelievable that after the editor tried to contact Henderson, who had been killed from the heat-ray, he did not print the report. Thus no one outside of Woking knows the gravity of what is happening in the common. Life goes on as usual. People keep on coming to the common to try to catch a glimpse of the Martians. Once in a while one or two of these people walk near to the pit but they never come back. It is predicted that the heat-ray has killed them.

A group of soldiers are deployed and they guard the edge of the common. Soon over four hundred soldiers are called. That night, the crowd circling the common witnesses another falling star, accompanied by a green-colored gas. It is a second cylinder.

Book 1: Chapter 8, Friday Night Analysis

Again the suspense builds. The people consider the pit as a sort of tourist show. It is an amusement but nothing more. The fact that soldiers have been deployed creates a feeling of safety among the local residents; however, when more than four hundred soldiers are called, it creates the message it might take that many men to handle the situation.



Book 1: Chapter 9, The Fighting Begins

Book 1: Chapter 9, The Fighting Begins Summary

The author does not sleep well Friday night. The milkman arrives Saturday morning, as always. He brings news that the soldiers have surrounded the pit but are not to kill the Martians if it is possible. The appearance of the milkman and the sound of the train are reassuring to the author. He walks down to the common where he runs into a group of soldiers. He tells them he has seen the Martians. They pepper him with questions on what they look like. The author walks away from the soldiers as they begin arguing over the best way to deal with the Martians. The day is full of waiting and suspense. The Martian's do not exit the pit. There is hammering noises and a constant stream of smoke coming from the pit. Presumably, the Martian's are preparing or building something.

The woods in which the second cylinder has fallen is shelled. The desire is to destroy the object before the top is screwed open. The author and his wife are sitting down to tea when they hear the first large detonation from the common, followed by a fury of gunfire. The nearby college is destroyed and the author's chimney is cracked. He realizes they cannot stay in the house any longer. He hires a cart and packs his wife, servant, and the valuables he can quickly gather and leaves for Leatherhead, a town to the north, where his wife's cousins live. The town is in a panic trying to evacuate. The roads are crowded with people on horses, bicycles, and on foot.

Book 1: Chapter 9, The Fighting Begins Analysis

The suspense of the preceding chapters gives way to the inevitability of action. Chapter nine announces a rising action in the plot structure. It is now apparent the characters must uproot and evacuate. They are in crisis, which marks the beginning of the exploration of the theme of the book, which will run throughout the rest of the story. The theme shows how mankind reacts in time of crisis. The true character of man is revealed through how they handle a crisis. The author's first reaction is to save his family, his self, and his wife. This is a common reaction known as self-preservation. He secures the cart before anyone else can. He lied to the owner, in order to secure it, and did not tell him they were in danger and the best option was to evacuate.



Book 1: Chapter 10, In the Storm

Book 1: Chapter 10, In the Storm Summary

The author arrives at Leatherhead, about twelve miles away from his home. He stops to rest and eat and then leaves his wife and servant while he drives back to return the cart as he promised. In addition to keeping his promise by returning the cart by midnight the author is also curious to go back to see what is happening.

The author is nearing his home street and sees another falling star with a green colored gas, the third cylinder. A storm begins as the star falls. The horse is spooked by the lightening. As the author tries to get control of the horse he first comes upon what he calls "The Thing." It looks like a giant walking tripod with a disk for a head. It has moving tentacles acting as arms. The Thing is over one hundred feet tall. A second "Thing" appears. In attempting to turn the cart around, the horse falls, breaking its neck. The author hides in a water-filled trench. The author is drenched with rain and pelted by hail. The author makes his way to his house, passing the dead body of the man whom he had rented the cart from. He finally makes it to his house.

Book 1: Chapter 10, In the Storm Analysis

In this chapter, the author again shows his interest and curiosity in the Martians. The death of the man whom he rented the cart from sends a feeling that the author and his wife got out of town just in time. It may also have brought up the thought that, had he not rented the cart from the man, he would have been left without a way of escape. This symbolizes the notion that one person dies in order that another may live. This chapter describes the first sighting of the Martians in the huge metal machines they have built while in the pit. The Martians do not move fast, but their carriers do. There is a sense of relief when the author makes it safely to his house.



Book 1: Chapter 11, At the Window

Book 1: Chapter 11, At the Window Summary

The author has a drink of whiskey, eats, and changes out of his wet clothes. He looks out of his study window at the overturned carts, dead bodies, and desolateness. As he is looking out the window he sees an artilleryman and calls him inside. The artilleryman has not eaten since the previous day. The author feeds him while the artilleryman explains brokenly, the events of the night before.

At first, the Martian's moved the second cylinder covered by metal disks, from the commons. These disks later rose into the tripods the author had seen. The artilleryman's horse had fallen from beneath him and there was gunfire heard behind him. The rest of his group had been killed. He was stuck under a pile of charred bodies. He had been hiding from the tripod machines until he happened upon the author's house.

Book 1: Chapter 11, At the Window Analysis

In chapter eleven the author meets his first traveling mate. He describes how the Martians rose up beneath disks into the full height of the tripods they now control. The humans have greatly underestimated the intelligence and industry of the Martians. When compared, the large scale of the Martian's tripods symbolize human's fragility.



Book 1: Chapter 12, What I Saw of the Destruction of Weybridge and Shepperton

Book 1: Chapter 12, What I Saw of the Destruction of Weybridge and Shepperton Summary

The two decide it is not safe to stay at the house. The soldier convinces the author it is not prudent to take chances by taking a direct route; they must take the long way. They begin stuffing all of the food they can find into their pockets and filling a flask with whiskey. On their way out of town they run into a lieutenant and a couple of soldiers who had not seen the Martians and do not believe the accounts of a large tripod-machine and the heat-ray weapon.

They tell the author to go to Weybridge to check in with the soldier in charge of evacuation. They get to Weybridge and see people calmly packing their houses. No one is aware of the total destruction that will come from the Martians. The soldiers begin telling people that they must leave now, or hide in their cellars. The artilleryman leaves to try to find his unit. Gunfire is heard and suddenly, five of the Martian tripod-machines appear over the hill. They begin using their heat-rays and the author jumps into the Thames and yells for everyone to get in the water. A hidden group of soldiers are hidden on the opposite bank. They fire a volley of shells, hitting the disk of one of the Martians, which kills its inner intelligence and the machine moves cowardly and falls into the water. Its heat-ray fizzles in the water and creates a burst of steam. The water temperature began to quickly rise. The other Martians go to their fallen counterpart and two carry it off while the other two acted as guards. The author stayed in the boiling water until the Martians passed him. He is successful in escaping the heat-ray.

Book 1: Chapter 12, What I Saw of the Destruction of Weybridge and Shepperton Analysis

The death of one of the Martians shows that they are not indestructible. The Martians are mortal and this gives hope to both the characters in the story and the reader. The realization of the Martian's mortality symbolizes the Martian's ability to be defeated.



Book 1: Chapter 13, How I Fell in with the Curate

Book 1: Chapter 13, How I Fell in with the Curate Summary

Every night a new cylinder fell from Mars. The author sees a small empty boat and climbs into it. He paddles through the boiling water with his hands. He arrives on a bank and falls asleep, in exhaustion. When he woke a curate, or clergyman, is sitting over him. He is in great distress. He is asking the author why God was doing this, and why the Martians are killing everyone. He does not see the point in going on.

The author calms him down and gives him hope by telling him that one of the Martians has already killed. They are not indestructible. Just then they hear the sound of gunfire. The two begin traveling north together. The curate does not react well in a crisis. The fact that he is broken down and unwilling to find hope in the situation may be an exaggeration on how he views life.

Book 1: Chapter 13, How I Fell in with the Curate Analysis

Chapter thirteen introduces the reader to the second traveling mate of the author. He is a man of God yet he automatically believes that God had sent the Martians to punish humans on Earth. The curate is very depressed and wary, he does not have the spirit of hope that the author has.



