



The War of the Worlds **by H G Wells**

Cambridge iGCSE Study Guide

Z Knight

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Teacher's Introduction

The War of the Worlds has perennial appeal as an adventure story which asks enduring questions about science and power, and addresses how humanity deals with disaster, while giving insight into Victorian values and questioning the nature of empire. This study guide provides students with a clear and accessible analysis of the text and includes a range of learning tasks and activities, including extension tasks to challenge and engage stronger learners.

This guide includes the following sections:

- **Plot summary:** an overview of the key events of the story and narrative structure.
- **Chapter-by-chapter analyses:** detailed analysis of the text with discussion topics and activities throughout.
- **Characters and relationships:** focused analyses of major characters, their significance, and the techniques used to present them: the narrator; the artilleryman; the curate. Analysis of the roles of minor characters: the wife; the brother; Ogilvy; Henderson; and the Elphinstone ladies.
- **Relationships mind map:** a visual representation of the interactions of characters.
- **Settings:** analyses of key settings and their significance: Woking and the suburbs; the house at Sheen; the artilleryman's lair; London.
- **Themes, Ideas and Messages:** analyses of key themes, ideas and messages in the novel, including war and conflict, invasion and imperialism, the destruction of civilisation, science and technology, and human complacency.
- **Language:** Wells' use of language, including animal imagery and journalistic style.
- **Form:** exploration of form, including genre and narrative form.
- **Structure:** Wells' use of structure, including text divisions and narrative conventions.
- **Context:** key aspects of social, historical and cultural context, including imperialism and technology, and some biographical detail.
- **Key term glossary:** covering all key terms used in the guide.

Please note, some of the tasks involve research and so require Internet access, e.g. tasks on p. 6 and p. 36.

Specification Information

This resource supports the teaching of *The War of The Worlds* by H G Wells as part of iGCSE Literature in English syllabus (2023–2025).

- *War of the Worlds* appears on the Cambridge iGCSE as part of Paper 1: Prose (Section B)
- Paper 1 is 1 hour 30 minutes long
- It is made up of Poetry and Prose with two questions on two texts: one poetry and one prose
- It is worth 50 marks and is externally assessed

Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

Students will be examined on their ability to meet the following assessment objectives:

Assessment Objective	Description	Weighting in Paper 1
AO1	Show detailed knowledge of the content of literary texts in the three main forms (drama, poetry and prose), supported by reference to the text.	25%
AO2	Understand the meanings of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond surface meanings to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes.	25%
AO3	Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects.	25%
AO4	Communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts.	25%

Note: *The War of the Worlds* could be used for Component 5 (Coursework) if not chosen as a set text for Paper 1.

Edition of the Text

Penguin Classics. ISBN 978–0–14–144103–0

Wells, H G (2005) *The War of the Worlds*. Edited by Patrick Parrinder. Introduction by Brian Aldiss. Notes by Andy Sawyer. London: Penguin Classics.

Z Knight, May 2022

Plot Summary

Book 1

The narrator explains that the events of the novel took place six years before, when no one even suspected there could be life on Mars...

Plot
map

Early on: lights are seen from Mars, creating interest amongst scientists. The narrator named Ogilvy goes to see them from his observatory.

Later, one Thursday night: what people think is a meteor lands on Horsell Common.

Friday: in the morning, Ogilvy goes to investigate and discovers it is in fact an artificial cylinder but struggle with earth's atmosphere and retreat back inside. A group of 'deputation', approach the cylinder to try and communicate, but are wiped out by the Martians.

Friday night: the narrator goes home and tells his wife what has happened; the common people are reassured by the presence of the army, expecting them to exterminate the Martians.

Saturday: the narrator is reassured by the presence of the army, expecting them to exterminate the Martians. However, the Heat-Ray destroys the army and much of the town.

Saturday afternoon: the narrator borrows a cart and takes his wife to his cousins in Woking.

Saturday night: the narrator travels back through the storm and sees the Martians attacking the landlord whose cart he borrowed. Most of Woking has been destroyed. The narrator and his wife meet the artilleryman, who is hiding in his garden.

Sunday: the narrator and artilleryman travel to Weybridge where they are caught by the Martians. The narrator returns to the army and the narrator meets the curate. The Martians use the Blast-Ray to destroy the curate in a house.

Meanwhile, Londoners have found out about the danger approaching, and the curate's brother managed to escape on a stolen bicycle, rescuing the Elphinstone ladies. The curate's brother and his companions escape by boat, but soon all resistance to the Martians is crushed.

Book 2

The narrator and curate are still hiding in the house.

Monday: after the smoke clears, the narrator and curate escape the house and hide in the Red Weeds along the way. They see a Martian collecting up people and throwing them into a cylinder. The narrator and curate realise the Martians may have a more sinister purpose for people than just destroying them.

Then, the narrator and curate are trapped in a house when the fifth cylinder lands there for fifteen days.

On the third day, the narrator witnesses the Martians killing a 'lad', and possibly a woman (the first time he saw the Martians directly injecting blood from the victims).

On the sixth day, the narrator tries to ration the food, but the increasingly hysterical curate refuses. The narrator and curate's relationship breaks down more and more, until on the seventh day the noise the curate is making annoys the narrator who hits him over the head with the meat cleaver. The attention of the Martians is drawn to the house and they feel around the house with tentacles. The narrator is unconscious and the curate is dragged away.

After fifteen days, the Martians leave and the narrator escapes the house to find a deserted London. There are no people about and everything is covered with the Red Weed. The narrator plans to build an underground civilisation. However, his plans are unrealistic so he abandons them.

The narrator wanders through a deserted London, but is beginning to become overgrown with the Red Weed, hoping to be killed, only to discover the Martians have all been wiped out.

The narrator has a nervous breakdown, but is nursed back to health by kind strangers and being reunited with his wife.

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Chapter Summaries and Analysis

Book 1: Chapter 1

Summary

The narrator looks back six years, commenting on how different things were before on scientific views and humanity's ignorance of Martian intelligence, then recalls how invasion was about to occur. He and Ogilvy observed Mars through a telescope, and its impact on everyday life.

Structure: the order in which the narrative is presented.

Retrospective: looking back. A retrospective narrative is a story where the narrator looks at things that have already happened.

Analysis

When looking at the **structure** of the text we can see that there is a lot going on. Wells introduces many of his key themes and ideas: science and technology, human civilisation, empire, and the media. The narrative is **retrospective**, giving the narrator authority.

The novel is told using a **first person narrator**, giving us a personal view on events. However, Wells also establishes scientific **verisimilitude**. Using a journalistic style, the narrator refers to real scientific articles (such as the 1894 *Nature* which reported flashes observed from the Lick Observatory), and includes scientific details that are believable, and so a more effective warning.

Narrator: the first person narrator.
Verisimilitude: the quality of seeming true or likely.

The narrator is characterised as someone who takes an interest in new science and his observatory and is busy learning to ride a bicycle. He also mentions the railway, a logical thinker, who is well read in science; he is writing about morality (the study of our ideas about what is right and wrong can change).

One of the narrator's concerns is human **complacency**: he describes people going into 'infinite complacency' (p. 7), the word 'little' emphasising just how unimportant the war is 'vain' and arrogantly assumes that if there were life on Mars it would be 'inferior' and a 'missionary embrace' (p. 7).

Complacency: the feeling when someone is pleased with themselves and doesn't see any way they are or behave, they feel they don't need to try and they don't think anything is wrong. Someone who feels this way is a complacent person. The narrator calls all of humanity complacent.

The **language** here reflects Victorian justifications for the British Empire: mission, especially Christianity, to the places they colonised. The fact that the narrator mentions that the invasion will happen is one of the first signs of Wells' criticism of imperialism throughout the novel.

The narrator also refers to humanity's 'empire over matter' suggesting contempt for those who made them overconfident. The language of 'empire' links the themes of civilisation (p. 7). He also compares the Martian takeover to the 'utter destruction' of animal extinction but also upon so-called 'inferior races' such as the Tasmanian 'existence' by European (British) immigrants (p. 9).

At first, newspapers fail to report outbreaks of gas from Mars and the media are wrong about events. These ideas are also raised during the narrator's night-time stroll, when he is 'feeling [his] way in the darkness' (p. 11). Although he looks at Mars through the telescope, the Thing is 'invisible' to him (p. 11). He does not have the technology or knowledge. Meanwhile, hundreds of people sleep peacefully below. The narrator's walk in the limits of human knowledge and technology and the sleeping people become

Metaphor: a comparison between two things for the purpose of making a point.

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Book 1: Chapters 2 and 3

Summary

People see a falling star and assume it is a meteorite. The next morning Ogilvy gets help from a number of people and is eventually helped by a journalist, Henderson, in London. A crowd, including the Astronomer Royal and several workmen, gathers.

Analysis

When the star falls, the narrator is sitting by the window but 'saw nothing of it' as he is not looking at the right time; he comments on how easily he would have seen it 'had I only looked up as it passed', drawing attention to how an important event is repeatedly missed (p. 13). At first, no one understands how significant the event is and takes much interest. It isn't until the next day that anyone goes looking for it.

When the Thing is found, Ogilvy and his companions do not have the scientific knowledge to deal with it: for example it 'had not occurred to him [Ogilvy]' that the cylinder might be hollow (p. 14); neither he nor the Astronomer Royal can open it; no one knows what it is. They do assume they are able to help it, overestimating their own abilities. They try to carry out an 'excavation', like an archaeologist might dig up an ancient object, but their assumptions it might be dangerous to them.

The crowd who gather around the cylinder, and the two men Ogilvy first approaches, are ignorant 'common people' of England who have very little knowledge of science.

The waggoner does not understand Ogilvy and does not believe him. This is partly because he is old and appears dishevelled. H G Wells criticises the Victorian social values which considered politeness to be a sign of trustworthiness.

Discuss...

How many examples can you find of complacent behaviour, where people do not take enough notice of what is going on? Your examples could come from these chapters or the novel so far.

It is the journalist, Henderson, who takes an interest. After seeing the Thing, he telegraphs London. A growing crowd of people, including the narrator, are drawn to the site and arrive quickly by train. The combination of media and transport technologies allows this.

The Lord Mayor, however, is still in London and the narrator returns home for tea, showing a lack of urgency as the people do not understand what is about to happen.

The suburban setting of the opening chapters is very significant. Like the narrator, who lives about 23 miles from London. The setting, with its quaint inhabitants, perfectly encapsulates the small-town life that Wells criticises in the novel: its insularity and how it is not safe. The domesticity of the setting, rather than big city, make the invasion strikes at the heart of people's lives. Furthermore, the presentation of the invasion is accurate, adding to the verisimilitude.

Setting: the time and place where the story is set.

Domestic: concerning home or the family.

Active-learning

'A Message Received'

As news spreads, Ogilvy receives a message in the evening papers: 'Received from Mr. Woking'.

Choose a headline to think about:

- Key events of the story
- Features of the novel
- Context: how the novel was viewed at the time

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Book 1: Chapter 4

Summary

In the evening, the narrator returns to the pit where a large group of people has gathered. The cylinder unscrews and the crowd runs and the man attempt to climb out of the pit then disappear.

Analysis

The narrator and, he suspects, the rest of the crowd, expect the alien to be, though a little different, 'in all essentials a man' (p. 21); their limited world view means they are unprepared for the radically different being that eventually emerges. They have far less scientific knowledge and ability to imagine than they think they do.

Furthermore, the crowd all move in the same way: they move away from the pit and it is this behaviour of the crowd which leads to the shopman being pushed in and his death. Firstly, by accidentally knocking him in and secondly, when none of them suggests that humanity's ignorance and indifference are dangerous.

The narrator also finds it noteworthy that 'ladies' are joining in the pushing in the Victorian expectation that women are more gentle and reserved. That they are not makes the behaviour seem especially shocking (p. 20).

What particularly frightens the narrator and crowd about the Martians is how unlike them the aliens are: they are afraid of difference. The Martians have an oversized head and withered body. The narrator describes their eyes as 'vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous' (p. 22). Although the Martians are incredibly powerful, the word 'crippled' is used to describe them. The contrast between words like 'vital' and 'crippled' demonstrates some of the contradictions and complexities of Martian evolution: they are incredibly powerful, technologically and intellectually, and incredibly weak, physically and emotionally'. For Wells, the prioritisation of intelligence means dangerous power and underdeveloped emotion and empathy.

Discussion

What is the crowd's reaction to the alien?

Think about the following questions:

- Why do you think the crowd reacts in this way?
- What does this tell you about the crowd?

Active-learning Task

Alien appearances

Look again at the physical descriptions of the big greyish rounded head. How does this create a sense of disgust and dread'.

Research images and descriptions of aliens in science fiction. Roughly how many 'in all essentials a man' (but not others, do any of them) are influenced by Wells' description?

Extension: give each alien an abstract noun to reflect the emotions associated with them.



Exam Tip

For the exam, you need to quote, and quote well!

When you read the question underline key words so you know what ideas and themes you need to address.

For each key word write down four or five relevant, short quotes from the novel you can use. Make sure your response is structured, uses evidence (examples from the text) and uses appropriate language.

To help you with revising you could create a small bank of one or two word quotes on the novel. For example, 'disgust' the narrator feels when he first sees the Martian, or the word 'crippled' being used in the analysis of the Martians.

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Book 1: Chapters 5 and 6

Summary

The crowd gradually returns to the pit. A small group, including Ogilvy and Henderson, approach with a white flag. A Heat-Ray comes from the pit killing people and attacking the surrounding countryside. The narrator tells us that humans are still unaware how the Heat-Ray works and recaps events.

Analysis

Wells draws attention to humankind's naivety and powerlessness: the deputation expect their white flag will be recognised and respected as a symbol of peace and their use of 'signals' shows how 'we too were intelligent' (p. 25). As with their failure to notice the danger of gas flares from Mars and their surprise at the appearance of the Martians, they are completely wrong. Their gesture is not just a failure but utterly ignored as they are 'swept out of existence' (p. 27). The fact they approach peacefully means nothing to the Martians who are a superior force.

Some of the people are crushed by the rest of the crowd in the panic, rather than suggesting that people are, to some extent, to blame.

The insignificance of humanity is emphasised when the narrator describes the destroyed buildings, saying 'Nothing was changed saved for that...' (p. 27). This also raises the characterisation of the narrator. He often seems to admire or sympathise with the Martians as he explains that before we criticise them we should consider that they are not unusual. He is seen as guilty of the same callousness the Martians demonstrate. However, as he 'stumbles' he could also be interpreted as shocked by how insignificant humanity is. This suggests he is overwhelmed (p. 27).

Discuss
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Symbol
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Active-learning Task

Many of the characters in the novel are **symbolic**. For example, the policeman represents

Draw up a table of these characters with the following column headings:

- 'Characters'
- 'Ideas/themes they represent'
- 'Key action'
- 'What this reveals about the idea/theme'

Add to this as you read.

Among the retreating crowd, a mounted policeman is described as fleeing 'with his screaming' (p. 30): human authority is being overturned. Victorian systems of

H G Wells begins to present the effects of war and conflict in which one other. The people and buildings of seemingly safe suburban England are victims, the human impact of war and colonisation, particularly on helpless, innocent-hearted and innocent people as they destroy weak and helpless people. Wells implicitly criticises that the British had a right to rule their empire and conquer other lands based on other races: we see the cruelty of an empire which is maintained through sophistry.

**Exam Tip**

The extract is a springboard for your answer but you must show understanding of the text as a whole. You are asked to refer to other points of the novel, and this is your chance to show how well you know the text. What part of the novel the extract is from and try to select your different points from different parts. For example, if the extract is from the start choose one from the middle and one from the end. If you then write about how this theme or idea stays the same or changes throughout the novel you will not only be showing good textual knowledge, you will also be analysing the text.

**Practice Essay Question**

Using the extract and your knowledge of the text as a whole, answer the question. In this extract, the narrator flees the common after witnessing the destruction. 'Nothing was changed save for that... [end of chapter]' (Chapter 1). Write about how human helplessness is presented at this and elsewhere in the novel.

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Book 1: Chapters 7 and 8

Summary

The narrator returns home to his wife and tells her what has happened, reassuring her to leave the pit because they are not used to earth's gravity. He eats what he describes as 'comfort food' for a long time. On Thursday night, only people nearby are affected by events: He reads the papers. On Friday night, soldiers begin to arrive and surround the pit. A soldier

Analysis

In terms of structure, when the narrator tells us this will be his final civilised dinner 'for very many strange and difficult days' (p. 31), especially in the final sentence of a chapter (7), we know that a significant event is about to occur. He also hints at what is to come in the next chapters, over several days. As the second cylinder is dealt with before the first is dealt with we get a sense that people are struggling to keep up with events.

