Baker Street Readers

Great reads for all ages

No one would have believed that planet Earth was being watched by creatures more intelligent than humankind...

But our planet was not only being watched – soon it would be invaded by monstrous creatures from Mars, striding about the land in great mechanical tripods, bringing death and destruction with them.

What can possibly stop an invading army equipped with heat-rays and poisonous black gas, intent on wiping out the human race?

This is one man's story of that incredible invasion, from the time the first Martians land near his home town, to the destruction of London.

Is this the end of human life?

Lexile® Level	AR Level	Word Count
900L	5.9	5,581

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"Miniature masterpieces"

- BBC R4, Open Book

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

H. G. WELLS

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www.bakerstreetreaders.co.uk

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Illustrated by Felix Bennett

TEACHER'S EDITION ONLY

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Accelerated Reader

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THE CHARACTERS

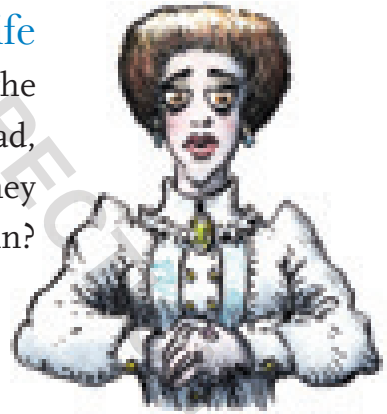


The narrator

The narrator witnesses a Martian invasion. Can he escape their aggression? Will his life ever be the same again?

The narrator's wife

The narrator's wife flees to the nearby town of Leatherhead, but is that far enough? Will they ever see each other again?





The curate

The curate is a terrified man. Will his fear put both him and the narrator in even greater danger?

The artilleryman

The artilleryman is a fine soldier. Can the human race depend upon such men to defate the invaders?



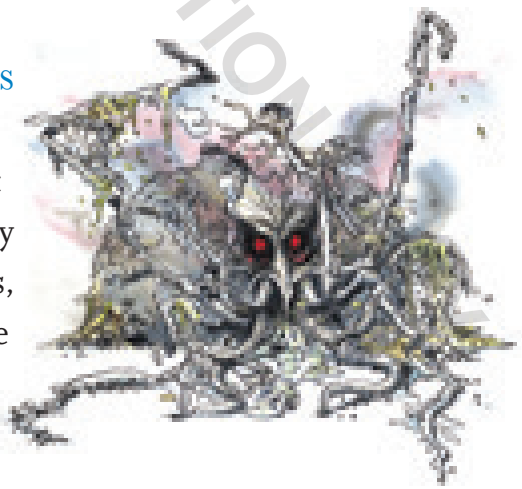


Ogilvy

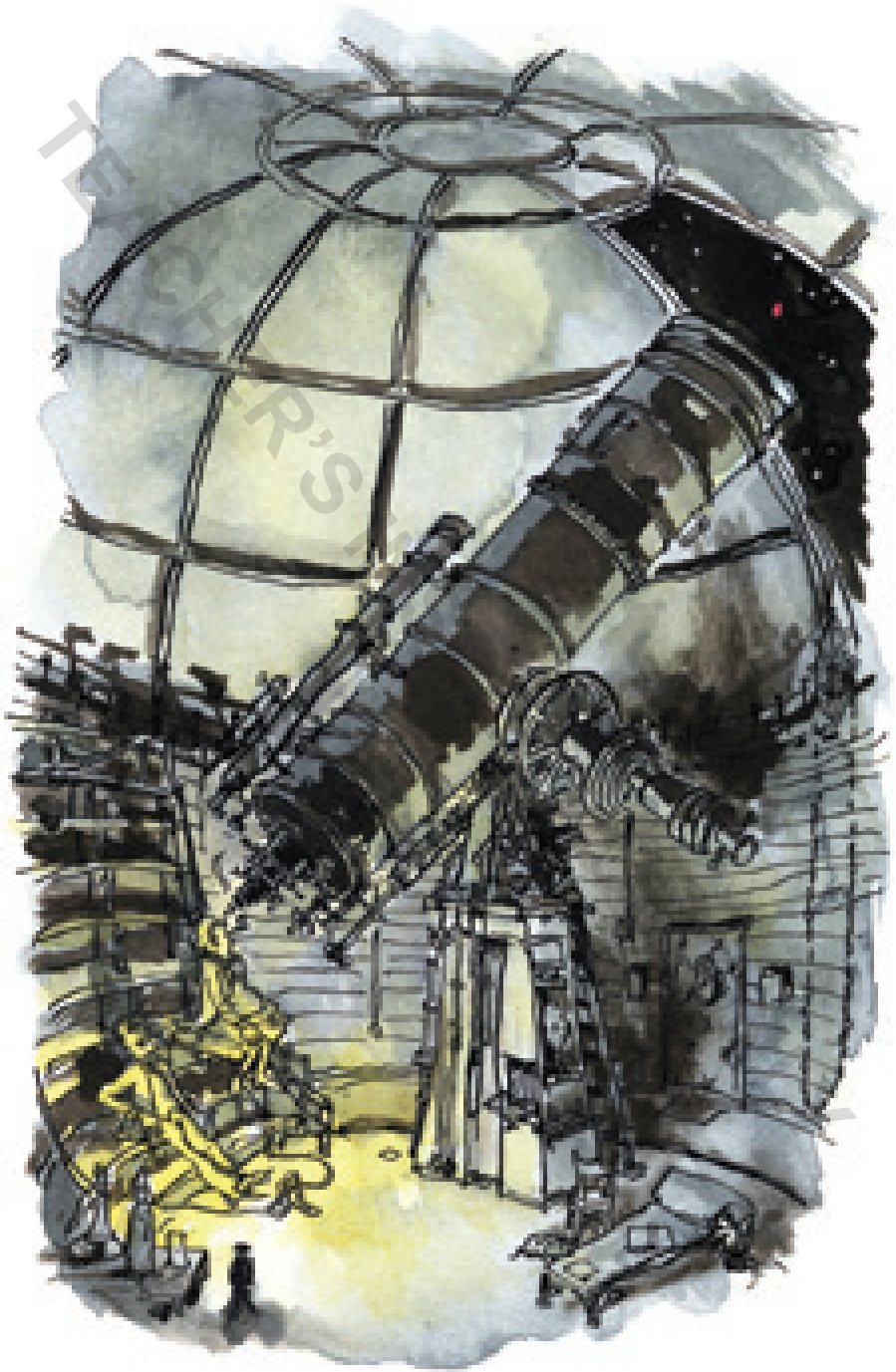
Ogilvy is one of the first men to greet the Martians. Will he live to tell the tale?

