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## Literature Teaching Unit

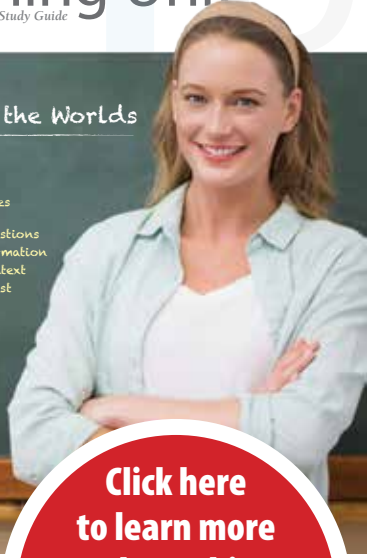
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



### The War of the Worlds

by H.G. Wells

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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# The War of the Worlds

## Objectives

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

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

# The War of the Worlds

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

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

### Chapter III - On Horsell Common

#### Vocabulary

**afforded**—offered, provided,  
**embedded**—firmly secured, stuck  
**fancy**—to imagine  
**hue**—a tint, hint of color  
**impediment**—an obstacle, hindrance  
**inanimate**—lifeless  
**jobbing**—freelancing  
**models**—plans, designs  
**oxide**—oxygen and another element  
**perceived**—understood  
**roused**—awakened, excited  
**waylay**—to wait for  
**wielding**—waving, brandishing

1. One of the reasons Wells is called the “father of science fiction” is because the events in his stories seem to be real. How does the setting of this story contribute to the reader’s acceptance of the Martians landing as a real news event?

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2. Why is the narrator included in the group of “privileged spectators within the contemplated enclosure”?

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3. List the sights and sounds coming from the pit before the Deputation are destroyed by the heat-ray.

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4. What do you think the narrator is feeling in the following passage from the story? Are his feelings reasonable under the circumstances?

I remember I felt an extraordinary persuasion that I was being played with, that presently, when I was upon the very verge of safety, this mysterious death—as swift as the passage of light—would leap after me from the pit about the cylinder and strike me down.

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## Chapter XII - What I Saw of the Destruction of Weybridge and Shepperton

### Vocabulary

**assiduously**—completely  
**clangorous**—loud, echoing  
**crested**—topped  
**decapitated**—beheaded  
**din**—a commotion  
**dissuaded**—persuaded  
**expostulating**—arguing  
**formidable**—terrifying, fearsome  
**heliograph**—an instrument that sends messages using mirrors and the sun  
**incandescent**—bright, glowing  
**jesting**—joking  
**magnified**—enlarged  
**obliquely**—indirectly  
**patent**—obvious  
**pitched**—tossed about  
**pluckily**—bravely  
**portmanteau**—a leather suitcase  
**proportion**—a part, amount  
**riveted**—captured, fastened  
**sabbatical**—religious  
**save**—except for  
**score**—many (at least 20)  
**secure**—to maintain  
**seething**—ferocity  
**sodden**—soaked through  
**theodolite**—an instrument with a telescope used in surveying  
**treble**—three-part  
**tumultuous**—rough; stormy  
**unavailingly**—uselessly  
**vicar**—a minister or priest of the Church of England  
**weal**—a ridge

1. What two pieces of advice does the artillery man give the narrator before they leave his home?

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