Again, Wells suggests humanity's scientific understanding isn't as good as people think it is: the narrator describes how he offers 'comfort' to his 'sweet, anxious' wife with scientific arguments (and that the same arguments were in the papers – so shared by lots of people) that the Martians cannot leave the pit due to differences in gravity between the earth and Mars. He now knows better and provides the missing scientific information, explaining how

Furthermore, in terms of human complacency, the press don't believe Henderson's message they think it must have been a 'canard' or rumour; however, they send more information because he is dead.

In Chapter 7 the narrator makes a symbolic break from Victorian social conventions: 'My terror had fallen from me like a garment. My hat had gone, and my collar had burst away from its fastener' (p. 31). Remember, Ogilvy was not taken seriously when he lost his hat (p. 15). In Chapter 8 he then remarks that the 'most extraordinary thing' was how quickly 'our social order' fell apart (p. 35). Victorian society and **hierarchy** are presented as incredibly fragile and insecure; society's values are as easily removed as clothing.

The narrator describes himself as perhaps a 'man of exceptional moods' and at times goes through a wide range of emotions (p. 32): terror, shock, surprise. At points he is not concerned enough about the invasion, but he then reassures his wife all will be well. Of his terror coming off like clothing, the language suggests that his feeling can change in contrast to his usual self-presentation as level-headed. This can make him seem vulnerable.

In Chapter 8 the narrator describes the Martians at work upon their machine, describing them as 'indefatigable' (p. 37). They are consistent and untiring. These words suggest a deadly efficiency. The Martians, while appearing confident and complacent, but also show fear as the narrator knows

Unlike others, the military are 'alive to the seriousness of the business' (p. 37). This suggests that the military are not only more aware, but more active than most of the population, which deadens them.

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Book 1: Chapter 9

Summary

Saturday is a day of 'suspense'. Hammering noises and smoke come from the pit where the soldiers will succeed. However, they fail to destroy the cylinder. The Martians' area and the narrator decides to escape with his wife; he rents a cart from the inn.

Analysis

Despite the events of Friday night, on Saturday morning life goes on as normal. The narrator discusses events with his milkman, in a very suburban and domestic scene and notes the 'familiar, reassuring' noise of the trains (p. 38). The word 'familiar' emphasises the comfort of the setting; the terror of the Martian invasion is how it transforms the landscape and people into something totally different.

The milkman comments that the soldiers won't kill the Martians 'if that can possibly be avoided' making the arrogant assumption the soldiers will be better than the Martians and able to beat them, despite the evidence of Martian power; and the neighbour complains that it is 'a pity they make themselves so unapproachable' as 'we might learn a thing or two', rather underestimating the extent of Martian superiority (p. 38). The narrator says he 'found people in the town quite secure again in the presence of the military'; they feel safe now the army have arrived; to him the Martians 'seemed very helpless' at the time (p. 40).

Throughout the novel humans are compared to animals. In this chapter when humans try to communicate to the Martians with a flag 'The Martians took as much notice of such advances as we should of the lowing of a cow' (p. 40). To the Martians humans seem unsophisticated and uninteresting; they do not recognise human communications as language and do not respond.

Again, the narrator typifies people and marks them by class. He comments that sappers are more intelligent than 'common' soldiers (p. 39). 'Common' is the same word he used to describe the members of the crowd earlier. He attributes this to better education, but it can be hard to tell if he is sympathetic to 'common' people because of their lack of education or scathing of their ignorance.

The narrator comments that the media reportage of the deaths is 'inaccurate' (p. 40).

H G Wells uses authentic details to make his narrative seem more realistic. When the narrator describes the destruction caused by the Martians the landscape he describes is very accurate: the church tower and the clock tower found on Victorian maps of the area.

When the narrator goes to get the cart from the landlord he only thinks of the safe; he admits it did not seem so 'urgent' to him that the landlord is able to leave his own interest. In war and conflict, people do not always act to help one another (p. 42).

Imagery

something
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thing being
helps us
detail but
meaning
imagery

Active-learn

Animal imagery
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animal imagery

Discuss

What does
attitude to

Think about
• His use
• The number
buys.
• The speed
papers

Practice Essay Question

Explore ideas about how human arrogance contributes to Martian invasion and elsewhere in the novel.

In this extract, the narrator chats to his neighbours about what he has seen. 'They aren't to be killed... poor Ogilvy' (Chapter 9, pp. 38–39).

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Book 1: Chapters 10 and 11

Summary

Leaving his wife with cousins, the narrator sets out at night to return the cart. He is surrounded by confusion and smoke. The third cylinder falls. At one point he sees a man stumble on the body of the innkeeper. He continues to travel until he arrives home. He looks out at the damage nearby, watching the Martians, then invites them in a hiding place. He talks in on some of the things he has missed, explaining how the Martians wiped out the

Analysis

Chapter 10 is called 'In the Storm' and this night-time storm is incredibly significant. The atmosphere is tense but the violent thunderstorm also symbolises the chaos and danger surrounding them. Humans are just as powerless to stop the Martians as they are to stop the weather. The smoke, noise and light caused by the Martians gets mixed up in the sounds and sights of the storm, making them seem like a force of nature. Furthermore, the storm reflects feelings of anger and despair: something terrible and painful is happening. The night-time setting reflects the ignorance of people: they cannot understand what is going on, just as the night makes it difficult for the narrator to see. During the infrequent flashes of lightning the narrator begins to get a 'flickering' picture of what is going on, but only 'vaguely' as the light is 'blinding' (p. 46).

When the narrator first sees the Thing, a 'monstrous tripod', it is in a flash of light (p. 46); for a moment he can see more clearly (both metaphorically and literally). He describes it as machine-like: 'a walking engine of glittering metal' (p. 46). As the storm and the Martians mingle, the thunder is described as 'like a rocket' and 'like the working of a gigantic electric machine' (p. 46); the natural world about him becomes more and more mechanical as the Martians spread.

The soldier tells the narrator about the 'leisurely' way in which the soldiers were wiped out by the Martians, who then pursue and kill the townsfolk (p. 53). The Martians have very developed technology and have become more like machines than people or animals.

The Martian invasion levels people across the distinct Victorian social groups: destruction is 'indiscriminate' and 'universal' (p. 55). The divisions between classes and levels of education become unimportant as a far superior force overwhelms them.

When the narrator stumbles upon the body he describes how the person looks and tries to work out how they died before noticing who it is. In this moment, he seems very detached, quite mechanical, responding to but not emotionally, like the Martians. By contrast, he describes the houses as 'for them' (p. 49). On returning home he soon recovers, describing his 'storms of emotion' separate to the storm. Although the word 'storm' links him to the Martians and the event, he then watches the Martians from the window it is with 'impersonal indifference' and 'unemotional and scientific point of view'. He describes them as 'amazingly busy' (p. 51).

There is yet more animal imagery: when he watches the Martian technology in the distance, he compares it to a 'steam-engine', might seem to 'an intelligent animal' and the idea that humans are lower than the Martians (p. 52).

The narrator begins to describe the destruction of people, the environment and the damage caused by Martian weapons; H G Wells shows the growing horror of invasion.

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Book 1: Chapter 12

Summary

The artilleryman and the narrator travel together; along the way they meet people who run into an army lieutenant and two privates who are unsure whether to believe them. The soldiers are where soldiers are unprepared, and run away from an attack. The narrator hides under water. One of the Martians is killed and the others collect its debris.

Analysis

The artilleryman is more practical than the narrator: he urges a more cautious route for supplies for the journey. He says it is 'no kindness' to make his wife 'a widow', warning of the much risk-taking (p. 56).

In terms of setting, Byfleet and Woking are too far from Woking for news of the invasion to reach them yet and the soldiers find it difficult to make the townspeople realise they are evacuating. The scene is described for a holiday: 'men in golf and boating costumes'. This naïve scene, emphasised by the words 'costumes' and 'prettily' (as if playing dress-up) contrasts with the chaos the artilleryman and narrator have experienced. The people are ill-prepared for what is coming: the atmosphere is one of 'excitement'.

A crowd of people has gathered at the railway station and the narrator comments that 'the same thing occurred for places' on trains later in the day (p. 60). One of the Victorian arguments was that the English saw themselves as a 'civilising' force upon 'savages', but in the face of an invasion they become savage.

The narrator's description of the Tripods' arrival suggests some admiration for them: 'Their armoured bodies glittered in the sun as they swept swiftly forward' (p. 62). They seem unstoppable as they sweep across the landscape; the word choice is poetic (particularly the **alliteration**) and beautiful, rather than fearsome and ugly. There is a little of the 'disgust' the narrator has previously reported.

Alliteration of the words 'swept' and 'swiftly' have been used.

When the Martian is killed the Tripod continues: it travels in 'a straight line' causing it to fall into the church and falls, causing a huge tidal wave. Martian technology not only destroys the heart of the most powerful empire on earth, it destroys religious spaces, questions the Christian idea of humanity as the centre of creation. Furthermore, it operates without an intelligence guiding it, reflecting Victorian fears about mechanisation.



Practice Essay Question

'The War of the Worlds is more interesting than Victorian imperialism'. How far do you agree with this view? Choose at least two moments from the text to support your ideas.



Exam

OCR gives you a choice of questions: in one you are asked to draw on your knowledge of two relevant moments to refer to; for their other question and for Eduqas you will be asked to refer to other parts of the text. It can be useful to have some points from across the text that you would be able to use for a number of these questions. This will help you to revise a section you feel good about.

It can be a really useful revision exercise to put together your own questions, picking relevant extracts. Try rephrasing the question above to accompany a relevant extract of your choice.

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Book 1: Chapter 13

Summary

Rather than travelling to London, the Martians retreat and are busy preparing so much time to travel and the army time to prepare. The narrator drifts down the river, and becomes inexplicably angry with his wife. He 'became aware' of the curate who is why this is happening and calling the Martians a punishment from God. The narrator does not collapse at the first sign of trouble and they travel on together.

Analysis

The curate is despairing and panics in response to Martian power, considering the destruction of Weybridge to be a punishment from God. He is characterised as weak and clings on to the narrator: his face is described as showing 'weakness' and his voice as having a 'complaining' tone (pp. 69-70). Religion does not give him strength or protection (he mentions the church tower and the pinnacle of the mosque in Weybridge were destroyed). The characterisation of the curate can be seen as a criticism of religion.

Discuss

Names

Like the narrator, the curate does not understand the meaning of the martians.

Why do you think the curate is so weak? What effect does this have on the story?

By contrast, the narrator presents himself as practical, suggesting they need to hurry, using a 'matter-of-fact' voice (p. 70). At moments in this chapter, however, he admits his anger towards his wife cannot be explained, and is irrational. Further, when meeting the curate, and assumes he has dozed off, and although the first question he asks is 'Have you any water?' (p. 69) – in contrast with the curate's raving, the curate has been drifting in and out of consciousness for an hour, suggesting the narrator has been drifting in and out of consciousness of his own behaviour.

The curate mentions Sodom and Gomorrah. These are cities from a biblical story, where the cities were destroyed with fire and brimstone, when the people who live there refuse to change their ways.

The narrator explains that had the Martians not retreated they would have entered the city. Their arrival would have had time to travel there. The next paragraph begins 'But this short sentence is ominous; by now we know the power the Martians have, and they are biding their time. The unelaborated sentence is more effective as it strips away the narrator's further explanation, beginning a sentence with 'but' is abrupt: it jars the reader. This gives the Martians time to prepare, meaning we the readers are prepared for a battle.



Exam Tip

AO2: Context. Although social and historical context is perhaps the most obvious kind of context to think about other kinds of context: the themes and ideas of the genre, for example. The characters are products of their contexts and we can look at what they say and do to more effectively understand the context. Writing about how and why the curate is a clergyman or policeman act as a



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Book 1: Chapter 14

Summary

After reading the news of the cylinder in Woking, the narrator's brother had plans because of problems on the railway line. He begins to learn of the true power of the cylinder, unable to make day trips and refugees flood in from the suburbs. In the morning, the narrator sees 'Black Smoke' and decides to leave London.

Analysis

When we look at structure, most of the novel is **linear**, told in **chronological order**; however, rather than telling his brother's story alongside his own the narrator begins it here. This pauses the narrative on the moment of suspense, as the Martians and military prepare for battle, and allows Wells to explore key themes. The power of the cylinder and the destruction they cause have been discussed but we are reminded of the casual attitude people had to their destruction.

Active-learning Task
Imagine you are a Londoner on the Sunday night, after the refugees begin arriving.

- What were the refugees like?
- Did you see any damage to the countryside?
- Were you able to do anything?

We are reminded that media reporting of events could not keep up. In fact, many of the events of Saturday night's events until the Monday, partly because 'the majority of people's papers' (p. 74): this connects to the idea of human complacency, they do not take notice of them, unlike the narrator who is constantly hunting for news. Train delays are not mentioned, as the Martians are in the area. A lot of the chapter focuses on the lack of information in London, as news comes by bit and are often muddled. The narrator's brother plans to travel down out of London 'before they were killed' (p. 73); this reminds us of the assumption that the Martians are defeated, a thought which seems even more ridiculous in retrospect.

The setting has shifted from the suburbs to London. As the capital, London is the heart of the empire; however, news has not reached London and what does is garbled: this emphasises the powerlessness of humanity. Furthermore, people are described as 'fashionable' and frustrated by their inability to go on outings (p. 79). They are not the same as the 'common' people in the suburbs, and refugees from the surrounding countryside do not fit in with the Londoners in their Sunday best.

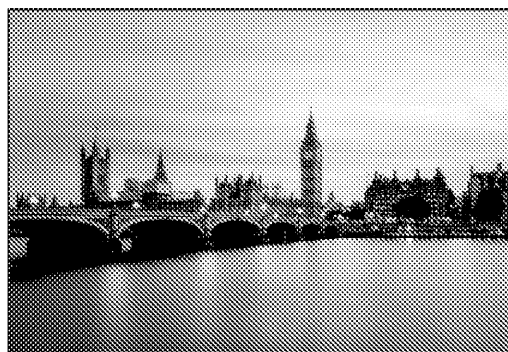
Check the text for evidence of the narrator's feelings about the situation in London.

Discuss...

While the 'fashionable' Londoners are in some ways contrasted with the common people, are they presented as similar?

Think about:

- How they are described.
- What they do.



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Book 1: Chapter 15

Summary

The narrator is with the curate at the same time as his brother watches refugees settle close to the ground. The narrator and curate hide together. Meanwhile the Navy have given up hope of success, with many of them mutinying.

Analysis

H G Wells continues to explore the theme of war and conflict as the narrator describes the fates of those who have set out to defend towns from the Martians. A group of volunteers 'ought never to have been placed in such a position' (p. 84), retreats; another group hold their ground, after damaging one Martian tripod, 'only a few' of the men who were already running manage to escape (p. 85). The sounds of war, 'howling' and 'screaming', are inescapable as everyone is unwittingly swept into the conflict (p. 84); although the howling describes the sounds of the Martian and machinery it also reminds us of someone crying helplessly or in pain. There is no sense of morality or right. The helplessness of its victims are emphasised. The Martians 'walked serenely' through emphasising their callousness (p. 84). Furthermore, the Black Smoke and Heat-Ray their victims: they are impersonal and powerful. Wells saw such technologies as the last three paragraphs of the chapter the narrator invites us to imagine being in the arrival of the Martians and then being victims of the Black Smoke, drawing his own experience of war.

The curate continues to be characterised as cowardly and panicking. He does not draw strength from religion. The more pragmatic and scientific narrator deals better with circumstances. The curate is not confident in his own thinking and decisions. Instead, he copies the narrator.

As he watches the Martian advance, the narrator asks a series of **rhetorical questions** and disbelief. The rush of questions show his confusion; he says hundreds 'struggle to understand the Martians, and, therefore, his own position' (p. 87). The arrival of the question humanity's place in the universe. In fact, one of the questions repeats itself through the book, as the narrator wonders if the army's fight back seems to the Martians might seem to a human.

Active-learning

Look at the narrator in the soldiers. 'On the picture...' (p. 84)

Make a list of each paragraph

Compare and contrast using the list

Rhetorical questions

make a point to find

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Practice Essay Question

Explore how H G Wells uses the impact of war in this extract. In this extract, the narrator imagines watching the soldiers facing the Martians. 'The war is dead' (Chapter 15, pp. 90-91).



Exam Tip

You are rewarded for **using** terminology correctly, not for finding features, and for not general effects. **Don't write** 'The narrator uses rhetorical questions. They make the narrator struggles to understand what is going on he uses a lot of rhetorical questions in his mind.'

Book 1: Chapter 16

Summary

London has fallen into chaos. There are no trains so the narrator's brother steals a bike in order to escape. The bike has a puncture and he soon abandons it, continuing on foot. He rescues Mrs Elphinstone and her sister-in-law Miss Elphinstone from robbers, who are trying to steal their pony trap, and travels on with them. They join a large crowd, but when a man's money bag breaks and he is nearly trampled, they decide to leave forcing their way through the crowd. They settle down to rest for the night, but are soon disturbed by people fleeing in the opposite direction.