Book 1: Chapter 14, In London

Book 1: Chapter 14, In London Summary

The author's brother is a medical student in London. The papers are giving little coverage to the landing from Mars in Woking. At first he is not concerned for his brother because the Martians are not reported as a threat. On Saturday night he goes to the train station to see his brother and wife, and to see the Thing before it was destroyed. However, once at the train station he is informed that service on the train line has been interrupted.

The next afternoon he buys another paper and is alarmed by what is being reported. He goes again to the train station but there is still no service. People coming back from day trips in the southern suburbs of London come back on the trains with reports that people are packing up their houses and evacuating. While at the train station he also sees soldiers being taken south, armed with guns. He will not be able to travel south to check on his brother. After reading all of the papers that he can get his hands on he believes his brother is dead.

He is awakened in the middle of the night by noise outside his apartment. He goes to the window and sticks his head outside. Police are running up and down the street warning everyone to evacuate. The Martians are coming. He dresses and gathers all of his money and leaves.

Book 1: Chapter 14, In London Analysis

The narrative order is changed as the story is described chronologically but in two different locations. It is as if there are two separate stories going on. The name of the author's brother is never revealed. His first thought of traveling to the common in Woking is to see the Martians and the cylinders before the army destroys them. The thought in London is the same as was in Woking a few days before--that the soldiers will take care of the situation. There is nothing to worry about. The fact that Londoners continue to be unaffected by their fellow countryman living in the suburbs symbolizes the superiority that many in London proper feel towards those living in outer areas. They feel secure in the fact that surely nothing could destroy the greatest city in the world. It is only in later newspaper reports that his brother begins to be considered; ultimately believing the author is dead. The brother is now told to evacuate London as the Martians advance upon the city. By telling these two stories the magnitude of the disaster and the movement of the Martians are made more real.



Book 1: Chapter 15, What Had Happened in Surrey

Book 1: Chapter 15, What Had Happened in Surrey Summary

Three Martians come out at approximately eight o'clock that night. They advance northward in a line. Again, hidden soldiers fire shells at the Martians and crush one of the feet of the tripods. The other two tripods gather around the injured one. The Martian in the injured tripod crawls out from beneath the metal disk. He repairs his machine and crawls back under the disk.

Four other tripods join the three. They are each carrying a black tube. They pass tubes out to the three tripods. The black tubes turn out to be their new weapons. They emit a dark, poison smoke. The smoke is fatal to humans. The Martians are now able to advance by first smoking out any hidden soldiers and then destroying their guns with the heat-rays. They advance northward toward London throughout the night.

Book 1: Chapter 15, What Had Happened in Surrey Analysis

Another tripod is injured by hidden soldiers; however, this tripod is not ruined completely and the Martian repairs his vehicle. The new weapon, the black tube, is the Martian's solution to these hidden attacks. The fact that the Martians can adapt so quickly and produce a new weapon to combat the hidden soldiers represents their ingenuity and high level of intelligence. The massive amounts of killing that are possible with this new weapon allude to the fact that the Martian's mission is to wipe out the humans.



Book 1: Chapter 16, The Exodus from London

Book 1: Chapter 16, The Exodus from London Summary

Meanwhile the author's brother has begun his evacuation in London. He first tries to get on a northbound train but it is no use. The streets are already packed with carriages, horses, and vehicles. He comes upon the ransacking of a bicycle shop and takes a bicycle. He begins biking northward. He rides the bike until it breaks. He continues his trek on foot. He comes upon two women in a carriage in the process of being robbed of their mode of transportation by three men.

He is an expert boxer and fights them off in time for the women to get away. However, the men get up and the female driver has to save him. The older woman is a surgeon's wife and the younger, her sister. The three agree to travel together for protection. The married woman is quite agitated and fearful but the younger Miss is of good character and very logical. He convinces them to head to Harwich and then escape from the country. They begin traveling north.

The small group comes to a very busy road that is full of people evacuating. These people are filled with fear and are leaving for unknown destinations. The group, as a whole, makes it very difficult to get through, as the terror causes people to be unkind. The group sees horrifying things such as lost children, a man being crushed by a horse and the young medical student is whipped in the face. The group finally makes it across the wide street and they continue traveling northward. Throughout their journey there are rumors that food supplies will soon arrive if only they wait a little while. The group chooses to press on even though they are very hungry.

Book 1: Chapter 16, The Exodus from London Analysis

The author returns to his brother's story. It is meant to go on at the same time as the author is traveling with the curate. The brother finds a couple of traveling mates as the author has. The reader recognizes the brother as a true protagonist, who in the midst of his own escape from London, protects two women. His true character is that of an honest man who would not hurt a woman for his gain. Even though traveling with the women may have slowed his escape he does the right thing. The brother's strength in not stopping, based on rumors of food, keeps the three going and possibly saves their lives.

The fate of the brother is of more concern to the reader, as the author does not divulge whether or not he lives. The suspense increases over the brother's predicament.



Book 1: Chapter 17, The Thunder Child

Book 1: Chapter 17, The Thunder Child Summary

The author describes that he writes the chapter concerning his brother's escape to illustrate the immense evacuation happening throughout London. Six million people evacuated. They were terrified and had no idea where to go. Everyone was fighting for their lives and therefore could be nasty towards one another.

As the medical student is traveling with the two women they hear word that the Martians have taken over London. Rumor is it that half of the government members had escaped and are holed up in Birmingham. On Wednesday, a group of people who had given themselves the name *Committee of Public Safety* seizes their pony. The three refugees continue on foot. They reach the sea at midday. There are more ships in the sea than they have ever seen. Sitting amongst the smaller boats is a huge warship name *Thunder Child*.

The three settle on a price with a large paddleboat to take them to Belgium. The boat already has plenty of passengers but the captain is greedy and waits awhile until it is almost dangerously full. The boat begins sailing east just before the passengers hear gunfire. The Martians are visible and heading towards the sea.

The *Thunder Child* rushes toward the shore. It rocks the smaller paddleboat in which the medical student and two women are passengers. All of the passengers watch as the *Thunder Child* nears one of the Martians and fires shells at it. It hits the first Martian and the tripod falls to the ground. The *Thunder Child* has been hit by the heat-ray but still moves toward a second Martian and fires. It hits this one too and it falls down.

Book 1: Chapter 17, The Thunder Child Analysis

Chapter seventeen describes how some people use the crisis to their own personal gain. Opposite of how the medical student reacts in a crisis other groups of people use the crisis as a means to personal gain. These people were already greedy and selfish and the crisis just magnified their character flaws. A group of people seize the pony unlawfully and the ship's owners wait to set sail until a large amount of people get on board. The passengers have all negotiated healthy payments to take them across the channel.

The large war ship is successful in bringing down two Martians. This gives hope to both the passengers and reader. It also symbolizes the hope and momentum that is gained in war when one side wins a battle. It may be predicted that the war ships will play a large part in fighting the Martian's tripods throughout the rest of the story.



Book 2: Chapter 1, Under Food

Book 2: Chapter 1, Under Food Summary

The author and curate stay for two days in an abandoned house in Halliford. The curate is annoying to the author, so he locks himself in a room, worried about his wife. He assures himself that the Martians have headed towards London, away from Leatherhead.

As soon as the author found a safe way to escape, he set about readying himself. The curate did not want to go, but also did not want to be left behind, so he follows the author. The pair passes many dead bodies and eventually run into a group of people in Twickenham, a city that has not been as badly damaged.

As the pair nears Kew, they see a Martian fighting machine, as the author is now calling the large metal tripods. They quickly hide in a shed until night. The author resumes his trek to Leatherhead and the curate follows. They soon see another Martian and quickly hide. The Martian is picking up humans with its long tentacles and throwing them in a cage-like carrier. The author first realizes that perhaps the Martians have another purpose, other than destruction.

From the ditch in which they had been hiding, the pair makes their way to an empty house. Not finding much food, they move on to another house, which is well-stocked with food, wine, and beer, where they eat. Sometime during the night, they see a flash of green light outside the window. Suddenly, the house shakes as it is partially destroyed. It is as if a shell has hit the house. The author is knocked unconscious. He wakes and the curate warns him not to move as the Martians are just outside the house. The pair sits and waits for quite a long time. They can see through a break in the outside wall, the Martian in his fighting machine and a fifth cylinder. It must have fallen on the house next to them. They are now buried in the earth that was displaced by the cylinder.