The Martians

Escaping their own dying planet, the Martians want to settle on earth. Can they live in harmony with us, or must the human race fight to survive? How do you kill a Martian?



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THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

No one would have believed at the end of the nineteenth century that planet earth was being watched by beings more intelligent than humankind, who regarded our planet with envy and were drawing up plans against us. The planet Mars, I will remind you, orbits the sun at a distance of one hundred and forty million miles. It has air and water and all that is necessary to support life. And yet over the millennia the planet has cooled, its air has thinned, and its oceans diminished. Mars is a slowly dying world. The Martians, gazing acquisitively across the gulf of space, watched our own warm and watery planet – and planned invasion.

One night six years ago, astronomers on earth beheld a huge explosion of gas upon the surface of Mars. Their instruments indicated a mass of flame moving towards the earth at great

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speed. The newspapers paid little attention, so most people on earth remained ignorant of one of the greatest dangers that has ever threatened the human race.

The next night, through the telescope of my astronomer friend Ogilvy, I saw the phenomenon with my own eyes. For the next ten nights, at exactly the same time, we and many other observers saw the same thing happen. A flaming mass heading towards earth, one each night.

Although I watched in fascination, I did not for one moment dream that Martians had fired missiles towards us, and that these missiles were now hurtling through space at thousands of miles a second, getting nearer and nearer. I did not even begin to consider that these flames would bring so much calamity and death to the earth. Each night, I returned home from Ogilvy's observatory to my comfortable home and my loving wife. Everything seemed so safe and tranquil.

Then came the night of the first falling star, a line of flame high up in the atmosphere. Below, hundreds of thousands of people in London and the Surrey countryside were sleeping in peace.

Convinced that a meteorite had landed on the common, Ogilvy rose early the next morning and strode out to investigate. On the grassy hillside, he found that a huge hole had been blasted violently into the earth, with sand and gravel flung in every direction. In places, the heather was on fire.



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planet earth itself might one day come under threat from another race fighting for its own survival. *The War of the Worlds* shows very clearly how fragile are our notions of society, culture and even humanity when threatened with the possibility of extinction.

Some people have claimed that the novel was a criticism of the way the British Empire ruled the world in Victorian times. In *The War of the Worlds*, they say, the Martians can be seen as the imperialists taking over land that was not theirs. As Wells was a socialist, who believed in equality among people and was opposed to British imperialism, this is possibly an accurate interpretation.

The War of the Worlds was one of the first novels about the earth being invaded by aliens. In Victorian times, not many people thought about the possibility of life on other planets – it was considered an impossibility that humankind might ever fly to the moon. Wells not only speculated about alien life on Mars, but he used the latest scientific knowledge to write about what life there might be like, and suggested that the inhospitable conditions on the 'red planet' were what prompted the Martians to invade earth.

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Since Wells' time, many writers have written about alien invasion. Some writers have even continued the story of the Martian invaders, setting stories in different countries around the world. But not all science fiction stories are about evil invaders; many feature the arrival on Earth of peaceful extraterrestrials. Furthermore, a lot of science fiction is about how human beings travel to other planets – where they are the aliens. Wells himself wrote a novel, *The First Men in the Moon*, in which human space travellers journey to the moon and discover a race of insect-like Selenites.

Finding out more

We recommend the following books, websites and films to gain a greater understanding of H. G. Wells and the world he lived in:

Books

- H. G. Wells, *Selected Short Stories*, Penguin, 1989.
- J. D. Beresford, *H. G. Wells*, Dodo Press, 2007.
- Kevin J. Anderson, *War of the Worlds: Global Dispatches*, Bantam, 1996.

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