Discuss
Sympathy
While not
unpleasant
descent
sympathy
you think
sympathy

Analysis

London represents the height of human civilisation as is reflected by the narrator of London as 'the greatest city in the world' (p. 92). Its fall into chaos reflects the civilisation under the microscope.

In the midst of invasion, people quickly turn on one another in their desperate 'savagely' for spaces on trains (p. 92) (remember the crowd turning 'savage' in Chapter 15). They trample one another in order to grab at money a man has dropped. The descent as London is in 'tumult' (p. 101). In order to control crowds, the police are hitting; protecting; train drivers are refusing to return to London to pick up more passengers; of systems and authorities to deal with the situation.

The brother is characterised as brave and he shows good common sense. He 'has a sack of a bicycle shop' (p. 93): although he has effectively stolen the bike the language is accidental, as though he is not really responsible for the theft. He then rescues Mrs Elphinstone from more thuggish robbers, who are portrayed as immoral. Like the narrator he is practical and common sense. Luckily he is an excellent boxer, sees it is no time for 'chivalry' and fights back.

In terms of structure, at the end of the chapter, the brother and the Elphinstones are briefly able to rest. However, in the final sentence of the chapter people are 'in dangers before them' in the direction from which they have come (p. 103). Now

Active Learning Task: Role Play

Imagine you are creating an adaptation of the novel with an additional scene in which the brother and the Elphinstones are refugees. With a partner, imagine you are two very different refugees who have been thrown together. Write your stories and plans.

When selecting your character think, about:

- What their background is (e.g. where they come from, how old they are, their class) this will help you to explore themes of the novel in your dialogue.
- What their behaviour is like (e.g. panicking, rational, thoughtful, frightened).

In your dialogue you could discuss:

- What has happened to you
- How much you understand of events (what you have seen yourself or read in the paper)
- What you plan to do next

The best role plays will explore the themes of the novel through the presentation of characters.

Extension In your roleplay, evaluate why Wells selects the characters he does. How does he allow him to explore the themes?

Exam Tip

When using quotes in the exam it is best to show knowledge across the text. If you can show you show good knowledge of the whole text and if you can explore why they are useful for language analysis.

'Savage' and 'savagely' are words which come up a lot and could be useful ones to use in with animal imagery, war and conflict, the end of human civilisation. How else might

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Book 1: Chapter 17

Summary

The narrator's brother and his companions make their way to the sea where they are afraid to go abroad. As they are about to set sail Tripods appear. A navy ship, allowing the boats to escape. Clouds gather and the fate of the naval ship is unknown.

Analysis

In the previous chapter the crowd become savage and unpleasant in the face of it begins on a more sympathetic note. The narrator invites us to take a bird's-eye view of the refugees covering the landscape, reminding us 'each dot a human agony of terror'. The reader is reminded that these people are the victims of war and their behaviour. The huge mass of the crowd is hard to understand, but each person has their own pain, united as the narrator explains that this huge group of people has never 'moved and suffered together before, emphasising their common humanity'. Mrs Elphinstone's fear of 'a foreign country' is shown even the Martian threat (p. 108), and the ridiculousness of her outburst reconfirms this idea of human unity.

Irony: a contrast

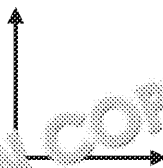
However, Wells also returns to the theme of chaos as people turn on one another, huge amounts of money and throwing those who can't pay overboard to drown. The 'Committee of Public Supply' commandeer the pony (p. 108). The inhabitants of Chelmsford working together to ensure provisions are shared; suggests the pony is taken by force and their claim on it is considered dubious by

The pace picks up in the chapter as a number of cylinders fall. Miss Elphinstone follows heightening the tension. As the refugees escape they see a large object 'rained down darkness over the land.' (p. 112). From their boat they are powerless, their helplessness. As in the previous chapter, the moment of relief is clouded over about to happen. This is the end of the first part and does not bode well for the

Active-learning Task

Create a tension graph for the first part of the novel. Think about:

- Key events: moments where we learn something new or something important happens
- Pace: how quickly does the situation develop?



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Book 2: Chapter 1

Summary

The narrator and curate are still hiding, but their relationship is breaking down. The narrator worries about his wife and avoids the irritating curate, locking himself in the box room. He decides to leave, and although the curate is at first reluctant to go he is even more reluctant to be alone. When they run into danger, they take refuge in a house. The fifth cylinder falls beside them, partially destroying the house and trapping them together.

Discuss

H G Wells
two parts
and The
do you

Analysis

The novel is structured in two parts. The second book is titled 'The Earth Under Fire' and is about the final chapter, the narrative is relentlessly pessimistic. Book 2: it is full of references to terrible things still to come, for example when the narrator and curate are trapped in the house, the narrator says 'would that I had!', the exclamation making them realise that their situation will cause problems later (p. 116).

The curate is full of 'selfish despair' and the narrator becomes 'irritable', running away from him. However, the curate is unable to look after himself and follows the narrator about. When the narrator retreats to the top of the house he 'locked [himself] in' to keep away from the curate (p. 115). The curate spends the chapter 'weeping', moaning and generally getting on the narrator's nerves. The narrator describes him unsympathetically as 'lethargic and unreasonable' (p. 116). This chapter perhaps accidentally, can make the narrator seem to lack empathy. The narrator, unlike the artilleryman and prepares himself with provisions, he is active rather than passive. Unlike others, he finds hiding places, and observes the Martians in order to learn about them.

In this chapter the Martians stop simply attacking and destroying people. The narrator is picked up and 'tossed' them into a 'metallic carrier' (p. 118). The narrator is aware of the more sinister purposes for humanity, which are not elaborated on, yet the word 'carrier' suggests for the Martian, again emphasising their power and callousness.

In terms of structure, while at other points in the narrative the narrator provides us with information he discovers later to help us understand something (like the Black Smoke), here he does not tell us the fate of these people in order to prolong suspense. This chapter teases us with missing information and hints about what is to come in the second part of the novel.

Activity

The

This

have

What

text

either

Min

com

When the Black Smoke settles, the narrator describes the landscape as looking like a 'black snowstorm' has covered the land (p. 116). The Martians are like the weather, uncontrollable and inevitable.



Exam Tip

Writing about structure can be hard, but structure isn't so much the order of the text as the way the author chooses to organise them. Having some ideas about why the book is split into two parts can help you. Your answer you can compare how things have changed between the two books you are studying.

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Book 2: Chapters 2 and 3

Summary

The narrator and curate watch the Martians through a peephole in the ruins. They do not eat but directly inject the blood of other living beings; they are just like machines; they have no gender; they do not wear clothes. He thinks they communicate through machines. The narrator and curate are 'incompatible' and argue quite heatedly. The curate tries to restrain him. After witnessing the Martians consume the blood of a human, the narrator must escape and tries to dig out a tunnel but it collapses.

Analysis

The Martians are highly developed, particularly technologically. They 'wore no clothing' (p. 129), which might shock a Victorian audience, but are essentially machines with tentacles; they wear, as 'different bodies' (p. 129), machines most appropriate to the jobs they have to do (p. 129). They do not need to dig out anything which Wells associates with emotion, and have no feeling or empathy, instead they are purely intellectual. They have evolved alongside technology; the narrator presents the practical advantages of the direct injection of blood as 'undeniable' (p. 125), though we might suspect Wells is more critical of the lack of emotion in these highly developed brains. H G Wells was very concerned about the consequences and responsibilities of scientific advancements. He was also concerned that mechanisation would have a negative effect on people morally and socially. The Martians are technology such that they are totally reliant on it and are physically weak.

The narrator characterises the Martians as very different to humans (remember we are expecting something that would look like a man). They are literally and metaphorically machines. He also invites us to see ourselves in them. Though the injection of blood might seem like a 'mechanical' process, he thinks what our meat eating might seem like to an 'intelligent rabbit' (p. 125). Further, the narrator suggests that such as bicycles and guns – 'are just the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have achieved. Human technological advancement is directly linked to Martian advancement.

The narrator again expresses admiration for the Martians, describing their machines as 'perfect' (p. 133). This list of adjectives praises the technical, engineering power of the machines, and these qualities that make the narrator feel the machines seem alive. Furthermore, he acknowledges their physical weakness given their reliance on technology, telling us that when he compares the machines to the 'clumsiness of their masters' he keeps having to remind himself that the machines are which is living (p. 133).

Once again, animal imagery is employed as the curate has 'sunk to the level of an animal' (p. 133). This re-emphasises how humanity no longer feels superior in the face of the Martians. The narrator is distinguishing the curate from himself: the curate's lack of control has reduced him to the level of an animal, but there is something, perhaps, essentially human, about the narrator which makes him different.

The Martians have brought with them a Red Weed which is taking over the lands. The curate's sense of the completeness of their invasion: the planet is swiftly overtaken and is even changing.

Active-learning

Martian appearance
Draw up a table with two columns. List details of the second expedition and the significance of the large heads sign.

Extension: what do you think Wells is trying to describe? List more details.

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Practice Essay Question

Extract: 'The mechanism it certainly was...scarcely realise that' (pp. 123–124). In this extract the narrator describes watching the Martians. Using this extract and referring to the text as a whole, discuss the way in which *The War of the Worlds* is concerned with technological advances stripping away humanity.

Book 2: Chapters 4 and 5

Summary

The narrator and curate fight over the rations: the narrator thinks the curate eats; decides he has been driven insane. The curate begins shouting about God's punishment; him out to stop him from drawing attention; however, the Martians are drawn by machines feels around the house with a tentacle. The narrator hides, but the uncle is found and dragged off. The narrator continues to hide and when he finally emerges a few days he hears a dog barking and goes to kill it, either to eat it or at least silence it. The dogs are gone and everyone is dead.

Discuss...

Chapter 5, 'The Stillness', is very short and does not contain a lot of action.

What does it tell you about the story? You might think about **structure**, **content**, or **atmosphere**.

Analysis

The curate rather than drawing comfort from religion becomes increasingly disturbed and a weak character. He is also hypocritical: when he is ranting he confesses to not sharing; he doesn't want to share the rations out properly. His religious ideas seem irrelevant in the face of invasion, especially as they provide him with little strength or comfort. This, in addition to his role as an 'animal' in Chapter 3, makes us more sympathetic to the narrator who we might otherwise see as a cold, pragmatic character.

The narrator is again contrasted with the curate, as more pragmatic and rational in his plan for survival; he does not despair but has a strong will to live. He is not entirely successful when hiding from the Martians. He attacks the curate in order to prevent discovery 'with fear' (p. 138); here he admits to being ruled by emotions, rather than rationality, and takes himself from blame at the curate's death.



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Book 2: Chapter 6

Summary

The world around him is completely destroyed and the narrator is driven by hunger. He tries to travel away from London but the Red Weed has blocked rivers, causing floods in London. We are told that the Red Weed is later killed off by bacteria they have no resistance to. The narrator worries he is the last person alive.

Analysis

The narrator uses yet more animal imagery: he says he feels 'as a rabbit might feel returning to his burrow' to find it has been 'suddenly' destroyed by human construction (p. 141). Once again, the reader is invited to think of the Martians in comparison to human ones: are they and we equally mindless, or something else? Furthermore, the rabbit's action is unexpected, likewise the Martian attack seems to come out of nowhere, and even though the Martians were there humans were unable to read them. He says he feels 'humanity has been dethroned from their place and he is now 'an animal among animals' (p. 144).

Darwin's theory of evolution published a few decades before *The War of the Worlds* contemporaries as it placed humans alongside animals rather than above them in the hierarchy. The image of humanity's 'dethronement' can be interpreted as humanity usurping the divine hierarchy (p. 144). This emphasises the shock of humanity's swift fall from grace and is a direct criticism of religious beliefs, especially considered alongside the character of the Red Weed. However, if humans do not have a God-given right to rule, does Martian superiority give them the right to rule?

This image is that of an unelected, monarchic ruler, as opposed to a democracy. Victorian Britain was one of the world's earliest constitutional democracies, in which although Queen Victoria was treated with great respect, her government had more power. At the time the novel was written two-thirds of adult men had the right to vote. Questions about government and power were pertinent, and H G Wells advocated rule by an intelligent, benevolent intelligentsia.

Alongside the image of the throne (Queen Victoria was also an empress – of the British Empire), the narrator tells us the 'empire of man' is gone (p. 144). The language is explicitly one of rule and imperialism, pointing to how easily human empire is swept away by a superior force.

The Red Weed has overtaken the landscape, so it forces the narrator to find food. The narrator is, at times, up to his neck in it, showing how absolute the Martians' impact is. The Red Weed has caused rivers to flood, showing its impact, forcing the narrator to change course.

However, we are also told that in the future the Weed will recede as quickly as it came, which it has no resistance. (Remember, in Book 2, Chapter 2 we were already told that the Martians had wiped out disease on Mars.) The narrator explicitly refers to natural selection: the earth had developed a resistance to these bacteria which the Red Weed did not have, so it was wiped out.

Discussion

What does the Red Weed represent?

Are humans portrayed as more evil than the Martians? Why or why not?

And how does the Red Weed represent the 'evil' of the Martians?

Activities

1. Write a letter to the narrator from the perspective of a Martian.

2. Write a letter to the narrator from the perspective of a human.

3. Write a letter to the narrator from the perspective of a Red Weed.

4. Write a letter to the narrator from the perspective of a bacterium.

5. Write a letter to the narrator from the perspective of a Martian.

6. Write a letter to the narrator from the perspective of a human.

7. Write a letter to the narrator from the perspective of a Red Weed.

8. Write a letter to the narrator from the perspective of a bacterium.

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Book 2: Chapter 7

Summary

The narrator stays overnight in a ransacked inn thinking about the fates of the curate. He prays and, in the morning, sneaks out of the inn. He runs into a man with a cut, an artilleryman. The artilleryman has plans for surviving underground in a community. Initially the narrator is convinced by this plan, but when he sees the work the artilleryman does it is all talk and decides to move on.

Analysis

The transformation of the setting continues. An inn is a place which should be hospitable: it should offer food, welcome, shelter... but now the food is 'rotten' and the place has been ransacked (p. 148); there is no welcome. The Martian invasion has changed the world from a place where humans are settled and comfortable to a place where they are uneasy and unsafe: the narrator 'lit no lamps, for he thought some Martian might come' (p. 148). Furthermore, the narrator has gone from his own home, to staying in a stranger's partially destroyed home and then hiding in an inn which offers little comfort.

The narrator feels no 'remorse' regarding his responsibility for the curate's death. The circumstances led 'inevitably' towards it (p. 149). Although he is generally given to the curate's claim that the Martians are a punishment from God, here he says he accepted death, treating it as fated, as though he has no free will, saying he was 'driven step by step' (p. 149). This idea of inevitability can be linked to moments when he suggests the Martians are a superior force. The word 'hasty', meaning the action was not thought out, suggests he was not at fault: the attack wasn't planned, but it also contrasts with the phrase 'step by step' suggesting some inconsistency in his thoughts.

Despite having spent the night praying, in the morning the narrator says 'I, who had talked with God, crept out of the house like a rat'; the **juxtaposition** here emphasises how low the narrator feels humanity has fallen (p. 149). The artilleryman then compares humanity to ants, saying 'It was never a war, any more than there's war between man and ants' (p. 152): people are completely insignificant.

The artilleryman, who was previously a useful companion, has made plans for earth under the Martians, which at first seem feasible and convince the narrator. He makes some good points about practical considerations for survival but as he describes his underground society he is quite ruthless in his social Darwinism suggesting only 'able-bodied, clean-minded' people will be admitted (p. 157); anyone else will be left to their fate. He has aspirations to rule the society and sees the Martian invasion as an opportunity for him to dominate: when he and the narrator first see one another he declares the area 'my country' and warns the narrator off (p. 151). However, the narrator soon sees the artilleryman is lazy and hypocritical; there is a 'gulf between his dreams and his power' (p. 158). The tunnel he has dug in a week the narrator says he could have dug in a day' (p. 158), he quickly decides it is time to leave, and criticises the people of London for complaining about the Martians while doing exactly that.

The artilleryman says the time of art galleries and meals out is gone; there is no longer any use for 'drawing-room manners' which though shocking to the narrator is convincing (p. 154). He also worries about people going underground who have not encountered before (p. 157).

Active-learning

The inhospitable world is no longer a place of comfort.

Write a paragraph describing a place you are in, and how it has been utterly transformed. Describe a place that has somehow become a place of comfort.

Juxtaposition
things are placed side by side to contrast or highlight differences.

Discussion

How has the world changed since the invasion?

- Think about the following questions:
- What has changed?
 - What has stayed the same?
 - How has the world changed?

Social context

nineteenth-century ideas of the fitness and efficiency of the individual. See Chapter 1.

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Practice Essay Question

The Martians are an outside force controlling humanity. Explore how the characters in *The War of the Worlds* have no control over their fate. Use two moments from the text to support your ideas.