Hammering noise is heard from this new pit. The author and the curate spend much of the day sleeping and upon waking, eat again.

Book 2: Chapter 1, Under Food Analysis

The brother's story is now finished and will not be revisited. The curate is becoming increasingly difficult to deal with. This represents the first real continued interpersonal conflict that has occurred between two humans, notwithstanding the small petty fights. The curate's weak character is increasing under the stress of the crisis.

The crashing of the fifth cylinder so near the house they are staying in represents the climax of the story. It is the uppermost point of emotion. It represents a turning point for

the characters. The reader feels the suspense written into the plot. It is wondered as to how the author will extradite himself from this perilous situation.



Book 2: Chapter 2, What We Saw from the Ruined House

Book 2: Chapter 2, What We Saw from the Ruined House Summary

The pair sleeps in the windowless scullery. The author wakes to find the curate sleeping below the triangular opening in the wall. The cylinder has been opened and work is happening in the pit. The author gets a very close look at one of the fighting machines and describes it. It is less like a tripod than he first thought. It has five legs and many tentacles that are able to reach, grab, and carry things. The joints in the big machine move fluidly. It is not an awkwardly made machine but very flexible.

His attention turns toward the Martians themselves. Their body consists of only a head. It had large eyes and a fleshy, beak-like mouth. There appears to be some sort of eardrum located on the back of the head. Their hands, or tentacles, were situated in two bunches of four on either side of its mouth.

The author describes the Martian's internal anatomy, as he had since read about them. The inner workings of the Martians only included lungs, hearts, and its vessels. The Martian's bodies must be much more efficient than humans for they did not have the complicated digestive tracts that humans have. In fact the Martians did not eat or sleep. Instead they injected the blood of living things directly into their bodies. The author explains that although the idea is sickening, it is much more efficient than human digestive activities.

The remains of other creatures were found afterwards in the cylinders. They were dead before the cylinder reached Earth. It is believed that these creatures served as the Martian's supply of fresh blood. The creatures were approximately six feet long with a very fragile bone structure.

The Martians also have no sex. They reproduce by division. The last important difference between the Martians and humans is the fact that the Martians have no microorganisms or bacteria. They have none of the disease that Earth has. The Martians have brought with them some sort of red-colored vegetation, which has sprouted near water, wherever the Martians have gone.

The author also explains that the Martians do not wear clothing. He likens the various machines that they use, as their clothing. They crawl inside different machines to do different tasks. Their machines are very complicated, yet they lack the basic engineering element of humans, the wheel.



Book 2: Chapter 2, What We Saw from the Ruined House Analysis

The author uses chapter 2, of the second book, to fully describe the Martians and their machines. He uses the narrative order of flashback quite frequently in this chapter in order to fill in his descriptions with information that was learned after the scene had happened.



Book 2: Chapter 3, The Days of Imprisonment

Book 2: Chapter 3, The Days of Imprisonment Summary

The author and curate were trapped in the house. The curate starts to slowly go crazy. His complaining and fear have taken over his self. He eats more of the share of food than the author and sleeps very little. He weeps for long periods of time. The author resorts to physical fights with the curate so that he does not eat all of the food.

The two men are fascinated by the activities of the Martians outside. They vie for the position at the opening in the wall. The curate is at the opening and first sees the Martians feed on a human. He is horrified and moves aside for the author to look outside. He sees a human picked up out of a cage, and then hears screams. The next day the author actually sees a boy killed by the Martians feeding off of him.

Book 2: Chapter 3, The Days of Imprisonment Analysis

The interpersonal conflict between the author and the curate is intensifying. This intensifies the suspense, as the reader is left to wonder if their physical fights will attract the attention of the nearby Martians. The author's description of how the Martian's feed is witnessed by him in chapter three. The author realizes that the Martian's may have come to earth for a fresh supply of live blood. It is a wonder why the Martian's have killed so many people with their heat-ray and poison gas weapon.



Book 2: Chapter 4, The Death of the Curate

Book 2: Chapter 4, The Death of the Curate Summary

On the sixth day, the author wakes to find the curate drinking the last bottle of burgundy. He tries to take the bottle away, but it breaks. The curate begins complaining very loudly. The author tries to quiet him but there is no use reasoning with the curate who is now crazy. The curate, runs to the opening yelling loudly. The author picks up a meat chopper and hits the curate on the head with the blunt end. The curate falls down, unconscious.

A noise is heard outside. The author sees a Martian outside the opening. A tentacle reaches into the kitchen. It touches the curate, who is unmoving. The author moves silently into the scullery and into the coal cellar. He tries to cover up as much as possible. The tentacle returns and unlocks the door leading to the cellar. It touches the author's boot and then grabs a clump of coal and retreats. The author does not move for some time. On the eleventh day, he finally exits his hiding spot and goes to the kitchen.

Book 2: Chapter 4, The Death of the Curate Analysis

The interpersonal conflict between the curate and the author reaches a conclusion. The curate has gone crazy and in an effort to save his own life the author knocks him unconscious. The curate has finally become a liability to the author. Only when he can no longer control the curate does the author resort to knocking him down. The tentacle reaching into the house and touching the boot of the author represents a rising action of the plot structure, as one of the characters is in crisis.



Book 2: Chapter 5, The Stillness

Book 2: Chapter 5, The Stillness Summary

When he returns to the kitchen the curate is gone and the food too, which the Martian has taken. On the twelve day, the author pumps water from the kitchen pump, risking the noise that might attract the Martians. He spends the next couple days without any food and only water from the pump.

On the fifteenth day he hears a dog as it comes near the opening. The author thinks that if he can get it to enter the house perhaps he will be able to kill and eat it. He listens for noises from the pit but hears nothing. After watching from the opening he sees crows feeding on the dead, the Martians have left. The Martians themselves are nowhere to be seen. The author decides to leave the house he has been hiding in for fifteen days.

Book 2: Chapter 5, The Stillness Analysis

The author goes through tremendous hardship not eating or drinking. This symbolizes his desire to live and his hope that humanity will triumph over the Martians. He is also filled with apprehension and suspense. The author shows his great will to live and eventually learn information about his wife.

Book 2: Chapter 6, The Work of Fifteen Days

Book 2: Chapter 6, The Work of Fifteen Days Summary

Hungry, he digs for vegetables in a nearby garden. He begins walking toward London. He comes upon no people, only dead bodies and wreckage. The author believes himself to be the only living person in the area.

Book 2: Chapter 6, The Work of Fifteen Days Analysis

The author sees the desolate landscape and feels alone. It is not known how many others have survived. The desolate landscape symbolizes the authors' depression and the fact that his will to survive is in question.



Book 2: Chapter 7, The Man on Putney Hill

Book 2: Chapter 7, The Man on Putney Hill Summary

He sleeps that night in a bed in an inn at the top of Putney Hill. It is the first time the author has slept in a bed in some time. Before he falls asleep he thinks of the killing of the curate, his wife, and the possible location of the Martians.

The next day the author considers his plan to find his wife. He believes that he should go to Leatherhead to look for information. He begins walking, making his way to Wimbledon Common. There, he sees a man holding a machete. He does not recognize the man at first, as the man does not recognize him but soon it is revealed that the man is the artilleryman whom he first met back at his house, sixteen days before. The soldier is friendlier once he recognizes the author. They move under cover and begin talking.

The soldier tells the author that he has not seen a Martian in five days but he believes they have built a machine that flies. The author believes that humanity as they know it, is over. He thinks that it is only a matter of time before the Martians will keep humans as pets and make them work for them. The soldier thinks that soon, humans will hunt other humans for the Martians. He wishes to start an underground colony to rebuild the human race. People will live in the underground drainpipes that run throughout London. One day they will be able to use one of the Martian's own fighting machines and overpower the rest of them. The author believes the soldier's reasoning as he has certainly had time to think out his plan.

The soldier shows the author the house he has been living in. He has begun digging a tunnel to the nearest drainpipe. The author begins to silently question the soldier. He could have dug what the soldier had been working on for a week. They dig together for some time. The soldier wants to rest but the author keeps him working.

