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Reflections: A Student Response Journal



The Time Machine
H. G. Wells



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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Chapter 1

1. The Time Traveller gathers a group of men to have a discussion about time. They are: the Narrator, the Medical Man, the Psychologist, the Provincial Mayor, the Very Young Man, and Filby. Some critics believe that these men are identified only by their occupations because Wells wants the reader to see them as types of men rather than as individuals. Suppose you are the Time Traveller and want to gather together a group of people from all walks of life. Who might you include in the group?
2. The Time Traveller says that it is possible to move about in time. “For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence: I become absent-minded, as you say. I jump back for a moment.” Write about an instance in your life when you might have experienced this same kind of jump back in time.
3. The Psychologist thinks time travel would be very convenient for the historian because he could go back in time to verify historical events, such as the Battle of Hastings. If you could go back in time, what past mystery or event would you like to verify? Why?
4. The Medical Man thinks the Time Traveller is going to do “some sleight-of-hand trick or other” when the Time Traveller claims he can produce experimental verification that time travel is possible. Suppose someone you know claims he or she can travel through time. What would that person have to say to convince you of his or her sincerity?

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11. The Time Traveller worries that the first creature he sees in the future might have
“developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful. I might seem some old-world savage animal, only the more dreadful and disgusting for our common likeness.”

Think about the harmful ways powerful societies in the past have treated less technologically developed cultures, such as Native Americans. Why do you think this happens? Should the Time Traveller be afraid of creatures in an advanced society?

Chapter 4

12. At first, the Time Traveller likes the people of the future. “Indeed, there was something in these pretty little people that inspired confidence—a graceful gentleness, a certain childlike ease.” In your experience, how important is physical beauty or attractiveness in helping a person to be liked?
13. The Time Traveller expects humans in the year 802,701 to be intellectually superior to himself. He is disappointed by his childlike hosts and worries that he may have built the Time Machine in vain. Write a letter to the Time Traveller helping him to understand that, despite his disappointment, his accomplishment is important.

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40. As the Time Traveller approaches the White Sphinx, he notices that the Morlocks have opened the brass panels. He throws away his iron bar, “almost sorry not to use it.” Write about an incident in your life when you prepared for some event only to discover that your preparations were unnecessary.

Chapter 11

41. In this chapter, the Time Traveller continues forward in Time instead of returning to his own age. Assume you are the Time Traveller. You experience the horror of the Morlocks and the disappointment of man’s bleak future. Where would you go in the Time Machine after finally wrestling it away from the Morlocks? Why?
42. The Time Traveller describes the silence of the future world without “the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the background of our lives...” Describe the background sounds you hear every day as you sit in your classroom.
43. Wells describes the last living creature on the planet as a “round thing, the size of a football perhaps, or it may be, bigger, and tentacles trailed down from it...” If you were a science fiction writer, how would you describe the last living creature on Earth?

Epilogue

48. The Narrator writes, “He...thought but cheerlessly of the Advancement of Mankind, and saw in the growing pile of civilisation only a foolish heaping that must inevitably fall back upon and destroy its makers in the end. If that is so, it remains for us to live as though it were not so.” Write a letter to a friend explaining the meaning of the above passage.
49. Often in modern science fiction, time travelers must try to avoid tampering with the past because they might inadvertently change the future. Assume that the Time Traveller’s story is true and that mankind’s advancement eventually destroys humanity. Also, assume that the Time Traveller returns to 1895 to tell his companions about his experiences in the future. In what ways do you think this knowledge of the future might help to change the future and make the Time Traveller’s conclusions invalid?
51. The last line in this story is a hopeful one: “even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man.” What redeeming qualities do you think humans possess which help give you hope that mankind’s future will be a good one?