Book 2: Chapter 8

Summary

The narrator wanders through 'dead London' encountering corpses, dust and cold. Weed is dying off due to diseases. After resting in a pub, he sees a 'yelling' Martian machine with Martian remains inside; there are dogs running about with meat, and yelling stops. He sees another Martian and steps towards it resigning himself to that Martians have been wiped out by disease.

Analysis

The Martians are wiped out as swiftly as they came, by a seemingly divine force. The microbes of disease as 'the humblest things that God in his wisdom, has put upon the earth' (p. 164) sometimes criticised as a **deus ex machina** ending. Wells having to resolve the plot with something new. This sense is stronger in film versions. In the text, Wells has acted the ending: he refers to a land of agony on Mars, and makes multiple references to its lack of resistance to diseases on earth.

The narrator's walk through London includes Exhibition Road, where he considers climbing a tower of the Natural History Museum 'to see across the park' but instead decides to stay on the ground 'where quick hiding was possible' (p. 164). The museum, which had been open 16 years at the time of the novel's publication, represents modern learning, and although he would be able to see further from its towers he would also be trapped there: Wells' complicated attitude to science in the novel is summed up here; it is powerful and useful but should not lead us to be complacent or feel we are invulnerable.

The narrator tells us that from the moment he first saw the Martians they were 'irrevocably doomed, dying and rotting' (p. 168); their demise due to earth's bacteria was 'inevitable' (p. 168). However, even though this is a retrospective narrative, in which the narrator sometimes tells us about things learnt later on, suspense is maintained by withholding this particular information. The language here ('irrevocably', 'inevitable') is absolute. This suggests very little freedom or free will; Wells was very interested in Darwin's biological theory of natural selection, or the survival of the fittest, in which developed animals inevitably survive. As the Martians seem at first the 'fittest' of all, Wells explores the application of the theory of natural selection to humanity, and

*see **social Darwinism** in **Context** on p. 45 for more information.

Discuss

Saved by ...
Previously
religion and

What do
humanity

Why didn't
save them

Deus ex ...
device which
unsolvable
appeared
literally not
refers to
appear to
the Greek



Practice Essay Question

In this extract the rescuing narrator walks through London.

...I crossed the bridge... I began
...across the road' (Chapter 8,
pp. 166–167).

With reference to this extract and at least one other part of the novel, discuss the significance of setting in *The War of the Worlds*.



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Book 2: Chapters 9 and 10

Summary

After realising the Martians are dead the narrator drifts: he has no memory of the strangers who looked after him until he had recovered. Another survivor telegraph in the form of food, arrives from around the world. The narrator assumes his wife is home to Woking where his wife is looking for him. In the final chapter, the narrator reflects on the Martian invasion has taught humanity. He talks about the mysteries of Martian technology; changes in the way people behave to each other.

Analysis

Technology, in the form of the telegraph, allows news to travel quickly and help to arrive. The good news is spread all over the world', a description which shows the speed of the telegraph and the positivity of the news (p. 171). 'The light'. Technology allows people to communicate quickly and joyfully. However, it is complemented by the more traditional church bells which 'caught the news' and ring celebrations out for everyone to hear (p. 172). This allows the news to travel to ordinary people, and the new and old technologies complement one another. Work is quickly begun to repair train tracks: the trains transport goods such as food; they are a vital part of modern infrastructure.

Compared to the behaviour of the crowds, jostling, pushing and trampling one another in a novel, people here are generous and thoughtful: strangers take care of the narrator, they care for him whilst he raves following his breakdown, dissuading him from 'morbid despair at what he has lost' (p. 173). The invasion has reduced differences between people. On the train he sees a variety of people working together to fix the tracks: 'clerks side with the customary navvies' (p. 174).

The media: the narrator buys the first newspaper to resume publishing. There is no 'fresh' news and the publishing of the paper has been 'emotional': it contains mostly advertisements, which the narrator calls 'grotesque' (p. 174).

The narrator returns home to find it broken into: the invasion of the safe place of his home reflects the Martian invasion of earth, but he too was forced to break into homes on his travels. He looks over a piece of writing he had begun on 'the probable development of Moral Ideas with the development of the civilising process' which seems ridiculous in light of the Martian invasion (p. 175). When the Martians are dead they have fundamentally changed humanity's view of itself.

At the end of Chapter 9, the narrator is reunited with his wife, and he rather hopes she faints. However, she is not mentioned until the final sentence of the novel: 'I hold my wife in my arms, and to think that I have counted her, and she has counted me' (p. 180). There is some poignancy and poetry in the rhythm of this closing line. He has already stated the 'strangest' thing in his story is his breakdown; although that does not seem to be his strangest reflection, it seems to devalue the **superlative**. Furthermore, the fleeting references to his wife across the text make her seem inconsequential and his supposed devotion either insincere or unconvincing (a character flaw or a narrative failure).

Discussion

'The story of the war' is a story of his sense of loss. Why do you think the narrator might feel this way?

Active-learning
Imagine you are the newspaper.

Put forward your ideas for the newspaper.

- Who, if any, are the winners?
- What do you think the future holds?
- What should we do next?
- Can we stop this from happening again?

Superlative: the highest quality; kindest, purest

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Whole-Text Analysis

Characterisation

Characterisation is how the characters are created and presented. You will need to think about the characters and how you know that about them, what you think about them, and what they think about them. Things in the text that will help you to write about characters are their words (what they say), actions (what they do), how they are described, what happens to them.

Major characters

The narrator

The narrator presents himself as a sensible, reliable character and a reliable witness. Like the author H.G. Wells, he keeps up to date with current events, knows scientific developments, reads the paper, works in an office and lives in Woking.

Characterisation: how a character is created and presented.

Dialogue: a character's words.

Action: what a character does.

On the whole, the narrator presents himself as logical and rational: he has a strong sense of duty and makes decisions to help him survive. When the Martians use their Heat-Ray at Byfleet he goes down under the water. He is not just a clever thinker but a man of action too.

However, other things make him seem a less likeable character. He can have quite a detached attitude. In Book 1, Chapter 7 he describes himself as at times feeling 'out of time, out of space, out of it all' (p. 32), as though he is outside of events simply watching them with indifference. This detachment makes him a good narrator: able to tell us about events without becoming hysterical. However, at other times, he is emotionally involved. In Chapter 8 he describes himself as 'exhausted with the violence of my emotion' (p. 38). His descriptions of himself as having 'storms of emotion' which then 'have a trick of exhausting themselves' make the emotions seem out of his control and even in control of him.

(See **Form** on p. 42 for more on the reliability of the narrator.)



Active-learning Task

The narrator and the Martians
Over the course of the book, the narrator has different feelings and experiences.

Draw a table with the following headings:

- Thoughts and feelings
- Moment in the novel

Complete the table with the narrator's attitudes to the Martians at different moments, events and questions.

Extension: overall, how does the narrator feel about the Martians? Provide evidence to explain your response.

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The artilleryman

The **artilleryman** appears in Book 1, Chapters 11–12, and Book 2, Chapter 7. Each artilleryman, in Book 1, Chapter 11 (p.51) and Book 2, Chapter 7 (p.150), we are introduced through **dialogue**. This is a character with whom we are immediately engaged: the point and takes us into the action.

The narrator firsts meets the artilleryman in Chapter 11, when he is hiding in the tunnels that he has escaped the Heat-Ray. He steps 'softly' and when he speaks he is 'whispering' (p. 51). In Book 2, Chapter 7, he gives the narrator a clear description of events: rather than make him see the curate, his fear is supposed to show us how terrifying the Martians are, after they have been 'wiped out' (p. 53).

The next morning the artilleryman makes sure there are provisions and plans a strategy. In Book 2, Chapter 1, the narrator describes him as 'wiser' due to the 'teaching' of the war. He packs food and drink (p. 116). He is then introduced as a useful companion.

When we next see the artilleryman he is standing on top of a hill; rather than being invisible, and rather than 'whispering' he shouts. He is no longer cautious but seems to claim his command and take charge. He calls the area 'my country' which could have connotations of nationhood (p. 151), especially given the new society he goes on to create as the founder, and defender, of a new land.

Discuss... The artilleryman

Look again at the first meeting with him, through the window, in Book 1, Chapter 11, pp. 51–52, and his second meeting, on the hill, in Book 2, Chapter 7, pp. 150–151.

- How is he presented?
- What has changed?
- What has stayed the same?

The artilleryman recognises that life has completely changed. He declares 'we're not like the curate, he is hopeless. He points out that it is the end of so-called civilisation, 'manners' and caring about how people talk 'ain't no further use' (p. 154). His view explores themes of **social Darwinism*** in the novel, as he talks about what kind of society should emerge. However, his ideas soon prove to be impractical and hypocritical: he is all talk and action. The man who in the morning seemed the 'energetic regenerator of his species' spends the afternoon playing card games (p. 161).

*see **Context** on p. 45 for more details.



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The curate

The **curate** appears in Book 1, Chapters 13 and 15, and Book 2, Chapters 1–4.

The narrator meets the curate after the destruction of Weybridge, and the church there. The curate is struggling to cope in the aftermath of the Martian attack and repeats the **apocalyptic** phrase 'fire, earthquake, death!' in his panic (p. 70). His speech is broken up: there is a lot of repetition in his sentences, showing how his thought is breaking down. He describes the world as 'the end of the world'. The curate sees the Martians as God's punishment and the 'beginning of a new invading force who must be reacted to logically' (p. 71).

The curate seems to take little comfort in his religion and instead attaches himself to the narrator. As their relationship gets worse and worse: the narrator and the curate clingy, but the narrator tries to comfort and assist the curate. The curate runs out of patience and hits the narrator on the head, leading to the curate's death.

The character of the curate suggests a criticism of absolute religious belief. The curate's transformation of his world. For him, God and church are associated with cosy safety, like the suburban church. When this safety net is removed he feels God is punishing him. The narrator points out that people have endured earthquakes and floods before, asking why this way the curate also represents the suburban Victorians with their false sense of security. When he protests the destruction has come to his town the narrator points out that the curate's idea of God is 'not an insurance agent' (p. 71).

The curate becomes more and more unstable as the novel progresses; he refuses to hide from the noise rather than making an effort to stay hidden. When the narrator reflects on the curate's death he says he cannot feel guilty as the curate's death was inevitable. Before meeting the artilleryman for the second time: the unsympathetic portrayal of the curate makes the artilleryman's views about getting rid of less useful people more acceptable.



Apocalyptic
end of the world

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Minor characters

The narrator's brother

The brother appears in Book 1, Chapters 14, 16 and 17.

The brother is, like the narrator, calm and logical. He is training to be a doctor and has a sense of duty and compassion. His theft of the bicycle is presented as good luck and good sense, contrasting with the men who are trying to rob the Elphinstone ladies: he was not a thief from a shop but a person. He is courageous in his defence of the Elphinstone ladies and earns their trust in him.

The brother gives us another perspective on events, particularly the view from London. He not only gives us his own story and experiences.

The wife

The narrator's wife is a mostly passive character; we learn very little about her. She is in a safe place and is content with looking after her, which reflects Victorian ideas of women's roles. From a narrator's perspective she gives the narrator a motivation to complete his journey. She is less aimless, and gives him an audience for expressing his ideas.

Interestingly, while the other minor characters are named, like the narrator, the narrator's wife is not named. Perhaps this is because as a Victorian wife she would be Mrs. Elphinstone, and her name forces hers.

Ogilvy

An astronomer and friend of the narrator's. The narrator visits his observatory to watch the flashes from Mars. Ogilvy is the first to visit the site of the landing, expecting to find a meteorite, and work on opening the cylinder. He is key in spreading the news and is later part of the deputation which is 'destroyed' (p. 29).

Discuss... Ogilvy

Ogilvy and Henderson are named characters in the text. Discuss the news of the cylinder and the deputation.

What do you think might be the similarities between these characters and similarities?

Think about:

- What jobs they have
- What role they have
- What they are like
- Their shared fate.

Henderson

A journalist, and the first to respond to Ogilvy's news. He too is key in spreading the story and dies as part of the deputation.

Stent

The Royal Astronomer, he is part of the group with Ogilvy and Henderson who die. He is described as having a 'high-pitched' voice, 'streaming with perspiration' and seeming 'irritated'. How out of his depth he is, and certainly not as dignified as his 'Royal' appointment suggests, during the doomed deputation.

Miss and Mrs Elphinstone

The brother meets Mrs Elphinstone and her sister-in-law Miss Elphinstone when he is in London.

The wife, Mrs Elphinstone, is a passive character. She is concerned for her husband. We learn of the narrator's wife who last saw him setting out to return the trap. Mrs Elphinstone is abroad reflecting English insularity and fear of the foreign – an attitude Wells was writing about. She seems more petrified of France than the Martians.

Miss Elphinstone is more practical and helps the brother, scaring the men with the story of her sister-in-law to get on the boat.

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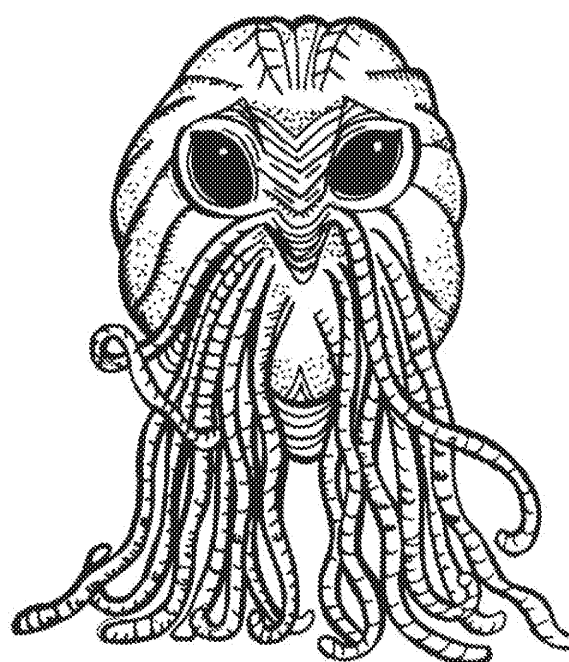
Lord Garrick

The Chief Justice. In normal circumstances he would be considered an important figure. On his flight from London he dies unceremoniously by the side of the road and is considered a failure. He got out of the path.

The Martians

The Martians are not characterised as individuals, but as a group. They are basically machines, which rely on machines and technology. The Martians are killing machines in order to get things done. They no longer have complicated digestive systems or blood directly and 'budding' their young. However, this has left them weakened.

The Martians are far more technologically advanced than humans and seem incapable of empathy or guilt. This links to Wells' concern that taking the scientific advances of the time and the tendency to play God (thinking that because we can do something we have the right to do it) demonstrate Wells' concern that technology could destroy human decency and emotions like empathy.



Active-learning Task

Set the exam.

It is a good idea to get thinking about questions you might be set in the exam. Try preparing questions for a friend.

Choose one of the characters. Choose an extract and set a question.

(Use the example below to help you.)

Extension:

- Try annotating the extract with your chosen, or
- Write the indicative content (a bullet-pointed list of the points you could include) for a question you have set.