They eat dinner and the soldier convinces the author that they should celebrate with champagne tonight and start digging again tomorrow. They eat and drink lavishly and play card games. The author goes to the roof alone. He at once realizes his mistake in believing the soldier. He wants to resume search for his wife and try to find other people that are still alive. The soldier, on the other hand, is content with his large stockpile of food and drink and his plans to rule a colony.

Book 2: Chapter 7, The Man on Putney Hill Analysis

It is a coincidence, an element of the plot, that the author is reunited with the soldier he had traveled with earlier. The author is still tired and weak from his long fast and believes the soldier's reasoning of the need for an underground society. It is not until afterward that the author realizes the soldier has become selfish. He only wants an



underground society so that he may preside over it. He is not out there helping others, rather is hiding in the house eating and drinking richly. The true character of the soldier is finally revealed. His desire to rule a new colony of man is symbolic of his former desire to rise up in the ranks of the army. While he did not have a chance to command others before, the crisis has given him a chance too rule. He does so selfishly. This may have been his true character all along. The author is resolute in his goal of helping his fellow humans and ultimately finding some information concerning his wife.



Book 2: Chapter 8, Dead London

Book 2: Chapter 8, Dead London Summary

The author leaves the artilleryman and begins walking towards London. He passes much destruction and many dead bodies. As he nears South Kensington, near the center of London, he hears the cry of a Martian, "ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla." The sound does not let up.

The author finds food in a pub. Exhausted, he falls asleep on a couch. He awakes to the same cry. The author begins walking around, exploring. He sees one of the Martian's machines damaged. Within the machine lay pieces of the brown remains of the Martian's, left by the dogs. Suddenly the "ulla, ulla, ulla," stops altogether. Down the road he sees a Martian. The author has a sudden feeling that he would rather have his life ended. He marches toward the Martian, no longer wanting to live. He sees the birds circling around the unmoving Martian. He begins running toward the Martian. He comes upon it and sees a line of more than a dozen Martians, all dead. The bacteria on Earth, the same bacteria that humans find harmless, as they are used to it, had killed them. The author counts more than fifty dead Martians, all in the same area. The destruction was over; all of the Martians were dead. The author looks around at all the damage and imagines the survivors returning from wherever they had fled and rebuilding.

Book 2: Chapter 8, Dead London Analysis

The author leaving the artilleryman symbolizes the return of his will to live and find his wife. His true character is his ability to work as a team and help his fellow man. However, the resurgence in optimism that he feels as he leaves the artilleryman quickly ends. After all of the hardships he has endured finally cause him to lose the will to live. He believes his wife to be dead, all of his friends and family, his city and country desolate and destroyed. For all he knows the whole of Earth has been invaded by the Martians. Finally the author has been broken. He no longer believes there is anything else to live for. Although his spirit is broken the author has endured much and his true character is that of a survivor.

It is when he is walking to his death the author suddenly realizes the Martian is dead. He is filled with joy that his ordeal is over and runs toward what turns out to be more than fifty, dead Martians. The author flashes forward to the scientific community's description of the Martian's cause of death. The Martian's death was caused by the simplest living organism on earth, bacteria. While the author was convinced that life on Mars had begun far before life on Earth and that Martians were more efficient than humans, they were killed by something that humans have a longstanding immunity to.



Book 2: Chapter 9, Wreckage

Book 2: Chapter 9, Wreckage Summary

The author does not remember the next three days but recounts what he has been told. He had been taken in by a nice family who finds him wondering the streets singing a made up rhyme, "The Last Man Alive!" They fed him and let him lodge with them for four days. After he is well, the author sets out for his old home. He sees many people returning from where they had fled, some coming back from overseas. He walks until he gets to the free train rides, taking people home.

One of his neighbors greets him as the author walks down his street. He arrives home to find it just as it had been when he and the artilleryman had left. He looks throughout the house but no one had been in it since. His hope that perhaps his wife would be waiting for him was dashed. He hears voices coming from the front of the house. Someone is saying, "It is no use. The house is deserted." He walks outside and sees his cousin and his wife. She had a hope too, that he was still alive. She faints and he catches her.

Book 2: Chapter 9, Wreckage Analysis

The euphoria of finding the Martians dead gives way to a feeling of hopelessness for the future and the author goes temporarily out of his mind. He believes his wife to be dead but he has nowhere else to go but home. The story comes to a happy denouement as a resolution is met through both the death of the Martians and the reunion of the author and his wife.



Book 2: Chapter 10, Epilogue

Book 2: Chapter 10, Epilogue Summary

All of the Martian bodies have been examined. The science community is learning much from their bodies and their tools. It is still unknown how their heat-rays or poison weapons work. The author believes that more efforts should be made to prepare for another possible invasion. But perhaps one will never come, as the Martians have learned that they cannot live on this planet. It has already been seen in space that the Martians have invaded Venus. People of Earth can no longer look at their planet as being safe from other planets. The author believes this to be the lesson of the war. The lesson of his story, however, or the theme, is how crisis reveals the true character of man.

Book 2: Chapter 10, Epilogue Analysis

The epilogue simply sums up what has happened since the death of the Martians. One curious detail is the fact that the author's brother is not mentioned. It is assumed that he had made it to Belgium and survived but it is not fully explained.



Characters

The Artilleryman

The narrator first encounters him outside of the window of his house. He is from a regiment of the army that has been destroyed by the Martians' Heat-Ray, and he is shocked and barely able to speak. They travel together until they come upon a cavalry unit, who tell the artilleryman where he can find a superior officer to whom he can report. The army is in such disarray that he has trouble finding who is in charge. The narrator is separated from him when the Martians attack with their Heat-Ray, and the narrator escapes by diving under the river.

Their paths cross again in Chapter 7 of Book 2, when London is just a ghost town. The artilleryman is protective of his territory and food until he recognizes the narrator as the man who had helped him before. Then he shares his idea about how the human race will repopulate itself. The Martians, he explains, will imprison those who fight them, and fatten them up for food and breed them like cattle, but humans who manage to stay out of their way and who do not prove to be difficult will probably be left alone. He has planned out a new, underground society, living in sewers, led by the strongest. They will keep learning until they acquire knowledge of how to beat the Martians.

The narrator is impressed with the artilleryman's plan until he notices that, for all of his talk, the man is not really willing to work hard at all. The man has dug a small hole, and then he wanders outside to look at the sky; instead of working through the night, he wants to smoke, drink champagne, and play cards. The narrator soon leaves him, disillusioned.

The Curate

In Chapter 13 of Book 1, the narrator finds the curate looking over him after he has fallen asleep on a river bed, and they travel together. He quickly finds that the holy man's fears are unnerving to him, a position that angers him all the more because he feels that there is no point to being a religious man if religion cannot at least give the curate the courage to face his situation. When a cylinder from Mars lands next to a house that they are ransacking together, the narrator and the curate find themselves trapped, afraid of going outside because the Martians who have just arrived might find them and feast upon them. Food becomes scarce, but the curate continues to eat wastefully and to cry out in fear. Finally, when he becomes mentally unstable and makes enough noise to attract the nearby Martians, the narrator hits him in the head with an ax (although, he points out, he has mercy and hits him with the blunt end). The Martian who investigates the sound takes the curate's body with him, presumably to drink his blood.



Mrs. Elphinstone

Mrs. Elphinstone is a woman who is escaping from London with her sister. Thieves are trying to steal their horse carriage from them when the narrator's brother intervenes. Mrs. Elphinstone is pale in complexion and dressed in white. She is nervous, screaming for her husband George. Her sister-in-law, on the other hand, is dark, slim, and cool; it is she who draws a gun and fires at the attackers.

Lord Garrick

Lord Garrick is the Chief Justice. When the narrator's brother is trying to escape London, Lord Garrick is brought through the crowd on a stretcher. Despite his high place in society, he receives no special treatment in all of the turmoil.

Henderson

Henderson is a journalist from London, who lives near where the first Martian cylinder arrives. He dispatches an early report of the situation, but he is one of the first people killed by the Martians when they emerge from the cylinder and fire their Heat-Rays.