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Practice Essay Question

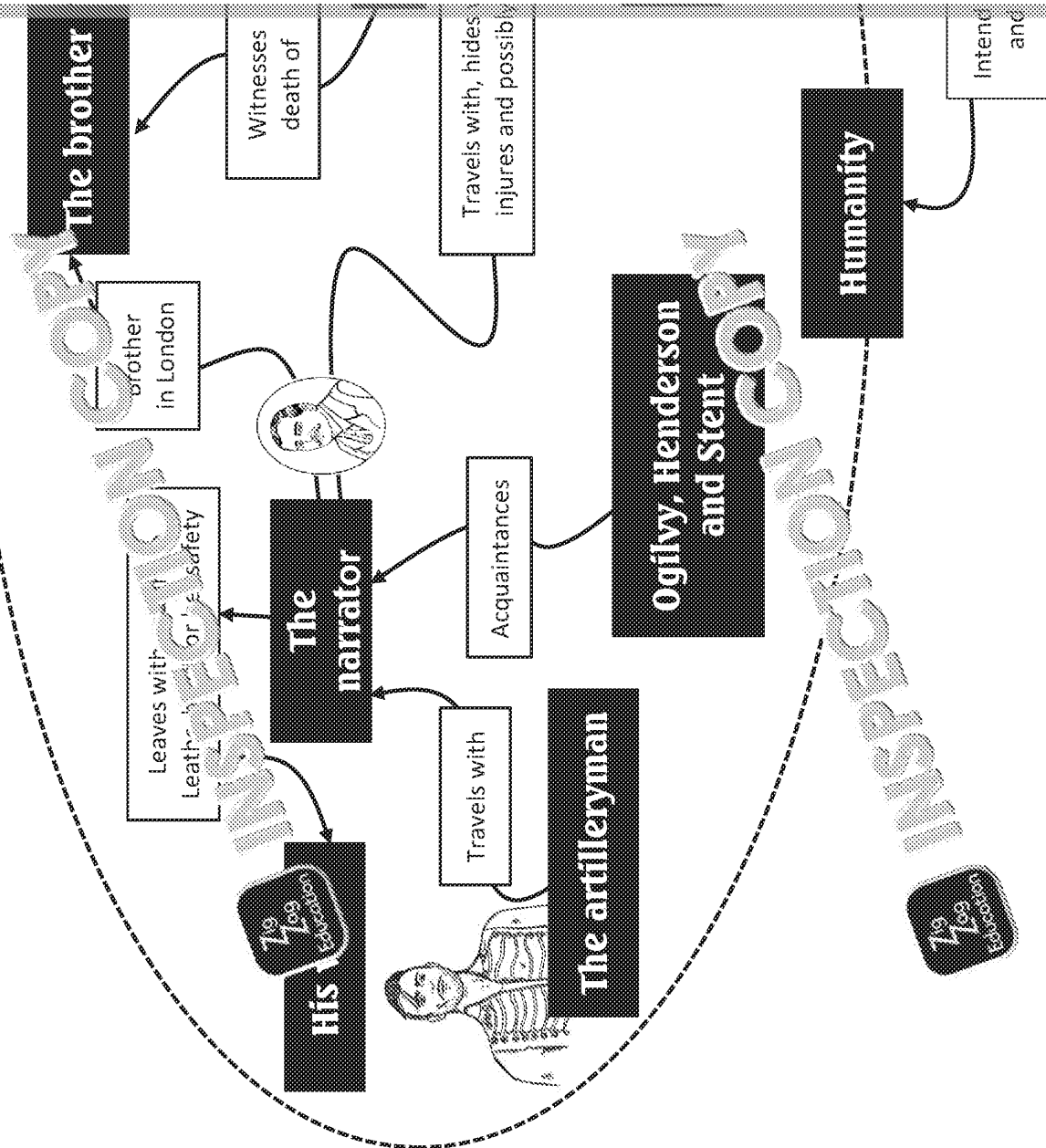
In this extract, the narrator shows his increasing frustration with

'The fact that we had absolutely incompatible dispositions...with ourselves' (Book 2, Chapter 3, pp. 131–132).

Write about the significance of the quote here and at other points in the text.

Relationships

Mind Map



Relationships Analysis

The narrator and...

...his wife.

We don't get much insight into the narrator's relationship with his wife, and she isn't a very developed character. At the end of the first chapter they go for a walk together on a 'warm night' which seemed 'safe and tranquil' (p. 12): on this occasion they seem happy and affectionate. However, the domestic happiness here is to contrast the Martian threat and make the invasion seem all the more terrifying when it is mentioned again until Chapter 7, when he returns home: here she provides a sound reason for the narrator's return. After the narrator and his wife are separated, she is reunited with him, providing a direction for the narrative; however, she is not referred to very often, and there is nothing for H G Wells to pin his story on a fully portrayed relationship. At the end of the novel, the final sentence of the story, 'And strangest of all is to hold my wife in my arms, and to know that she has counted me, among the dead', could be interpreted as a contrast as their relationship is not really central to the novel (p. 12).

Discuss...

In Book 1, Chapter 1, the narrator explains that he is angry with his wife for not being more helpful.

...the artilleryman.

At first they travel together pragmatically and productively. The narrator learns to live on good terms. When they meet again the artilleryman has changed and the narrator is angry with him. The narrator rejects his plans, more for their impracticality and hypocrisy than for whether they are right or wrong. So, at first they show good qualities in one another, but their partnership is contrasted against the narrator's poor relationship with the curate. With the artilleryman, the narrator being more pragmatic and cool-headed in the end.

...the curate.

The narrator and the curate have a disastrous relationship, leading to the narrator having some responsibility for the curate's death. It is a relationship which nearly kills them both. The curate is needy and clings to the narrator, putting them both at risk. This shows the importance of everybody working together. The narrator is far more scientific and pragmatic than the curate, characteristics which Wells portrays positively.

Discuss...

The narrator and the curate have a disastrous relationship, leading to the narrator having some responsibility for the curate's death. It is a relationship which nearly kills them both.

How much does the curate have? Should he be more independent?

The brother and...

... Miss and Mrs Elphinstone.

The brother acts as a protector to the Elphinstone ladies and like the narrator is a rescuer. He rescues the two women and guides them to safety.

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Settings

Woking and neighbouring suburbs

One of the most notable things about the geographical setting of *The War of the Worlds* is the narrator travels between his home town of Woking, Leatherhead and London, the suburbs such as Weybridge and Shepperton.

H G Wells and his second wife, Catherine Robbins, lived in Woking, very close to the cylinder lands. All of the settings were very familiar to Wells and are described with realism which may confuse readers unfamiliar with the area, the realism is supposed to heighten the reader's fear.

The small, suburban area is a domestic space: in Chapter 2 the narrator talks to his neighbour, who is a woman, and hands him strawberries over the fence. These details of the residents' 'little affairs' help to suggest their naivety and highlight the horror of the attack, as it takes place in a civilian, rather than a military space.

These settings also allow Wells to explore themes of war and conflict and imperialism as he invites the reader to imagine the consequence of war, and (both explicitly and implicitly) compares the Martian takeover of British towns and villages to the spread of the British Empire across the world.

Horsell Common

Horsell Common is the place where the first cylinder lands. It is common land out there alone at first. Chapters 3–5 are set there; Chapter 3 is called 'On Horsell Common the common 'charred and distorted beyond recognition' (p. 28); the surrounding area is then deserted. What happens at Horsell Common is then replicated in the novel, as the Martians kill and destroy, and London is abandoned.

Leatherhead

Leatherhead is the safe place to which the narrator takes his wife, and from which he escapes the cylinder. In fact, he expresses regret that he did not stay there with her. His entire plan is to get to London, but a failed attempt to get to Leatherhead. It is only after the end of the novel that he learns Leatherhead was not at all a place of safety, 'it is out of existence' (p. 173). Significantly, the place associated most with safety, where the narrator has been working, is utterly destroyed (although unbeknownst to him he has been working there since the Martians are gone, the world is completely changed, and any sense we have of the old world has been thrown out with the old world. The narrator's plan to escape has been thwarted and is irrelevant irrespective of Martian victory or failure.

Shepperton

The scene of the Martian attack in which the narrator ducks under water to hide from the destroyed but still functional Martian machine, discussed in Chapter 12.

Active-learning

Imagine you are a director of *The War of the Worlds* scene; you could write a screenplay (the direction):

- Will you show the cylinder lands before the action, or after the cylinder lands?
- Where will the city; the UK?

Explain the reason for your choice. How have you tried to show the scene?

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Microcosm
small
share
bigger

The house in Sheen

This is the house in which the narrator and Curate are trapped between Chapters 1 and 5 of Book 2. The house is partially destroyed, fast running out of food, and imprisons the two characters. This reflects the human condition under the Martians, acting as a **microcosm** for humanity's position: weakened, trapped and fighting among themselves. The domestic space of the house is defamiliarised: the narrator's house to a stranger's, so it is inherently less familiar and welcoming. It is also partially cut off from supplies. Likewise, the comfortable world which the narrator has lived in until the invasion is transformed into the unfamiliar, inhospitable and uninhabitable. The house also gives the narrator a perspective enabling him to describe them to us, but he can only see through a limited space. Curate, **symbolising** the limitations of human knowledge and understanding. When the world is radically transformed.

Putney Hill, and the artilleryman

This is where the narrator meets the artilleryman for the second time, and at the border of London (initially very much in London). The narrator passes a number of increasingly damaged areas by destruction, death and the spread of the Red Weed. He finds a brief moment of respite, but most of the food is 'rotten' and he is unable to eat. As the inn is a further step away from the comfort of home, this is another space transformed to one of horror or disgust.

The artilleryman has claimed the area as 'my country', in which there is only enough for himself, which he is not prepared to share. He claims a right to rule by his presence, and his exodus underground. He has made a 'lair', a word more usually used to describe a human's (p. 159).

London

London is the seat of empire, swiftly and chaotically abandoned. Wells aims to show how government collapses and London quickly becomes empty. Although the novel covers various geographical locations, in taking over London, the Martians have in some ways taken over the world (which at the time of the novel was still expanding, and by 1913 contained 23% of the world's population).



Practice Essay Question

In this extract the narrator's brother and the Elphinstone ladies

'The little vessel continues to beat its way seaward... And as it floats upon the land' (Book 1, Chapter 17, p. 112).

With reference to this extract and at least one other part of the novel, discuss the significance of the journey in *The War of the Worlds*.

London, Exhibition Road

Exhibition Road now houses the Natural History Museum, galleries and a number of academic institutions associated with exhibiting and learning since the 1850s; at the time the Royal Geographical Society, the Natural History Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum were among organisations located there. These symbolise Victorian values. The fact that the narrator feels safer on the ground, where he can take cover, than taking refuge in the towers of the Natural History Museum, shows that he must balance knowledge and survival.

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Themes, Ideas and Message

Themes are repeated ideas and concepts which link the story together. They use their ideas and messages. For example, war.

Ideas and messages are the big ideas and lessons which underpin the themes. For

Themes

War and conflict

The novel explores the destructive power of invasion and the horror of war. Wells depicts a vastly superior force completely destroying humanity, the heartlessness of war is emphasised both by Martian indifference and the quaint, domestic setting. Humanity is unprepared for this, as the narrator reports in Book 1, Chapter 2: 'Never before in the history of the world has such a mass of human beings moved and suffered together' (p. 104). Over the course of the novel the signs of 'destruction' increase: buildings collapse and are 'destroyed', until the narrator arrives in the 'ruins' of London; bodies litter the streets, by Richmond Bridge they are piled in 'a heap' (p. 117).

Active-learning

Revisit the end of

Read from 'I must

How does H G Wells

of war in this extract

Use words and phrases

your ideas.

Extension: turn

have a go at analysing

Wells also depicts the mental anguish of war, as the curate becomes 'insane' and an artilleryman is deluded (p. 137). By the end, even the rational narrator is 'raving'.

The novel also explores how in war people can turn on each other and, rather than fight desperately for their own survival. Sometimes this is thoughtless, as the narrator for the innkeeper, but other times it is deliberate and cynical: the Elphinstone ladies want the safety of their 'pony-chase' (p. 94). On the steamboat there are 'exorbitant' take advantage of one another in the chaos (p. 108).

Fear

Different characters demonstrate different experiences of fear, and reactions to witnessing the Heat-Ray, the narrator attempts to distinguish 'rational fear' and 'irrational' the Martians but the 'dusk and stillness' suggests he is behaving 'as a child might'. Fear drives him mad, is described as a 'spoiled child' or 'silly woman' (p. 131). The narrator is as he is cautious, but does not come to define him. Likewise, his brother takes shelter but does not become hysterical like Mrs Elphinstone.

The future of warfare

The main Martian weapons, the Heat-Ray and the Black Smoke, match Wells' predictions. Furthermore, their strategies: wiping out communications, travel routes and supply lines, the twentieth century. Their aim is to achieve the total destruction and subjugation of Earth.

Invasion and imperialism

Throughout the novel Wells depicts the effects of an invading force, where the Martians represent an imperial power. By using the Martians, rather than a particular national group as in invasion literature, Wells is able to make the problem more **abstract**, so that the reader engages with the idea of imperialism itself, rather than the British Empire, for example. The novel itself is split into two, reflecting the huge effect of the Martian invasion: 'The Earth Under the Martians' is a new era, as invasion transforms everything.

See also: *War and conflict* above, and *Ideas and Messages:*

Questioning Empire on p. 37.

Abstract

or idea. Consider

the

Discussion

How does

symbolic

with the

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The destruction of civilisation

H G Wells was a student of the evolutionary theorist T H Huxley and many of his novels explore themes. *The War of the Worlds* explores ideas to do with social Darwinism, which is the idea to enforce the process of natural selection in human life. Wells explores this idea through the Martians and through the artilleryman's plans for an underground society. There is a ruthless, technology-led evolution of the Martians, and the artilleryman's plans for a new society. There is no emotion, or empathy: people care less for one another, the Martians' way of thinking and they are 'pitiless' (pp. 126, 71). In Book 2, Chapter 2, it is even mentioned that the 'tendency of natural selection' would lead to humans with oversized brains and weak bodies. The narrator finds it 'quite credible that the Martians might be descended from beings not unlike

The narrator begins the novel writing an essay on the progress of human civilisation and ironically comes back to: the Martian invasion has completely changed his perspective.

See also: *Context: Social Darwinism* on p. 4.

Rules and order

Victorian society is depicted as rigidly structured, and ruled by a system of manners. When Ogilvy approaches a workman, the fact he has lost his hat makes him appear foolish, yet the Martian invasion is described as an event that 'was to topple that social order'. Hierarchies fall apart in the struggle for survival: Lord Garrick, the Chief Justice, dies on the road, and by the end of the novel people from all walks of life are working together.

It is unclear what rules or order the Martian society operates under, but they are said to seem to act in unison, 'at work upon the machines they were making ready' together and communicate telepathically (pp. 128–129).

Science and technology

From the very first chapter of the novel H G Wells makes the reader aware of technology in the lives of his characters. The first sentence uses the simile of 'a man with a new machine'. He visits an observatory and uses its telescope, he rides a bicycle. The main, human concerns concerned with are the railway, the telegraph and newspapers. In Chapter 2, Herbert is at the railway station to telegraph the news to London. Technology has opened up new communication networks, and the newspapers are part of this; the ability to compile up-to-date news is itself a sign of technological advancement (as is today's 24-hour news cycle as the technology is in front of us). The Martians go about 'hamstringing mankind': they 'exploded and wrecked the telegraph and wrecked the railways' (p. 105).

See also: *The future of warfare* on p. 35.

Foreignness and 'the other'

Throughout the novel, Wells explores ways in which the Martians are different from humans and Martians are similar and different. One of the first moments of real shock in the novel comes not so much from the falling cylinder, but from the moment it opens: those gathered at the station do not expect something 'a little unlike us'; as the cylinder opens, people realise how different from them the Martians appear. Their expressions change from 'astonishment' to 'horror' (p. 21). In fact, the Martian appearance is so unfamiliar the narrator struggles to describe them and uses a wide range of comparisons: a Martian's tentacles resemble 'a little grey snake' which is 'about the thickness of a walking stick' and the main part of its body is 'about the size of a bear' (p. 21). Wells is at pains to create a Martian which seems truly alien. Their customs and biology are also different: they do not wear clothes; they reproduce by laying eggs (p. 125). The Martians appear to have a sense of 'otherness'; they are monstrous.

Active-learning
Create a Venn diagram of similarities and differences.

Extension: include a drawing and describe them.

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However, the reader is also invited to make comparisons, and see similarities, as 'us to reflect on our own values and ideas. For example, the narrator suggests we carnivorous habits would seem to an intelligent rabbit' (p. 125). Furthermore, the Martians may have evolved from a human-like being.

Mrs Elphinstone seems to fear that 'the French and the Martians might prove very encapsulates the fear of the foreign which Wells exploits in making his Martians like with such different manners. In doing so, he draws attention to how like the French extension, they are like the so-called savages whose lands they have colonised. This is emphasised by the fact that the whole world is under threat (p. 178). Furthermore, a source of aid, which comes 'Across the Channel, across the Irish Sea, across the

Exile

The narrator is one of many people literally in exile. They are driven from their home countryside. The abandonment of their home is described as an 'exodus', drawing on the Exodus tells of the Israelites going from slavery in Egypt to wander the wilderness, home is also metaphorically lost as 'the fear and empire of man had passed away' and



Practice Essay Question

'The War of the Worlds is a warning to Victorian society.' To what extent is this interpretation? Choose at least two moments from the text to support your answer.

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Ideas and Messages

Ideas and messages are the lessons which the themes explore.

Questioning empire

Through his depiction of the Martians' 'indiscriminate' destruction (p. 55), Wells questions imperialism: they take over the earth taking no 'notice' of human needs, desires or acknowledgement of human intelligence (p. 63). Wells draws comparisons between the British Empire; sometimes he makes this comparison obvious and sometimes

In Chapter 1 the narrator reminds us: 'Before we judge them too harshly, we must remember that the destruction our own species has wrought...' explicitly comparing the Martian destruction of 'European immigrants' 'extermination' of Tasmanians (p. 55). In the novel, British 'civilisation' on earth' are repeatedly subjected to the suffering caused by an imperial power. In the novel, his home, it is 'desolate' and 'deserted' (p. 55) even after the Martians have gone. The 'comfort and ease' and comfort has been transformed. Wells invites the audience to consider the impact of imperialism on themselves, in their own time.

By depicting the real realities of imperial power, Wells criticises the supposed 'civilising' mission of imperial Europe, and the right to rule Britain claimed for itself based on its superior technologies. The Martians, though intelligent, are not necessarily civilised: as the artilleryman argues, 'there won't be any more blessed concerts for a million years or so; there won't be any Royal Society of Arts' (p. 154). There is no compassion or empathy in the Martians either. Whatever claims they have to superiority, they are not civilising, educating or improving, simply dominating. Although they are technologically superior, Wells' portrayal questions their **moral** right, and, therefore, the moral right to rule of any imperial power.

Discussion

What is the purpose of civilisation?

You could discuss...

- ...the role of technology in civilisation.
- ...the role of art and culture in civilisation.
- ...the role of science in civilisation.

Moral questions

What is the moral right to rule?

Human complacency

Wells was a scientist and teacher, as well as a writer, and he was very concerned with the state of the world and human understanding. In the novel they are criticised for their ignorance and complacency: they expect everything to carry on as normal: the day after the Heat-Ray wipes out the narrator's neighbour is gardening, the postman supposes the army will easily be defeated. The following day in neighbouring suburbs people are dressing up as though it is a holiday. This 'human complacency' that Wells is criticising (p. 7).

Active-learning Task

Using an online text (e.g. zzed.uk/11344-war-worlds) perform a search and find for 'complacency'.

- How often is the word used?

Read some of the sentences you find. Write down 1–3 of the quotes, and write:

- What you notice.
- What you think.

Do these sentences have anything in common?

Extension: What other words could you try searching for?

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Human cooperation

Although Wells shows people turning on one another and acting out of self-interest in the countryside, he also shows people cooperating and aims to demonstrate that human nature is good. Although strangers attack the Elphinstone ladies, the brother who rescues them is the narrator and artilleryman travel together cooperatively, and the narrator looks after the children.

The people who gather about the cylinder on the common cut right across social boundaries and shows no regard for class or status. Although the Martians do target communication centres, attacks are also described as 'indiscriminate' and 'universal' (p. 55). People suffering from the war in the novel are individually named or described, instead we have an image of the suffering of humanity. Wells talks about 'defeated humanity' and the 'human future' (pp. 118, 178), rather than the fate of cities or countries. The Martian war unites people as 'Humanity gathered for battle' – 'like one nation' (p. 68).

By the end of the novel, 'kindly' strangers take care of the narrator and food arrives from all over the world including bread from France which is given out 'indiscriminately' (p. 172).

Discuss...

The narrator says that the Martian invasion has 'done much to promote the conception of a new world'. Is this Wells' purpose in writing the novel? Do you think he is successful?

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The Writer's Use of Language

Animal Imagery

Throughout the novel, humans are compared to animals, not only in the narration but also by other characters, in the dialogue. Some of these are brief, passing references, but many are quite extended; for example, at the start of Book 2, Chapter 6 when the narrator escapes the demolished house, he extends the image across a whole paragraph, comparing himself to a rabbit and explicitly stating he had become 'an animal among the animals' (p. 144). In Book 1, Chapter 12 the narrator states that the Martians took no more notice of panicking people 'than a man would of the confusion of ants in a nest against which his foot had been pressed' (p. 63), an image echoed by the artilleryman who states that there was never any war any more 'than there's war between man and ants', then immediately stating, 'That's what we are now – just ants' (pp. 150–153).

Active-learning

At the end of Book 2, paragraph of the

'So some self-reliance might have been the arrival of the want of animal death tomorrow

Analyse the quotation

- Try to compare the effects of the
- Think about the
- What do the

Following the Martian invasion, humans are no longer the most powerful and are reduced to the power of animals. They are insignificant. It is not just that the Martians do not even really see them as an enemy so much as sweep them aside, but that people are in danger of dehumanising others if they see themselves as superior, as did in justifying empire due to their technological advances (see **Context** on p. 45).

Journalistic style

The narrator is very observant and pays great attention to detail. He reports events in an unemotional style. Events move forward not with the considered pace of an epic but with the speed of news.

When trapped in the ruined house the narrator does not tell us so much about his feelings; he reports on the appearance and actions of the Martians he watches. He takes care to be as precise as possible and gives details about their habits and behaviour.

Detached style

The narrator often seems unemotional and detached; in Book 1, Chapter 10, he reports: 'Near the top I stumbled upon something soft, and, by a flash of lightning, I saw a pair of black broadcloth and a pair of boots.' (p. 49). He gives us the detail of the feet ('broadcloth' and 'boots') before even mentioning there is a dead man at his feet. He focuses on the body as an object rather than a human being. Although the narrator is very journalistic and presents an accurate picture it also seems to set the wrong priorities. The dead man seems unsympathetic. He then continues to give details: 'I saw that he was a stout, middle-aged man, dressed in a dark suit; his head was bent under his shoulders and he lay crumpled up close to the wall, his arms flung violently against it' (p. 49). He explicitly states the other man is dead. It takes a whole paragraph to describe the landlord whose cart he borrowed (p. 49).

Emotional style

At times, however, the narrator is unexpectedly emotional. He has 'storms' of emotion that come quite suddenly. But he also has moments of reflection and empathy. In the opening of Book 2, he describes the great swarm of refugees, reminding the reader that each human being has their own 'agony of terror and physical distress' in what becomes a very poignant scene.

It is quite interesting that the Martians are criticised for their lack of empathy and the narrator has very little interest in feeling, particularly the feelings of others. He is often quite detached from quite abstract positions.

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Biblical allusions

As well as the curate's explicit reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, and the judge himself makes a number of biblical allusions, references where the language reflects the Bible. For example, the narrator states that we are to the Martians as 'the beasts that perish' (p. 112). The phrase used here is also a biblical allusion: in Psalm 49:12 the poet writes that 'People, do not boast; they are like the beasts that perish'. Interestingly, the biblical verse to which Wells refers does not distinguish human from animal, but in fact unites them in their mortality, as we are all mortal.

The phrase 'rained down darkness upon the land' (p. 112), which ends Book 1, sounds like a reference to Matthew 27:45, Genesis 19:24 and Exodus 10:22. These all describe catastrophic events that come away from, or punishes humankind: when the earth turns dark between the death of Sodom and Gomorrah and one of the plagues of Egypt. The darkness symbolises how alone and helpless humanity is, as well as possibly suggesting humans are to be punished from God the curate believes in, it is a 'lesser' consequence of their own actions.

When describing the destruction of the Martians in Book 2, Chapter 8, he compares them to a giant (p. 166) referring to the biblical character who loses his strength when he neglects his duties.

Geography and location

The narrator is very specific about the location of events, and at times makes great use of geographical detail are very accurate, and these are places that Wells knew well.

The transforming landscape, increasingly destroyed and overtaken by the Red War, is a key theme. The precision in place name and location makes the destruction more vivid to the audience. Furthermore, it reflects the **journalistic style** as the narrator seems to be reporting on what happened, where.

However, the writing can also seem poetic and thoughtful. In Book 1, Chapter 14, the narrator describes London where people are waking up:

'And all about him – in the rooms below, in the houses on each side and across the Terraces and in the hundred other streets of that part of Marylebone, and the West End, and Pancras, and westward and northward in Kilburn and St John's Wood and Hampstead and Highbury and Haggerston and Hoxton, and, indeed, through all the vastness of London – people were rubbing their eyes, and opening windows to stare out and as startled as the first breath of the coming storm of Fear blew through the streets.'

The narrator names a wide range of places: London is presented as huge and diverse, and they live in lots of areas, and they are different, but they are also united by the fact that at the time they are waking up. The specific naming of places seems to fit the reportage style. The sentence actually contrasts the tight journalistic style of the novel as a whole with the alliteration, as well as with the closing metaphor of a storm of Fear.

See also: *Settings* on p. 33.

Symbols and motifs

Technology

The novel makes frequent reference to human technology: the observatory, the microscope; telegrams; ironclad ships; trains, some of which were partly responsible for the global dominance of the British Empire (see **Context** on p. 46 for more details). However, these feats of human engineering and science are contrasted with Martian technology, such as the Heat-Ray which so easily wipes out the armed forces. The train line is swiftly destroyed, communications are broken, the bicycle suddenly seems quaint, although the brother does escape London on one, eventually abandoning it following damage.

See also: *Themes: Science and technology* on p. 36.

Active-learning
In Book 2, the narrator grows over the light of his obscurity.
Mind-map
Think about word choice.

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The Red Weed

The Red Weed is symbolic of the Martian invasion. It spreads with great speed and chokes the rivers, which it 'choked', and destroying native plants (p. 145: the Red Weed also 'chokes' the air (p. 167). Like the Martians themselves, it shows the destructive power of an invasive species, causing great damage and fundamentally changes the landscape. Like the Martians it 'succumb[s]' to the weather.

Pathetic fallacy

In Book 1, Chapter 10, the narrator travels back through a storm: as the world falls into chaos, the weather is likewise chaotic and fearful. Furthermore, it is night-time, a time of darkness. In the opening chapter the narrator stumbles about, literally and metaphorically, in the dark. The events of the novel take place in darkness and at night, reflecting the fact that human knowledge is limited and partial. Sometimes the full truth is discovered, in the light of day, and it is usually too late.

Apart from the storm in Chapter 10, the weather is rarely mentioned; however, it is often described as a 'storm [which] burst[s] upon [us]' directly linking them to this powerful metaphor.

Liquid metaphor

A number of metaphors of liquid and water are used, particularly to describe large crowds. In Book 1, Chapter 16, the narrator describes the 'liquefaction of the social body' as 'losing shape and efficiency, guttering, softening, running' (p. 92). As the Martians melt away: things change radically and humans have lost control of them, as liquids do.

Furthermore, crowds of people are described as moving like streams: the 'stream of humanity' in London (p. 105). There are so many people they become one, uncontrollable movement. They do not follow a course but, like the water in it, individually they have no control over the movement, they are swept up in the mass movement out of the city.

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Form

The War of the Worlds is a **science fiction novel** which uses a **narrator**.

Form: the type of text the author uses. For example: a novel; science fiction; narration.

Speculative fiction: fiction with supernatural or futuristic elements.

Genre

Science fiction is a genre of **speculative** fiction which explores **futuristic science**, **time travel** and **extra-terrestrial life**. Works of science fiction often explore the scientific developments and new technologies.

Although it is concerned with futuristic technologies and settings, science fiction is not always about making predictions for the future, but exploring ideas about the world now, how it might advance, and what consequences there might be for how we live now. The technology in *The War of the Worlds* shows the things Wells believed would be the weapons of the future, and in fact ideas suggest weaponry and chemical warfare were fairly accurate. However, Wells also explores the Martian invasion to reflect on the British Empire. Both of these themes

Discuss

What does the reader think?

Invasion literature

In the late nineteenth century and up to the start of the First World War, a large number of novels about the invasion of Great Britain were published. Despite a powerful empire, the British were concerned about the actions of the French or Germans, or the actions of terrorists. New technologies made these threats seem more real.

The War of the Worlds, however, moves away from European politics to present a global world. In doing so, Wells attempts to rise above divisions and portray a united world for survival. At the end of the novel people of all different classes come together to help. 'Across the Channel, across the Irish Sea, across the Atlantic' comes aid, mostly in the form of ships.

Adventure fiction

Adventure stories revolve around a danger which the protagonist must escape or overcome. In *The War of the Worlds*, the Martians are a threat, like that of the Martians. These narratives often involve a separation and his wife are separated and reunite. In adventure stories the pace and plot are often more important than characterisation, which seems especially true of *The War of the Worlds* in which the characters are not fully developed, but the story moves at great pace; however, settings and themes are prominent in adventure stories, are quite fully realised.

War novel

The war novel has its origins in ancient epic poetry, telling stories of great sieges and battles – think Greek myths and legends. The war novel itself really came into its own in the nineteenth century, when novels such as Tolstoy's *War and Peace* dealt with the great conflicts of the era, particularly the Napoleonic wars, and American Civil War. Although *The War of the Worlds* does not deal with a historical conflict, it does explore the morality in conflict, and particularly focuses on the civilian experience of warfare.

Discuss

What difference does the conflict make?

Gothic fiction

Gothic fiction, which also inspired the horror genre of film and writing, was very popular in the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. It is often seen as the precursor to science fiction. Themes and issues: otherness and the foreign; change; scientific development. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) deals with the moral limitations of scientific advance and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) also features a blood-sucking monster, the vampire. The vampire as character predates *Dracula*, occurring throughout the century. In fact, the vampire became a stock figure in Victorian penny dreadfuls, cheap pamphlets.

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Narrative

Point of view

The War of the Worlds is narrated by a single person: we are only exposed to one story is retold by the narrator and we are offered his summaries of newspaper and scientific journals, rather than excerpts. The narrative itself is in the past tense, of things that have already happened.

Although we know very little about him and his interests, his scientific knowledge of him seem like a **reliable** narrator. He **reports** on what has happened, and this **journal** is believable. However, he is telling us a personal story and controls what information is made more obvious when he reflects on the curate's death and tells us 'I set this down, as it was' (p. 149). When he tells us that all he has written is true it draws our control of what we do and don't know.

Usually a first person narrator allows us to identify with the character; it might make us more sympathetic or make the events seem more real as we see them from a particular person's perspective, but we don't find out a whole lot about our narrator, he isn't even named.

Discuss.

Why do you think the narrator gives us information about himself?

The narrator also reports things he hasn't seen, like his brother's story, as though other characters think.



Practice Essay Question

Joseph Conrad described H G Wells as a 'Realist of the Fantasy' in the extract and at least one other part of the novel, how far do you agree with his description?

In this extract the narrator is trapped in the ruined house observing the Martians.

'The Martians wore no clothing... moving feebly after their vast... (Book 2, Chapter 2, pp. 29–30).

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Structure

The novel is told in **hindsight**, six years after the events of the story have occurred. This means the narrator is looking back and has full knowledge of everything that has happened.

Structure: the narrative is

Hindsight: after it has

The story is mostly told in **chronological order** recounting events from the first cylinder landing to the narrator's return home after the Martians are wiped out. However, the narrator also tells the story of his brother's single narrative, rather than alongside his own, meaning the story jumps back in time to scientific details discovered later at points in the story. These extra details help to show he is knowledgeable and the audience rely on him to have points explained; science the narrator withholds or delays detail to create suspense.

The novel is split into two sections: 'The Coming of the Martians' and 'The Earth's Revenge'. The first section has a huge impact the Martians have, changing things completely and highlighting a new chapter has a title.

Active-learning task

1. Draw up a table with the column headings 'Chapter title' and 'Analysis'.
2. Complete the table for each chapter.

Extension: you could also complete a column with 'Key events' to help you revise.

Chapter title	Analysis

Example:

Chapter 1: The Eve of War

- Draws attention to the fact the narrator is setting the scene for the Martian invasion.
- Adds a level of tension.
- The word 'eve' suggests anticipation and the close of an old day – moving on to something new.

Quest: the novel can be considered in terms of the quest: a narrative structure in which the hero travels on a difficult journey in search of a goal, which can be literal or symbolic. This allows the narrative to explore a range of locations and encounter different characters, as the narrator does witnessing the spreading invasion and falling in with different companions. This allows the author to explore a range of themes. The hero often learns lessons along their journey and is changed by it.

Discuss

Is the narrator's journey?

Overcoming

a narrative out to destroy their home.

Overcoming the monster: Christopher Booker ties *The War of the Worlds* in with his analysis of the monster. Although the narrator does not set out to destroy the monster, and the Martians are defeated not by him but by an external force, the novel can be thought of in terms of some of the stages he identifies (remember his description of 'Overcoming the monster' comes **after** the novel: it can help us understand what we think about the novel but Wells is not deliberately writing about it).

Discuss

Is the narrator?

Discuss

Is there a

1. **Anticipation stage:** plumes appear on Mars; a cylinder falls: the narrator is curious and goes to investigate.
2. **Dream stage:** this is where preparations begin but the real nature of the danger is not yet revealed: think about the conversations the narrator has with his wife and neighbour confidently asserting the Martians will be defeated.
3. **Frustration stage:** the moment it is revealed things will be tougher than expected: the Heat-Ray wiping out the army.
4. **Nightmare stage:** terrible things happen and everything seems hopeless: the narrator's brother is killed.
5. **Miraculous escape:** just in the nick of time the monster is defeated and the narrator returns home. In *The War of the Worlds* the monster is not defeated by our hero, the narrator, but by a natural force.

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Context

Genre: *invasion literature and science fiction* (see Form on p. 43 for more information)

Historical and Cultural Context

The British Empire

In 1898 the British Empire was the largest in history, including around a quarter of the world. Britain had been, for about 80 years, the leading global power. This strength was due to such things as the steamship and telegraph as well as a powerful navy which left Britain invulnerable. Interestingly, the ironclad navy steamboat *Thunder Child* is the only human-made ship that can withstand Martian forces, holding them at bay while refugee boats escape the coast.

Some regarded the empire as Britain's natural right due to its technological, and cultural, superiority. Many argued that the empire was a force for good, spreading Christianity and British values and manners. Many modern historians point out that it was about British cultural superiority and ignorance of others.