The Narrator

The name of the first-person narrator of this novel is never given to the reader. He is a philosopher, working on series of papers that are to discuss the development of moral ideas, when the invasion begins. He lives southeast of London, not far from where the Martian invasion begins. Because of his connection to the world of academia, he is invited to look at Mars through the telescope of Ogilvy, a prominent astronomer, and is given updates on the knowledge of the canister that lands on Earth as Ogilvy receives them. He borrows a wagon to take his wife away to live with relatives, but returns to his home as the tide of refugees starts arriving.

The stress of the situation takes its toll on the narrator. Trapped in a house just outside of a Martian encampment, his irritation with the curate that he has been traveling with turns to panic when the man will not be quiet. Fearful of being discovered, the narrator murders the other man and hides while Martian tentacles drag the body away.

His calm philosophical attitude is also broken when he listens to the artilleryman's plans to restore the human population. Having earlier hoped for a victory over the Martians, he comes to realize that the best that can be hoped for would be for some humans to escape from them, like insects that manage to survive by staying out of sight. In the course of a few weeks his understanding of the world has gone from assuming that humans dominate to viewing humans as relatively insignificant.



At the end of the book, his mind snaps briefly. Finding the Martians dead, he thinks that he is the only human who has survived. He is later told about his ravings on this subject by people who care for him, who he does not notice. Having survived this episode, his despair reaches its depth when he returns to his house with the thought that he will never see his wife again. After her return, he settles into a domestic pattern somewhat like the life he once led, but he can never really be comfortable again.

The Narrator's Brother

Chapters 14, 16 and 17 of Book 1 relate the experiences of the narrator's brother, who is a medical student in London. At the same time that the narrator is fleeing from the Martians' Heat-Rays, his brother is unaware of anything that is happening. It is through his eyes that readers experience the invasion's effect on the large city. He sees the gossip and the panicked exodus of thousands of people once they become convinced that the rumors of an alien invasion are true. He reads the news of the release of the Black Smoke that the Martians use to exterminate masses of people.

When he does join all of the people fleeing the city with whatever belongings they can carry, the narrator's brother joins up with a woman, Mrs. Elphinstone, and her sister-in-law, after saving them from bandits who are trying to steal their carriage and horse. The sister-in-law fires a pistol at the thieves, and then gives it to the narrator's brother, trusting him with their security. He travels with them along the Thames River to the sea, where they pay their way onto a boat. As the boat is going out to sea, they see a flying ship that the Martians have evidently made since arriving on Earth, spraying the Black Smoke on the people on shore. Readers must assume, from the fact that the narrator knows these stories, that the brother survived the Martian attack.

The Narrator's Wife

The narrator's wife plays a minor role in this novel. When he first comes home from examining the unidentified metal canister that has arrived from Mars, she has dinner on the table, providing a contrast between the strange adventure that is beginning and the normal life he is used to. When the Martian advance is predicted, he borrows a dog cart and takes her to Leatherhead to live with his cousin. Later in the book, he hears that Leatherhead has been destroyed and all of its inhabitants killed. He despairs that he will never see his wife again, but she shows up at their house after the invasion is all over.

Ogilvy

An astronomer friend of the narrator's, he invites the narrator to look at Mars through his telescope after the first cylinder is fired from Mars at the Earth. Later, he joins Stent and some other astronomers to investigate the cylinder where it has landed at Horsell Common. He is with the party that approaches the cylinder with a white flag of peace, and the Martians that emerge from the cylinder obliterate the members of the peace party with their Heat-Ray.

Stent

The Astronomer Royal, he leads the expedition team that includes Ogilvy in investigating the first Martian cylinder when it arrives. He is one of the first people killed by the Martians.



Setting

The War of the Worlds is set in the late 1890s in England. For Wells and his original audience, this was a modern setting, and the British weapons he describes were the very latest products of high technology. Although the ironclad warships and batteries of cannons may seem old-fashioned to present-day readers, one should keep in mind that these weapons were once symbols of terrible destruction. That the Martian war-machines crush the well-armed and mighty British army confirms the Martians as technologically superior enemies of humanity. After the British artillery batteries are destroyed, no one doubts the Martians' ability to exterminate humanity.

All the locales in The War of the Worlds are real places in England—places where Wells lived or often visited.

Readers familiar with England would have readily recognized the place names and the descriptions of the countryside.

Thus Wells brings home the effects of the invasion on ordinary people.

It should also be noted that scientific theories of the 1890s suggested that Mars might be inhabited by intelligent beings. The "canals" of Mars, which today are regarded as merely optical illusions, were taken seriously at the time The War of the Worlds was written.

Maps of the canals had been published, and some scientists openly speculated about how and why they might have been constructed.

Furthermore, a prominent scientific theory about the origins of the solar system suggested that the sun periodically spewed out matter into the solar system, creating a new inner planet and forcing the other planets to move outward into new orbits. Many people reasoned that if Mars were older than earth, perhaps it would have an older civilization. And if Mars once occupied Earth's orbit, perhaps its civilization had arisen in a warmer climate than that which currently prevailed on the planet, making the Martians envious of Earth's gentler weather.

Social Sensitivity

In many respects, *The War of the Worlds* is a tale told before. For instance, the Aztecs of Mexico first took Hernando Cortes and his men to be benevolent gods when the Spaniards arrived early in the sixteenth century. The Aztecs were puzzled by the Spaniards' mighty horses, which they had never seen before; but when they realized that the men of Cortes were not "gods" but instead conquerors, they fought and were slaughtered by weapons vastly superior to their own. Wells's tale of the tragedy wrought by the colonialist impulse is thus lent force by historical precedent.

Wells stresses the idea that technological sophistication and moral development do not necessarily go hand-in-hand. The idea that ethics must keep pace with humanity's ability to transform the natural world if cruelty and disaster are to be avoided is a point well worth making, even in the present day—and the idea that superior technological skills do not make one a moral person is a concept that young adults should come to understand.

Literary Qualities

At the time Wells wrote *The War of the Worlds*, science had become the subject of much public debate. During this period, the natural sciences were becoming part of the everyday curriculum of schools. Journalists responded to the general interest in science—and the particular interest in Mars and its possible inhabitants—with a multitude of speculations. Wells chose a topic for his novel that was calculated to catch the public's imagination. In addition, his care in presenting accurate details, both in setting and about the everyday lives of his characters, gives the narrative a powerful immediacy, as though the action could be taking place in any reader's own yard.

An interesting technique is Wells's use of symbolic names. The Narrator could be an Everyman figure—a character who is meant to symbolize all human beings.

More pointedly symbolic are the Curate and the Artilleryman. They are not given individual names of their own, but instead stand as representatives of their kind. The Curate, representing a religious point of view, cannot cope with the invasion of Earth by creatures who do not fit into his theology. The Artilleryman represents the bravado and impotence of the military in the face of immensely superior weaponry. Usually, an author will try to interest readers in individual characters; in *The War of the Worlds* the great mass of humanity is more important than the characters because of what Wells wants to say about imperialism, technology, and social evolution. He therefore individualizes his characters only a little, preferring to emphasize what they have in common with the types of people they represent.



Themes

Ambiguity

One reason that the invasion against the Earth is so successful is that the humans do not know what to make of it. The first Martian craft to arrive lies in the crater made by its arrival, seeming to be powerless. There is a noise from within, but that stops, leading astronomers to believe that the creatures inside have perished. When the Martians emerge from the cylinder, they are weak, gelatinous organisms, and their inability to move very freely in Earth's thick atmosphere leads scientists to believe that they do not pose much of a threat. These assumptions are based on what little information can be gleaned from the spacecraft's behavior. The Martians seem to pose no threat, until they swiftly begin their destructive attacks.

Even after the Martians prove hostile, the people of London do not see the danger facing them because the news is so sketchy. While people are being cut down by Heat-Rays just twenty miles away, Londoners go about their daily business. The novel seems to be making the point that, given an ambiguous situation, people will prefer to believe that all things are going to remain as they were. The view of the Martians that the narrator gets from his secluded house on the end of a Martian crater, where he watches them drain the blood from humans and throw away their bodies, is vastly different from the early assumption that they were disabled. Action is forestalled for crucial days by uncertainty about what these very strange visitors want or are capable of.

Victory and Defeat

Once the humans in this novel realize that the Martians can and will destroy them, they see the entire adventure in terms of victory and defeat. Early on, a party of scientists approaches the Martian cylinder with a white flag, to signify a willingness to live in peace, but that peace party is incinerated by the Martians. After that, the reports about the invasion are all sweetened with false hope because an artillery shell manages to destroy one of the Martian pods. The fact that they can be destroyed indicates to the hopeful that they will be, although no similar victories occur. By Book 2, there is no longer any pretense that humanity might be victorious. The narrator finds great appeal in the plan that the artilleryman puts forth: he cedes inevitable victory to the Martians, but says that, if it is able to survive and reproduce, the human race might find a way to be victorious at some distant time in the future.

Man versus Machine

One reason that the Martians do not seem all that threatening is that they are small and weak. They lack mobility, being made of large heads that slither slowly around on tentacles. Their power makes itself manifest when they climb into the tall tripod machines that can carry them high above the ground and shoot Heat-Rays. In Chapter



10 of Book 1, when the narrator first encounters one of the Martian tripods up close, he constantly refers to it as a machine but is also amazed at how responsive it is to the controls of the Martian inside:

. . . it was no mere insensate machine driving on its way. Machine it was, with a ringing metallic pace, and long, flexible, glittering tentacles (one of which gripped a young pine tree) swinging and rattling about its strange body. It picked its road as it went striding along, and the brazen hood that surmounted it moved to and fro with the inevitable suggestion of a head looking about.

The suggestion here is that neither the Martians nor their machines would independently be able to vanquish humanity but that the combination of living creature and metal machine would prevail.

Persistence

Persistence is at the heart of Herbert Spencer's social Darwinian concept of "survival of the fittest." In this book, it shows itself on levels grand and miniscule. At the level of world dominance, there is the theory that, although greatly overpowered, the human race could survive and eventually win out over the Martians over the course of generations, but only if some humans are willing to adapt to the new reality of being conquered. These people would have to live underground and train themselves: "We can't have any weak or silly," the artilleryman explains. "Life is real again, and the weak and the cumbersome and mischievous have to die. They ought to be willing to die. It's sort of a disloyalty, after all, to live and taint the race." His theory that the race can live on, with modifications, makes sense, but then he proves unwilling to make those necessary modifications.

The ultimate defeat of the Martians comes, not from the persistence of human willpower, but from the persistence of the human biological organism. The human bodies that have survived over the course of millions of years are the ones that have been able to survive exposure to bacteria: the ones that have not have died off. The Martians, with no history of exposure to these bacteria, die quickly. The Martians' swift invasion is terrifying and effective, but it is the bacteria that have persisted that make the survival of humanity possible.



Style

Narrative

In order to present this story as a first person narrative, told by an "I" speaker who is a character in the book, Wells has to resort to some clever tricks. For one thing, the narrator is a scientist and a friend of an astronomer, Ogilvy: this gives him access to the world of astronomy when most of the news about the first projectile from Mars is not commonly talked about. Another method used is to have the narrator speaking from six years after the action has taken place, so that information that would not have been available during the Martian invasion, such as the details of their physiognomy, can be introduced into the book at appropriate times.

The most obvious narrative device, though, is in switching the action's point of view for several chapters into that of the narrator's brother. This is not a character whom readers come to know with any depth. The details of his experience are known without much insight into his personality. The function of these chapters is to show what the general reaction to the invasion was around London, and perhaps to introduce a dashing, romantic figure aiding damsels in distress without breaking away from the reality of the narrator's perspective.

Foreshadowing

Once readers reach the end of *The War of the Worlds*, many realize that they should have seen the Martians' defeat clearly prepared in the course of the story. When an action in the story prepares readers for what is going to be done, it is called foreshadowing. Done well, readers will not even notice foreshadowing until after they have seen the event foreshadowed.

As early as Chapter 2 of Book 2, the narrator explains that

Micro-organisms, which cause so much disease and pain on earth, have either never appeared upon Mars or Martian sanitary science eliminated them ages ago. A hundred diseases, all the fevers and contagions of human life, consumption, cancers, tumours and such morbidities, never enter the scheme of their life.

Readers who do not see this as a clue to the Martians' eventual inability to survive on Earth are given further evidence when the narrator goes on to introduce the red weed that came with them from Mars, which grew prodigiously but was unable to survive local bacteria. The end is foreshadowed early on, but readers who are engrossed in the story might miss it.

Historical Context

Fear of Invasion

At the end of the nineteenth century, the nations of Europe were divided into strategic alliances that pitted them against each other in the event of a war. From 1882 onward, these military associations resulted in a greater military buildup than the world had ever known before. The proof that this trend created a dangerous political situation can be seen in the fact that it ended in the largest and bloodiest confrontation that had ever happened up to that time, the Great War.

The roots of this division of Europe came in 1871, when Prussia conquered France. Prussia, the kingdom state that included Germany, sought to prevent France from coming back at some future time to take back the land that had been taken from it by forming alliances with first Austria-Hungary and, later, Russia. By the 1880s, Germany had signed on to a Triple Alliance with Italy and Austria-Hungary. Britain, France, and Russia, in turn, signed on to a Triple Entente, promising to defend each other in case of attack. By the time Wells wrote *The War of the Worlds* in the late 1890s, all of the nations of Europe were aligned with one of these organizations. The balance of military power was strictly monitored and maintained: for instance, the German naval build-up in the 1890s spurred Great Britain to pour resources into their own navy, which caused Italy, France, the United States, and Japan to follow suit. The political scene in which Wells wrote about the Martian invasion was a stable one, then, but one that was expected to explode.

The military melee that was expected throughout Europe did not actually occur until nearly twenty years later. When it did, though, it followed a course that by then seemed inevitable. When Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated by Serbians in 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Within a week, Germany, France, and Russia were involved, and days later Belgium, Great Britain, and Japan were drawn in. By the time of the war's end four years later, ten million had died, and twenty million were wounded.

Darwinism

One of the greatest influences on scientific thought at the end of the nineteenth century was the theory of biological evolution that had been put forward by the British naturalist Charles Darwin. Darwin's theory of natural selection, which posits that organisms evolve over the course of generations, is prominent in *The War of the Worlds*, particularly in the way that the Martians are said to have lost any need for bodies or sexual reproduction, and in the way that the bleak fate of humanity is viewed as perhaps regrettable but nonetheless unavoidable.



In 1859, Darwin outlined his theories in his book *On the Origin of the Species*. Based on observations made in previously unexplored regions of the South Pacific, he concluded that similar species were actually related to each other, and that those that had grown up under different circumstances had evolved in ways that best suited their individual environments. The book was a sensation after its publication, and the theory of evolution was applied to other fields as well, leading to such concepts as Herbert Spencer's competitive "social darwinism" to explain the survival of some social traits over others. One of Wells's teachers, T. H. Huxley, has been recognized as perhaps the single most influential writer to popularize Darwinism.

Critical Overview

The War of the Worlds was published early in Wells's career, at the tail of a string of successful novels that are still considered classics today: *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), and *The Invisible Man* (1897). Critics of the time were split between finding the book a marked improvement on his earlier works and a repeat of the same old formula. For instance, John St. Loe Strachey, in a review in the English magazine *The Spectator*, notes that "One reads and reads with an interest so unflagging that it is positively exhausting. *The War of the Worlds* stands, in fact, the final test of fiction. When one has taken it up, one cannot bear to put it down without a pang." In addition, an unsigned review in the American publication *The Critic* concludes that "The author has written an ingenious and original work. . . . The book has the tone of intense modernity, with notes of convincing realism and morbid horror." *Academy* starts its review with "Mr. Wells has done good work before, but nothing quite so fine as this." Basil Williams, writing in *Athenaeum*, finds the prose to be too flat to make the story exciting: "There is too much of the young man from Clapham attitude about the book; the narrator sees and hears exciting things, but he has not the gift of making them exciting to other people."