In *The War of the Worlds* Wells challenges the premise that technological superiority gives the right to rule. The Martians thoughtlessly take over the heart of the British Empire with little regard for the human race as much attention to their civilisation as we would to 'ants'. Wells exposes the hypocrisy of making a moral argument for empire as he shows the chaos and cruelty of the invasion.

Immigration

The spread of the British Empire and its economic dominance, as well as religious freedom, led to waves of immigration (particularly to London) in the late nineteenth century. A country that had invaded and colonised the largest empire ever known, there was a growing paranoia about the arrival of new and different kinds of people.

Apocalypse

As the twentieth century approached there was some very real fear that the end of the world might be 'the end of the world'.

H G Wells

Wells trained as a science teacher and, like his narrator, lived in Woking at the time. He was a socialist and as well as science fiction wrote comic novels defending ordinary people. From 1900 onwards he wrote largely about the World State which he imagined would be based on advanced science and ended nationalism. Despite having been a staunch defender of the status quo, he believed it should be ruled by a scientific elite.

Social Darwinism and eugenics

Darwinian theory argues that through a process of natural selection the species best adapted to survive. Darwin did not intend these theories to be applied to humans, they described how they evolved, but in the late 1880s people began applying the theories to humans and so-called 'improvements' of the human population could be improved, for example by sterilising supposedly inferior people. Wells certainly dabbled in ideas about eugenics, but ultimately argued that eugenics was a distortion of Darwin and about human individuality. In *The War of the Worlds* humanity suffers from a lack of unity. Those who gather around the cylinder in the pit are from a range of classes. The narrator's view to this view that the strongest should be selected for survival, is depicted as delusional.

Nineteenth-century science and technology

A number of the scientific allusions made by the narrator are to genuine scientific discoveries. The reference to *Nature* is a reference to a genuine piece in a journal, but the reference to the 'Great Pyramid' (p. 129) is to the Great Pyramid of Giza which Wells was highly critical of.

At the time, the progress of scientific study was seen, by the upper classes, to be amusing games with, but not for serious study. However, it was also a time of technological progress. The railway, telephone, and combustion engine. These practical inventions were seen by the elite, and often sneered at as relevant only to the lower classes whose working conditions were improved. Wells found this snobbery immensely frustrating, and wove together the science fiction and the real world.

Improved telescopes in the nineteenth century led to a growing interest in the stars and planets. Scientists began to notice geographical features and draw maps of its surface. In 1877 an astronomer discovered lines, which he called canals (later discovered to be an optical illusion); these lines, it was theorised they must be made by intelligent beings, rather than natural features. This speculation of life on Mars.

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Key Term Glossary

Abstract	Existing as a thought or idea. An abstract problem is one without context.
Action	What a character does.
Alliteration	The repetition of the same sound at the start of words have connected ideas.
Apocalyptic	Concerning the end of the world.
Characterisation	How a character is created and presented.
Chronological order	The sequence in which things occurred in time.
Complacency	The feeling when someone is pleased with themselves with the way they are going, so they feel they don't need anything could go wrong.
Deus ex machina	Literally 'god from the machine', the machine being a cart. This is a plot device where a problem that seems unsolvable is solved by the appearance of something unexpected.
Dialogue	A conversation between characters.
Domestic	Concerning home or the family.
Form	The type of text the author uses. For example: a novel.
Hierarchy	The structure and order of people in society according to rank.
Hindsight	Understanding of a situation after it has occurred.
Imagery	A way of describing something symbolically.
Irony	A situation which is in stark contrast to your expectations.
Juxtaposition	When two things are placed close together in order to compare or contrast them.
Linear	Arranged in a straightforward sequence; a linear narrative jumps backwards or forwards.
Metaphor	A technique used to compare two things, where one stands for the other.
Microcosm	Literally 'little world'. A small place, event or situation which has characteristics with a bigger thing or idea.
Moral	Whether something, particularly behaviour, is right or wrong.
Narrator	The person telling the story.
Overcoming the monster	A narrative structure in which the hero sets out to defeat a monster in their home.
Pathetic fallacy	When the setting or weather reflect emotions or events in a story.
Personification	Describing a thing or animal as though it has human characteristics.
Plot	The main events that make up the story.
Quest	A narrative structure in which the hero travels on a difficult journey which can be literal or symbolic.
Retrospective	Looking back. A retrospective narrative is a story where the narrator tells us about things that have already happened.
Rhetorical questions	Asked to make a point or produce effect, rather than to get an answer.
Science fiction	A type of speculative fiction which explores futuristic technology, time travel and extraterrestrial life.
Setting	The time and place where the story is set.
Simile	An image in which one thing is compared to another, using 'like' or 'as'.
Social Darwinism	Late nineteenth-century ideas mixing Darwin's ideas about 'survival of the fittest' with ideas about human social and economic life.
Speculative fiction	Fiction with supernatural or futuristic elements.
Structure	The order in which the narrative is presented.
Superlative	The highest amount of a quality.
Symbolic	When something stands in for or represents something else.
Verisimilitude	Seeming to be true or real.

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Further Reading

Suggested books or websites that will enhance the student's study of this text.

Suggested Books

Fiction

- *The Time Machine*, H G Wells: a time-travelling narrator explores an imaginary future about class, greed and social Darwinism.
- *The Invisible Man*, H G Wells: in which Wells explores the power of science fiction.
- *The Massacre of Mankind*, Stephen Baxter: a 2017 sequel to *The War of the Worlds* by H G Wells.
- 'The Empire of the Ants' – a short story by H G Wells.

Non-fiction

- *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*: a high-quality academic introduction to science fiction, with a section on history and another on theory, with some specific references to Wells.

Suggested Websites

- [zed.uk/11344-wells](http://www.britishlibrary.org/11344-wells) The British Library has plenty of excellent articles on the topic. The pieces include an excellent introduction to *The War of the Worlds* by Iain Sinclair, H G Wells' politics, and one on invasion literature.
- <https://www.bromleycivicsociety.org.uk/2019/01/h-g-wells-in-bromley/> – a local history of Wells in Bromley.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs0K4ApWI4g> – *The War of the Worlds* by H G Wells.
- [zed.uk/11344-war-worlds](http://www.britishlibrary.org/11344-war-worlds) – searchable online text.
- [zed.uk/11344-victorian-web](http://www.britishlibrary.org/11344-victorian-web) – essays on Wells and the Victorian context.

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Suggested Answers

Book 1: Chapters 2 and 3

Active-learning task

Students' articles will vary but should include:

- Key information about the discovery and appearance of the craft.
- Understanding of context may be shown by tone of article: a confident sense of English.

Discussion task

Examples might include:

- No one bothers to look for the meteorite overnight.
- Only Ogilvy goes out in the morning.
- Ogilvy assumes he needs to help the Thing; it does not tell him it may be dangerous.
- Four or five boys sit with their legs dangling in the pit.
- The narrator delays to have tea before visiting the mayor.
- At the end of Chapter 1 the narrators wife points out the lights in the sky.

Book 1: Chapter 4

Discussion task

- The crowd behave as a mass, showing ignorance and a lack of individual thought.
- Humanity is an amorphous group contrasted against the Martians.
- Their behaviour is uncivilised and unseemly showing how quickly people's behaviour can change.
- The crowd endanger another person showing they are uncaring and negligent.
- No one helps one another; the people do not view themselves as a group.

Active-learning task

This is an open-ended task and students will have a range of responses.

Book 1: Chapters 5 and 6

Active-learning task

Characters	Ideas/themes they represent	Key action	What this shows
The waggoner	ignorance	Drives off when Ogilvy tries to talk to him	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human uncomprehending • Victorian unusual
The shopman	'common' people	Pushed into pit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civilian • Neglected
Police officer	order and the law	Runs away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of control • Disintegration

And so on...

Active-learning task

Student role plays will vary but should allow students to demonstrate good contextual analysis and selection and presentation of character.

Wells uses types which reflect particular characteristics to explore the significance and role of knowledge. Many of his characters are ignorant and arrogant which are undervalued in the knowledge of others.

Discussion task

Events may include:

- Newspapers not reporting events.
- Human underestimation of threat.
- Crowd responsibility for knocking shopman into the pit.

Words and phrases which refer to ignorance, arrogance or complacency. For example, in the first chapter people reacting as they would to any 'novelty', using the 'massacre' as an excuse for 'triviality'.

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Practice essay question

AO1

- An overview of how powerlessness is presented across the novel.
- The utter destruction of the deputation in the extract.
- The narrator isolated and vulnerable in the extract.
- The policeman running screaming representing the failure of authorities.

AO2

- Commentary on Victorian values: the rule of law and the military.
- Comparisons to colonisation and empire.
- H G Wells' ideas about scientific ignorance.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of language in the extract and novel as a whole to present the Martians.
- The simile 'weeping silently as a child might do'.
- The symbolism of the flag 'swept out of existence'.
- Similes and metaphors throughout the novel comparing humanity to specimens or objects.
- Comparisons throughout the novel to Victorian empire-building.
- The inefficiency of the military (in later chapters).

Book 1: Chapters 7 and 8

Active-learning task

Student diary entries will vary but should show:

- Understanding of the key points the narrator has made to his wife.
- An understanding of context: the role of the Victorian wife – she may show deference and a comparative lack of education.
- Understanding of the character of the narrator.

Book 1: Chapter 9

Discussion task

Students might consider:

- The narrator is reliant on the newspapers: he buys and reads them a lot and is up to date.
- But, now that he is part of a story, the papers do not offer him any new information.
- The media failed to alert humanity to the Martian threat and have made many mistakes. Martians will be defeated, in Chapter 7.
- Henderson, the journalist, is presented fairly positively as, sensing a story, he is the first to take advantage of new technologies to quickly inform London.
- Henderson is part of the group who were wiped out, perhaps suggesting arrogance.
- The novel is told in a journalistic style; this reflects its 'modernity': it is part of a world.
- The modern, fast-paced journalistic style contrasts the slow suburban setting, making the Martians more complacent.
- The journalistic style lends the novel verisimilitude.

Active-learning task

If you want to complete this task without technology you can assign individuals or groups to research and then feed back to the class.

Students will pick out key images from the novel, in which humans are compared to animals, where the narrator says we must see animals as 'monkeys and lemurs'.

Effects of animal imagery:

- Showing how people are compared to the Martians.
- Comparing underdeveloped people's knowledge is compared to the Martians.
- Suggesting that we are part of a larger 'world' environment and part of the natural world, separate as the Victorians liked to believe.
- Suggesting that our superiority over animals should invite care rather than callousness towards the Martians.

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Practice essay question

AO1

- An overview of how human arrogance is presented across the novel.
- Initial failure to take an interest: press and ordinary people.
- Ogilvy's telescope insufficiently powerful.
- Assumption aliens will have human appearance.
- Assumption army will defeat the Martians easily.

AO2

- Wells' criticism of Victorian imperialism.
- Notions of British superiority.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of language in the extract and novel as a whole to present
- Irony of casual 'we might learn a thing or two'
- Incidental details: neighbour is gardening, he is preparing to leave.
- Leisurely word choices: 'chatter', 'sigh'.

Book 1: Chapters 10 and 11

Active-learning

Students may consider the language in a number of ways, for example:

- The Thing is huge and like a monster: 'monstrous'; 'the second monster'.
- Positive language: 'glittering' 'great'.
- Destructive: 'smashing' things.
- Alien – totally unfamiliar: 'incredibly strange'.

Discussion task

Students may include a range of ideas in their discussions including:

- Positive language suggesting he is impressed.
- The narrator describes qualities of the Martians which he perhaps admires.
- There are things he thinks we can learn from them.
- The narrator compares Martian behaviour to us as ours to animals, arguing either the sympathetic or, instead, that we are being criticised.
- While he is impressed by their power he is more fearful of it than sympathetic to them.
- He describes them as cruel, callous and revolting.
- Negative language which suggests revulsion or repulsion.

Book 1: Chapter 12

Practice essay question

AO1

- An overview of how imperialism is presented across the novel.
- Well-selected, relevant moments from across the novel.
- Narrator's admiration of Martians.

AO2

- Wells' criticism of Victorian imperialism.
- Notions of British superiority contrasted with Martian superiority.
- Scientific advancements.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of language in the extract and novel as a whole to present

Book 1: Chapter 13

Discussion task

Students may suggest a number of reasons, such as:

- The characters lack names as they are more symbolic than fully realised people.
- The characters are simply acting out roles and their job titles are more fitting.
- Lack of names has a potentially depersonalising effect.
- This could make the story seem didactic, or like a fable.

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Book 1: Chapter 14

Active-learning task

Student diary entries will vary but should demonstrate:

- An understanding of key events in London.
- An understanding of historical context: shock at disruption to routine; delayed trains
- Wells' characterisation of the general population: lack of care for one another; irritation
- The sense of confusion in London: some students may deliberately muddle key events, communication and the media.

Discussion task

Students may discuss a range of points, including, but not limited to:

- Although those in London are contrasted in what they wear their behaviour is quite
- like the crowds in Shepperton they begin in a holiday mood, ready to go on outings
- they gather at railways
- they turn savage when desperate to escape their homes
- they become a mass as the London panic begins

Book 1: Chapter 14

Active-learning task

- 'One has to imagine...' adjectives and adverbs: tensely; orderly; alert; watchful; dull
- 'One may picture...' adjectives and adverbs: swiftly; palpable; strange; horrible; dim; impenetrable.
- In the first paragraph descriptive words emphasise control and order while the soldiers are organised and seem prepared.
- This is broken by the Martian missile which is strangely 'clumsy'. This reflects the idea soldiers may be expecting an explosion and before the gas is released they are more nervous than they know better creating dramatic irony / tension.
- In the following paragraph the pace changes: many of the descriptive words point to the absolute. They also draw attention to the power of the Martians.

Practice essay question

AO1

- An overview of how the impact of war is presented in this extract and across the novel.
- Well-selected, relevant moments from across the novel.
- Understanding of how the description of the Black Smoke shows the destructive power of war.
- Understanding of the movement from order to chaos seen here and elsewhere in the novel.
- Transformation of the landscape.
- Increasing scenes of destruction.
- Breakdowns in civilised and ordered behaviour.

AO2

- Wells' criticism of Victorian imperialist invasions.
- Wells' ideas about technological advancement and war.
- Literary conventions of science fiction: exploring new technologies.
- Awareness this could be a commentary on real war or just invented ones.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of language in the extract and novel as a whole to present war.
- The shift from adjectives and adverbs depicting waiting and order to a faster pace. 'running', 'leaping', 'headlong, shouts of dismay, the guns swiftly abandoned, men
- How language used elsewhere in the novel shows the impact of war: its destructive power.
- Narrative voice / characterisations: the narrator imagines witnessing the soldiers running, possibly he is still detached, the narration eerie rather than sympathetic, or possibly a participant in the events.

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Book 1: Chapter 16

Discussion task

Sympathetic characters in the crowd, such as the man in evening dress who is clearly disturbed by the 'common' figure to elicit sympathy?), the woman with three children, more children in a car

- The people have 'miserable' eyes and are thirsty.
- However, some people 'whipped stupidly' at their horses: their actions are purposeless.
- The narrator is not very sympathetic to people he does not consider intelligent, generally.
- Some of the men are 'lowering and savage'.
- One of the women even tries to grab at the horse's reins.

Book 1: Chapter 17

Active-learning task

Student tension graphs will vary, and may or may not include events in the brother's narrative (on fitting the two together), but will hopefully offer a good summary of key events, for example: first cylinder landing; the crowd gathering; the narrator's speech; the retreat into the cylinder; the deputation; anticipation of military action; the heat-Ray; the narrator taking his wife to sea; meeting the artilleryman; the narrator cutting the narrator off from his wife; the narrator meeting the current; the narrator's flight from London; the brother's escape to sea. The graph at the beginning of the chapter is a structural analysis as students evaluate the importance, and atmosphere

Book 2: Chapter 1

Discussion task

- The extremity of the change is represented by the split: a seismic shift has occurred.
- The end of Book 1 indicates the invasion is complete; we then move on under new conditions.
- Different themes and interests may be explored in each book.

Active-learning task

The most obvious example of the Martians being related to storms is the one on the night of the noise of the Martians mingle with the storm.

Also,

- Words like 'tumult' frequently used to describe impact of Martians.
- Chapter 13: The flickers of activity from the Martians are described as the 'gathering'.
- Chapter 1: 'The storm burst upon us six years ago'.

This imagery makes the Martians seem unstoppable, like a force of nature. This emphasises that they have no ability to control the weather or fight it, as they might an army.

Book 2: Chapters 2 and 3

Active-learning task

Examples of details that may be selected	Students may suggest the following ideas about
'delicate tentacles'	The Martian driving the machine is contrasted with the machine's purposeful tentacles, which reach and carry. The Martians are weak, fragile, and easily broken. This suggests that it is the machine's power. They are not really strong and their dependence on the machine has weakened them.
'no nostrils', 'single ear which is as small as a pin'	The Martians make in limited sensory information, again emphasising that they are weakened in others. Perhaps this limited sensory information and empathy as their view of the world is so restricted.
No digestive system	The narrator explains that a lack of these organs means the Martians

Practice essay question

AO1

- An overview of the impact of technology on humans and Martians across the novel.
- An understanding the Martians can be understood as a vision of human future.
- Well-selected, relevant moments from across the novel.
- An understanding of the characterisation of the Martians: merging body and machine.
- The Martians' bodies have atrophied and weakened.

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AO2

- Wells' criticism of Victorian imperialist invasions.
- Wells' ideas about technological advancement and evolution.
- Literary conventions of science fiction: awareness the Martians can be interpreted as a vision of the future if humans and technology evolved together unchecked.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of language in the extract and novel as a whole to present the 'metallic spider': an image which combines animal/machine.
- 'swift, complex, and perfect': triple admiration from narrator.
- Illustrations lack 'living quality' and make them seem purely mechanical.
- The bodies of the Martians are like clothes; they are machines which can be discarded.
- The Martians' real bodies have become atrophied by their reliance on technology.

*Book 2: Chapter 5***Discussion task**

- The chapter provides a change of pace, a brief quiet in the action, perhaps allowing time to reflect.
- 'The story is a long tension: we are forced to wait for the action to continue.'
- The narrator is trapped and powerless: although short the chapter does mean we do not lose sight of his captivity emphasising his waiting and humanity's impotency.
- The narrator's suffering here is thirst and hunger; it is drawn out not sudden. These are not imaginary problems, but very real ones.
- The chapter is long enough not to skip over this pause but short enough to keep up the tension.
- In this time the world is transformed: when the narrator emerges he is alone in a radically changed world.
- The shortness of the chapter shows how sudden the change is, but is long enough for the narrator to reflect.

*Book 2: Chapter 6***Discussion task**

Students will make a range of points and judgments, for example:

- The narrator directly compares humanity and the Martians, as in the image of the octopus in the previous chapter, comments about meat eating in the previous chapter, comments about invasion.
- However, the physical description of the Martians makes them very alien: people are not like them.
- The description of the Martians is a warning: it is something humanity is on the path to becoming.
- The Martians are acting in their own interest but presented through a human perspective as necessarily evil.

Active-learning task

- Key details of how the author has survived may be gleaned from the text to aid context for an imaginative task.
- This is a good opportunity to revisit writing for purpose and audience with students.

*Book 2: Chapter 7***Active-learning task**

This is an open-ended task to which students may respond in a variety of ways.

Discussion task

- At first the artilleryman is hesitant and careful.
- He suggests a more cautious route than the narrator plans.
- He is practical and packs provisions.
- He reports calmly on events.
- However, he sounds excited about the prospect of a new world.
- On second meeting he is more animated.
- His plans are ambitious and impractical, in contrast to previous pragmatic behaviour.
- He drinks and plays games.

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Practice essay question

AO1

- An overview of the theme of control across the novel.
- An understanding that the Martians control humanity through superior technology.
- An understanding of ideas about whether this superiority gives the Martians the 'right'.
- An understanding of how the Martians might symbolise wider ideas about science, or
- Well-selected, relevant moments from across the novel.

AO2

- Nineteenth-century ideas about social Darwinism.
- Scientific and religious tensions.
- Science fiction as a genre which explores the real world.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of language in the extract and novel as a whole to present
- The narrator excusing himself for the curate's death due to its inevitability.
- **Structure:** the text is a retrospective narrative in which events are fixed.
- Commenting on words such as 'fatal'.
- The lack of control the narrator has: when the brother feels he is finally safe refugees
- narrator is trapped in the building when it collapses; the dark clouds cover
- to sea; is finally cut off.

Book 2: Chapter 8

Discussion task

- The narrator has prayed on other occasions, such as when he was trapped in the house.
- Is the phrase a figure of speech, or delivered ironically?
- Perhaps Wells is criticising people placing too much faith in any one system, the curate
- extremes with the narrator treading a more central path.
- Social context.

Practice essay question

AO1

- An overview of the theme of setting.
- An understanding that setting is time (in this extract: night) and weather as well as place.
- An understanding of setting e.g. the contribution of setting to atmosphere.
- Setting's relationship to structure: contributing to tension and narrative pace.
- An understanding of the symbolic value of setting (for example pathetic fallacy).

AO2

- Understanding of the symbolic nature of setting.
- Relevant historical context: the safe middle-England suburbs.
- England as the seat of empire itself being subject to an invasion.
- Generic conventions: pathetic fallacy.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of language in the extract and novel as a whole to present
- The morbid language in the extract: 'spectrally'; simile of windows as 'eye sockets' of
- 'The silence came like a thunderclap': a striking and dramatic juxtaposition.
- 'Night the mother of fear and mystery': the significance of the temporal setting.
- Personification of London as it 'gazed' at him, focusing in on him.
- Coming of dawn as moment of revelation.
- Well-chosen setting to reflect, for example, significance of London, or of suburbs, or
- invasion, or house in which he is trapped with the curate, the boat in which

Book 2: Chapters 9 and 10

Discussion task

- After holding onto his sanity for so long the narrator has finally succumbed to the pressure.
- He is overwhelmed in the moment of relief.
- Shortly before realising the Martians have died the narrator decides to end his life; is
- before? He certainly is not demonstrating so great a will to survive.
- Does his breakdown symbolise the complete change that has occurred, that humanity

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Characterisation: the narrator

Active-learning task

Students may select a range of examples, such as:

- He is terrified of the Martians when he first sees them.
- On his return home to his wife he is angry that other people are not taking the attack seriously.
- He then comforts his wife, explaining the Martians cannot succeed.
- His language sometimes suggests admiration of them.
- He is fascinated with them, and in Chapter 11 watches them with 'impersonal interest'.

Characterisation: the artilleryman

Discussion task

- First meeting: the artilleryman is 'whispering'; second: shouting.
- First: hiding, low down; second: standing on top of a hill, high up, open to view.
- First: looking up at the narrator, who he depends on to know he is safe; second: looks down, domineering, threatening the narrator.
- First: follows the narrator into the narrator's house; second: takes the narrator into his house.
- Both: showing uncertainty, 'doubt'; second: 'doubtful'.
- Both: dishevelled, 'tattered' and unbuttoned; second: 'dusty and filthy' but so is the narrator.
- Second: though seemingly more confident, he is frightened by a bird, and suggests the narrator is more confident in the garden the first time they met.

Characterisation: Ogilvy and Henderson

Discussion task

Ogilvy and Henderson represent two things Wells has mixed opinions on: scientists and the public. The narrator bemoans the public's lack of scientific knowledge and Ogilvy is one of the few who is valuable: the narrator relies on the papers for new information. However, he is critical of the limitations of each and Henderson both die in their attempt to communicate with the Martians when they are captured.

Students may also consider the narrator's lack of emotional response to their deaths.

Characterisation

Active-learning task: set the exam

Students will come up with a range of responses but this is a good opportunity to revise or to provide/revisit the exam board's wording of the AOs and bandings.

Practice essay question: the curate

AO1

- An overview of the significance of the curate, and his relationship with the narrator.
- Well-selected, relevant moments from across the novel.

AO2

- Victorian values: the curate is belittled by feminisation.
- Criticism of the church.
- Fears of the apocalypse.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of language in the curate and novel as a whole to present the curate.
- The curate's 'trick': although the word is used here to mean habit it also suggests the later described as 'shifty'.
- 'endless': the curate's lack of change and the narrator sees no real way to escape the curate.
- The curate is 'stupid', 'silly', 'weak', traits Wells and the narrator despise.
- Simile 'as a woman'; metaphor 'spoilt child': the curate is not a real (educated, manly) person.

Relationship analysis: narrator and his wife

Discussion task

Students may consider a range of reasons. However, the narrator mentions how worried he is about 'reaching Leatherhead' suggesting that he is in fact displacing anger at his situation onto his wife. He is unable to suggest that underlines how the narrator's relationship with his wife is used as a motivation to move forward but is not fully realised; sophisticated readers may criticise the novel, suggesting that the narrator's relationship with his wife is not fully realised undermines the plot device itself as the narrator's motivation seems weak. This serves to remind us of the narrator's purpose.

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Relationship analysis: narrator and curate

Discussion task

Students may approach the question from a number of perspectives, but could be encouraged to follow themes and ideas in the novel, such as ideas about survival; humanity as a collective.

Settings

Active-learning task

Students will approach the text in a number of ways, but can use the task to explore ideas difficult to understand why a smaller-scale setting can heighten the impact of the invasion.

Practice essay question

AO1

- An overview of the theme of journeys.
- An understanding of the literal and metaphorical journey in the novel.
- An understanding of the journey in the extract.
- An understanding of the key places in the narrator's journey.
- A sense of other journeys in the novel: those of the brother, the Martians, the crowd.

AO2

- Understanding of the symbolic nature of the journey.
- Relevant historical context: England as safe space from which people are now fleeing.
- The quest narrative.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of language in the extract and novel as a whole to present the journey.
- The coast is 'hidden'; much of the known is defamiliarised and journeys are through mist, destruction obscures familiar places.
- 'The fleet of refugees': a huge number of people are travelling out to sea, away from the coast.
- The journey is at 'twilight' as one day ends and another begins; it is also at the end of the world.

Themes: War and conflict

Active-learning task

This can be presented as a mini exam practice in response to the short extract, or notes in Analysis). Students may include:

- 'the stress and danger of the time have left an abiding sense of doubt and insecurity' and the secure, domestic setting is no longer comforting.
- Although the valley is 'healing' the narrator still sees it 'set in writhing flames', a vivid image of war.
- Everyday life seems 'vague and unreal'.
- The narrator has visions of the world transformed as it was during the invasion.
- What the narrator describes sounds much like post-traumatic stress disorder (which was not a condition until after the World Wars, though its symptoms had been described before).

Themes: Imperialism:

Discussion task

By making the problem more abstract, Wells pushes the argument away from nationalist ideas.

Themes: Foreignness and 'the other'

Active-learning task

Many of the points are included in the summary analysis; the Venn diagram helps students to think about their own thoughts. They may also include points of their own.

Some examples:

- Humans: communicate by talking.
- Martians: howl and may communicate telepathically.
- Humans: eat other animals.
- Martians: do not eat but directly inject the blood of humans.
- Both: survive by ingesting other living creatures.

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Themes: Practice essay question

Practice essay question

A01

- An engagement with the question, showing an understanding of ways the novel may be read, including the following: complacency about human knowledge, the security of empire, the moral superiority, manners and behaviour, war and conflict, future military technologies, the future of humanity, social Darwinism.
- Well-selected moments from the novel to illustrate argument.

A02

- Relevant historical context: e.g. imperialism; perennial fear of new technologies.
- Genre: science fiction looking to future; science fiction as a reflection on the here and now
- Genre: invasion literature and Victorian paranoia.
- Biography: Wells as teacher – didactic / valuing education

A03

- Comments on Wells' use of language: e.g. animal imagery uniting humankind; superiority; vivid description of death and destruction; pathetic fallacy associating weather with feelings
- Structure: gradual build-up to climax of destruction; uncertain ending.

Ideas: What makes a person civilised?

Discussion task

This is an open-ended task and students may make a range of points.

Ideas: Human complacency

Active-learning task

- Thirty-one instances of the word ‘know’, five of ‘knowledge’ (if you include words in you get 67.)
- Many instances are to do with not knowing: ‘I do not know’, ‘I did not know’, ‘I scar

Ideas: Human cooperation

Discussion task

Students may make a range of points, including:

- Much of the novel revolves around how well people do or don't work together: by the end, the narrator has to be supported by the community to survive.
- The novel emphasises our commonality rather than difference, constantly reminding us that we are all human, even in the face of the Martian attack.
- Wells attempts to show human suffering, exposing the problems of empire to Victorian readers. He suggests that colonised people are no more 'savage' and the British no more 'civilised'.

Language: Animal imagery

Active-learning task

- The tone is comic, and could be interpreted as uncharacteristically self-deprecating, butt of the joke.
- The dodo, unlike many other animals mentioned, is extinct, pointing to the possible
- The dodo is characterised as quaint, 'respectable'
- 'Lording' is ironic, and comic, but reflects on the position of humans in the novel
- The 'pitiless' sailors are, like the birds, without feeling (certainly for their victims)
- Looking back, the fact that the birds are looking for food gains significance.
- The idea that the birds think they could 'peck' the sailors to death points to the future

Language. The Red Weed

Active-learning task

- The spread of the Red Weed transforms his vision; everything is literally seen in the
- Everything is the colour of Mars, the red planet.
- 'crimson' might remind us of blood and violence.
- 'obscurity': the world has been made unfamiliar and strange, so it does not look quite difficult and unclear.

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*Form: Science fiction***Discussion task**

This is a very open-ended question. Students may discuss:

- Warnings about the possible effects of scientific advancement particularly in warfare
- What kind of a species we want to evolve into.
- Is the pursuit of knowledge superior to other things: art or empathy...?
- How can education and knowledge be valuable? How can it be dangerous?
- How should we treat one another?

*Form: War novel***Discussion task**

This is an open-ended task and students will make a range of points. These may include:

- Literary licence: in a fictional war the author is in control of events.
- In a fictional war the author does not have to consider war as the text is sufficient.
- Propaganda: the fictional war allows the author to shape events to suit a narrative purpose.
- A text set in a real war is potentially more poignant/familiar.

*Form: Point of view***Discussion task**

Students may make a range of points, for example:

- Characterisation: making the narrator seem arrogant or, conversely, authoritative.
- Reliability. Does this make the narrator seem more reliable: he is knowledgeable and information gained later? or less reliable: he is guessing and making up detail?
- The benefit of hindsight.
- The difference between H G Wells as author and the narrator.

*Form: Practice essay question***AO1**

- An overview of realist and fantastic elements in the extract and novel as a whole.
- An understanding of how Wells creates scientific verisimilitude.
- The reliable/unreliable narrator.

AO2

- Genre: science fiction as speculative / social commentary.

AO3

- Comments on Wells' use of journalistic language and detached style: the narrator says 'they were evidently much less sensible of change in temperature than we are'. Rather than the Martians' lack of clothing the narrator rationalises it and presents reasons: reportage.
- The narrator provides information rather than emotion, often detailed.
- Scientific analysis: 'Nature has never hit upon the wheel'.
- The Martians are very alien: very unlike people.
- Analysis of how convincing the ending is: scientific explanation offered; is it satisfying?
- Not a fairy-tale ending, grittier: the fear lives on.

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Structure

Active Learning Task

Chapter title	Analysis
The Eve of War	Scene setting; the imminence of war is apparent; there is a sense of inevitability
The Falling Star	Shows humanity's ignorance of the true nature of the space and not on earth
On Horsell Common	The importance of setting and small suburban places; the importance of the technology and its dangers; con- threatening to contemporary science
The Cylinder Opens	Sets up the climax of the chapter: a revelation
The Heat-Ray	The importance of the technology and its dangers; con- threatening to contemporary science
How I Reached Home	Sense of adventure, the difficulty of finding safety and
Friday Night	Seemingly an intermission: a pause for thought but also of peace
The Fighting Begins	Dramatic but also implies more to come
In the Trench	Metaphorical and literal storms: the weather, the battle
At the Window	Setting; looking out and in
What I Saw of the Destruction of Weybridge and Shepperton	Setting and the suburbs; reportage
How I Fell in with the Curate	Meeting the curate as accidental and unfortunate 'fell in'
In London	Setting up another scene apart from narrator: subplot
What Had Happened in Surrey	Return to own narrative: importance of place
The Exodus from London	Biblical allusion; being turned out of home; mass move
The Thunder Child'	The importance of the ship to the story; a name which and innocence
Under Foot	Humanity trodden down and subject to the Martians;
What We Saw of the Ruined House	'What we saw' drawing attention to their limited perspective of domestic spaces
The Days of Imprisonment	The curate and narrator's imprisonment in the house as under the Martians; time frame
The Death of the Curate	Does not hide significant event: no suspense, a description narrator is being honest and has nothing to hide
The Stillness	Creates suspense
The Work of Fifteen Days	Draws attention to time frame and transformation of the nature of Martians
The Man on Putney Hill	In contrast with other titles, the narrator here withholds the artilleryman
Dead London	Utter destruction: a vibrant city described as 'dead'; de
Wreckage	Implies total destruction; these are the leftovers
The Epilogue	Suggests the war goes on

Discussion task: Does the narrator change?

- The narrator is aware of the Martians and the threat they impose but is this a change?
- There is very little character development as the characters are more conduits for the story.
- Writing about character development helps students to make links across the text, character at the beginning and end of the novel is useful.
- The narrator has a breakdown, from which he recovers.

Discussion task: Is the narrator a hero?

This is an open-ended task and students may make a range of points.

Discussion task: Prize

- Arguably the gained knowledge is the prize; however, it is pretty depressing knowledge.
- The narrator is reunited with his wife, but this storyline is so underdeveloped it is an

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