In the decades that have passed, *The War of the Worlds* has come to be considered one of Wells's best books, if not his best one. One problem that modern readers might have in appreciating the story is that it has been retold frequently in many different forms so that it seems all too familiar. As Richard Hauer Costa puts it in his 1967 study of Wells's career,

The War of the Worlds is the archetype of all B-Grade films which present giant creatures from another world who invade the earth armed with death-ray guns. The imagery of the novel is so vivid that it is no wonder film scenarists have always thought of outer-space invasions in Wellsian terms.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1



Critical Essay #1

Kelly is an instructor of literature and creative writing at two schools in Illinois. In this essay, Kelly examines the role that is played in the novel by the two women that the narrator's brother meets while fleeing London.

The early novels that H. G. Wells wrote are remembered for infusing a groundbreaking sense of realism into unlikely situations, all the while holding fast to the principles of science. *The War of the Worlds*, in particular, is considered as "realistic" as a book can be when there are slimy tentacled creatures cutting down whole countrysides with ray guns. The book is apocalyptic, showing a very convincing vision of how the human race could quite conceivably end. It dismisses the most dominant factors of our society, presuming that they would be unable to rise to the kind of challenge presented by a Martian invasion.

The novel follows its vision of mankind's defeat through until the end, when, in the depth of his despair, its unnamed narrator finds out that the invasion has been defeated, mostly by a fluke. From there, things pick up: he returns to his home, he is reunited with his wife, international aid packages arrive for the displaced and there is hope that such an invasion could not work as well a second time without the element of surprise. In the end, though, the sense of hope is tinged with the kind of fear that any war survivor would harbor, having once seen how easily the life he knows can collapse in on itself.

Even with the final reconciliations, this is an almost unrelentingly bleak story. Wells seems to be saying, as he was to throughout his writings, that humanity is nothing but a cog in the greater machine of science. This message comes across in the narrator's tone, in the losses that the world encounters, and even in the unexpected way in which the Martians die.

There is, though, in the middle of this dark story, a small episode that reflects the romantic ideals of courage, love, and mystery. As the world faces the destruction of London—possibly the worst imaginable catastrophe for an Englishman—the story's focal character at that point, the narrator's brother, becomes involved with two interesting women. Their story is not by any means adequately examined, but the fact that they appear in this novel at all opens a window to a worldview that the rest of the book labors hard to shut out.

That this ray of hope should come to the narrator's brother should be no surprise. The narrator's story has no place for romance. He is presented as a moral pragmatist, a philosopher who sees the doom and destruction and, like the true philosopher that he is, considers its place in his understanding of the world. The fact that the book gives readers a happy ending when he is reunited with his wife does nothing to negate the fact that that he does not think of her while he is out on the road, struggling for survival. His rationalism is what makes him turn the others whom he encounters into symbols for society's doomed framework. The curate, for example, stands for religion, and when the narrator sees him crumble psychologically he realizes that faith is not strong enough to



offer solace when the pressure is truly on. The artilleryman seems to have a better idea for how to cope with humanity's destruction, an intricate plan that includes long-term and short-term goals and an abandonment of any hope for comfort in the foreseeable future. After mouthing his theories, though, he quits work and digs in to the comfort of cigars, whiskey, and cards. The narrator simply walks away from him, an act even more disdainful than bashing the curate's head in. These two odd, dead-end relationships fit perfectly into the mood of the rest of the narrator's tale, in which humanity is beaten by the invaders at every turn.

Critics have noted that the section of the book that breaks away from the narrator's story to tell the story of his brother—Chapters 14, 16, and 17—show a weakness in Wells's ability as a novelist. This break does not appear to be the result of any overall narrative strategy but is instead just a matter of convenience: it enables Wells to keep with his narrator from the discovery of the first alien through the invasion's end, while showing what happened in the crowded metropolis at the same time. Certainly, there must be some way to do this that would be more grounded in the story, but most readers seem to feel that it is worth a little cheating in the story telling if that is what it takes to work the destruction of London into the book. Generally, then, the brother's story is considered a small, forgivable misstep, and little is said about it.

And, in fact, this break in the narrative continuity hardly makes any difference at all. The narrator and his brother are barely distinguishable from one another. Neither shows any independent characteristics, other than the roles they have to play in the book: one is a philosopher and the other a medical student, and both are motivated by staying alive. The most important differences between them seem to be those that are implied, rather than stated: the brother is younger, and unmarried. These qualify him to be a romantic hero in a way that the narrator could not.

On the road out of London, the narrator's brother stops to aid two women who are being accosted by some thugs. He is injured in the skirmish, and they take him into the carriage that he helped save for them. This act is, in itself, remarkable: it does come after he has risked his life for them, but it also comes during the exodus, while anyone slowed down is likely to be killed. The fact that they take him in shows two distinct traits. First, there is a sense of indebtedness, which the narrator himself encounters when he meets up with the artilleryman the second time; if he had not helped the man earlier, he may have been shot. Second, there is the need for protection, in a traditional gender-role sense. These women, traveling with a gun, a carriage, and money, know that they will need someone to save them from looters.

The two women are drawn as opposites. The first, Mrs. Elphinstone, is one of the few characters in the book to be given a name, and certainly the only one to be named after the invasion begins. This can be contrasted with the main characters that the narrator meets, who are referred to by their social functions, curate and artilleryman. She, in turn, frequently talks about another named character, George, who is presumably Mr. Elphinstone. Her function in the novel is to become hysterical, unable to keep her wits about her in what are, admittedly, trying circumstances. While there might seem no reason to dwell upon one hysterical person during the evacuation of a city of millions,



Mrs. Elphinstone does serve to provide a clean contrast to her sister-in-law, who provides the book's romantic center.

Mrs. Elphinstone is short and dressed in white, and her sister-in-law is slim and dark complexioned; she is nervous, while her sister-in-law is "astonishingly quiet and deliberate"; she speaks out loud to George as if he were there, while her sister-in-law has the present situation well in hand. The sister-in-law, who is never given a name, also has a pistol, which she does not hesitate to use. And she has the courage to tell the narrator's brother, "We have money," at a time when the road is filled with thieves.

Mrs. Elphinstone's sister-in-law, George's sister, is the most unique character in the book. She cuts a dashing figure. She can be vicious, but she can be kind. One has to wonder how she turned up in the middle of a story that has all of the rest of the race bowing down to the inevitable or, like the artilleryman, too lazy to resist.

The story of these two women is woven with romantic imagery. The threatening highwaymen and the out-of-control horses are conventions of Victorian bodice-rippers. That in itself would make their appearance unusual, but one could see it, like the appearance of the curate, as Wells's commentary on a particular social convention. But, within the dashing romance, Wells turns the convention on its head by giving the sister-in-law characteristics that were at that time traditionally left to men. She not only produces the pistol, but she fires it without flinching; she takes the horse's reins after the narrator's brother enters the carriage; and, besides, she has the smoldering dark looks that one expects of a male character from a Brontë novel. Although the narrator's brother ends up as the leader of their small party, as is evidenced by the fact that he is the one who pays the passage of the three onto a boat, Mrs. Elphinstone's sister-in-law is still an independent spirit.

What this character meant to Wells is unclear. Probably, like the entire shift to the narrator's brother's perspective, she just materialized while he was writing and seemed like the right thing to do. He did not even give her a name, although in this section of the book he was naming characters. He did, however, give her a striking presence, making her the type of woman who is a match for a young medical student like the narrator's brother. The reader knows that the brother survived to tell the tale of his escape to the narrator, but nothing more is said of Mrs. Elphinstone's sister-in-law. She is just a strong-willed woman amongst a mood of general panic, and as such she gives the novel a romantic flair that it shows nowhere else. In that way, the brief interlude with the dark lady changes the book's entire meaning.

Source: David Kelly, *Critical Essay on The War of the Worlds*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2005.

Adaptations

An audiocassette version of Wells's *The War of the Worlds* is available from Books in Motion. It was released in 1982.

The 1938 radio adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*, by Orson Welles's *Mercury Theatre on the Air* company, is of course the most famous and has become an important piece of American history because of the panic that it induced when it went out across the country.

The War of the Worlds was loosely adapted into a movie in 1953 by producer George Pal, and it starred Gene Barry and Ann Robinson. The adaptation won the Academy Award for Best Special Effects. It is available on VHS and DVD from Paramount.

A stage musical version of the story was produced in London in 1978. *Jeff Wayne's Musical Version of the "War of the Worlds"* starred Richard Burton and had songs by David Essex and musicians from the bands The Moody Blues and Tin Lizzy. The soundtrack album achieved multi-platinum status and is available on CBS Records.



Topics for Further Study

This novel is specific about what sorts of physical characteristics the Martians would have developed, due to the kind of atmosphere Wells believed Mars to have. Using current information about Mars, describe what types of creatures would live there if there were any Martians at all.

Examine the information that has been printed by people who suspect that aliens have already come to Earth, especially the theories around Roswell, New Mexico, and the government facility at Area 51 in Nevada. After reading the information, explain why you do or do not believe that the government is keeping the presence of aliens a secret.

Listen to a recording of the Mercury Theatre's 1938 broadcast of their adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*, and then read about the panic that broadcast caused. Compare the public's response to that fictional account with the reaction to the real-life destruction of the World Trade Center, which was broadcast live throughout the world. Explain whether you think people in the 1930s acted rationally or irrationally.

The invasion of London in this novel can be compared to the attack against New York City in 2001. Write a report about the ways people behaved at that time, comparing and contrasting them to the behaviors that Wells describes.



Compare and Contrast

1898: One of the most frightening aspects of the Martian invasion is when they master the concept of flight, giving them the ability to spread their dominance across the globe.

Today: Humans have been able to fly since the Wright Brothers were able to attain lift-off at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903.

1898: Wells presents interplanetary travel as being a matter of a canister projected from Mars to Earth like a bullet from a gun.

Today: Humanity understands the principles of rocket propulsion well enough to explore the far reaches of our solar system.

1898: In the novel, Wells describes lakes of water on Mars, visible through telescopes.

Today: For a long time, theories about Martian water have been discredited as a misinterpretation of the visible data; however, in recent years, probes on the surface of Mars have determined that there is in fact significant water.

1898: The only means of communication are telegraphs. When the Martians are a few miles away from London, people in the city go about their ordinary business, unaware.

Today: Wireless phones with video capabilities make it possible for an average citizen to send sound and images from any remote corner of the world.

What Do I Read Next?

Readers interested in reading more of Wells's work can find this novel and *First Men in the Moon* (1901), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), *The Time Machine* (1895) and several science fiction short stories all collected in a box set entitled *Science Fiction Classics of H. G. Wells* (2001) from Dover Thrift Editions.

Before Wells, French author Jules Verne was considered to be the top science fiction writer of the nineteenth century. Verne's novels have stood the test of time. While *The War of the Worlds* might be looked at as the prototype for all sci-fi stories about alien invasions, Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864) has influenced an entire category of subterranean fiction.

Ray Bradbury's 1950 novel *The Martian Chronicles* tells the reverse of this story, as humans colonize Mars to escape a destroyed Earth and impose themselves on Martian culture.

Wells's life, spanning from the Victorian period to World War II, was one of the most interesting in twentieth century literature. One of the best biographies of him is *H. G. Wells: Desperately Mortal* (1986) by David C. Smith.

The H. G. Wells Scrapbook, edited by Peter Haining, is organized, as its title says, as a scrapbook—it collects various bits of material related to Wells's life, including possible sources of inspiration, newspaper clips, and artwork from and inspired by his books. It was published in 1978 by Clarkson N. Potter, Inc.



Topics for Discussion

1. Why are the characters given abstract names such as "the Narrator" and "the Curate"? Are the names symbolic? What would be the point of symbolic names?
2. In many stories about invaders from outer space, the aliens are so advanced that human beings can do nothing to hurt them. Wells allows his human beings to destroy some Martian warmachines. Why does he do this?
3. Is the ending of the book, in which the Martians are destroyed by microbes and chased down by packs of dogs, a letdown? Can you think of a better ending?
4. If modern scientists were to spot flashes of incandescent gas on the surface of Mars, how do think they would react? How would the national government react? How would the military react? Would any of these groups react differently than they do in *The War of the Worlds*?
5. What if scientists knew for sure that space vehicles were on the way from Mars to Earth—how do you think people would react to the news?
6. *The War of the Worlds* was published in 1898, and the military technology of Britain—then the world's preeminent military power—seems oldfashioned when compared to modern weapons. How does this affect your enjoyment of the novel? If you still enjoyed reading *The War of the Worlds*, what about the book makes it worth reading even though the technology is out of date?
7. After the Martians have crushed the resistance and gained control of the countryside, how do people react to the loss of their civilization? Do you think Wells's portrayal of the survivors is convincing? How would people react after a disaster left them at the mercy of their enemies?



Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Throughout his career, Wells was concerned about the ethical uses of technology and scientific knowledge. How are his ideas reflected in *The War of the Worlds*? (A good place to begin your research is Isaac Asimov's "The Science Fiction Breakthrough" and Rosalynn D. Haynes's *H. G. Wells, Discoverer of the Future*. Wells's own *Experiment in Autobiography* provides insight into what he hoped to say in his novels about the ethical use of advanced technology.)
2. Compare *The War of the Worlds* to another famous outer-space invasion book, such as John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids* (1951). How are the books similar? How are they different? Does the second author seem to be responding to any particular aspect of Wells's novel?
3. What was the state of military preparedness in England in the late 1890s? Is Wells accurate in his depiction of the military of his time?
4. What were the most significant theories about life on Mars in the 1890s? Who first suggested that there were canals on Mars? Why did people think these canals were made by intelligent beings? Who were the most important scientists to speculate that there was intelligent life on Mars? How much does Wells borrow from the scientific speculation about Mars?
5. *The War of the Worlds* was written during a turbulent period of Wells's life. Why did he write the novel? How did he come to choose the subject? What was the critical reaction to the book? How did the general public respond? Were these responses what Wells had hoped for?
6. *The War of the Worlds* is full of dramatic scenes of people fleeing the Martians, such as in chapter 16 of book 1, when the Narrator's brother flees London. Are there any historical parallels to these scenes? How accurate does Wells's "exodus" seem when compared to the mass movements of real-life people running from invaders? For examples, you might research Afghans who fled the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, South Vietnamese who fled the North Vietnamese capture of Saigon in the 1970s, Manchurians who fled the Japanese invasion during World War II, or Georgians who fled Atlanta during General Sherman's invasion in the Civil War.
7. Research and report on the actual panic that occurred in the northeastern United States when Orson Welles's adaptation of the novel was broadcast over the radio in 1938.
8. Compare Wells's novel, Orson Welles's 1938 radio adaptation of the novel, and George Pal's motion-picture version. How well do the adaptations capture the major elements of the book, such as characterization, plot, and themes? What ideas does each work seem to be trying to communicate? Which communicates its ideas best? Which is the most entertaining?



Further Study

Bergonzi, Bernard, *The Early H. G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances*, University of Toronto Press, 1961.

Wells changed much after the turn of the twentieth century. By focusing on the early novels, Bergonzi is able to give concentrated consideration to the style that was evolving.

Haynes, Roslynn D., *H. G. Wells: Discoverer of the Future*, New York University Press, 1980.

Haynes focuses on the influence of science on Wells's ideas, giving the history of scientific development in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the balance.

Hillegas, Mark R., *The Future as Nightmare: H. G. Wells and the Anti-Utopians*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1967.

This book is principally about Wells, but it draws connection to the other writers who have raised fears about what the future might bring, including George Orwell (1984) and Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*).

Huntington, John, "The Logical Web," in *The Logic of Fantasy: H. G. Wells and Science Fiction*, Columbia University Press, 1982, pp. 57—84.

Huntington examines Wells's novels as an expression of thought, using *The War of the Worlds* as an example of his overall thesis.



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St. Loe Strachey, John, Review, in the *Spectator*, Vol. LXXX, January 20, 1898, pp. 168—69.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels



frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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