

# Teaching Pack: *The War of the Worlds*

Cambridge IGCSE™ / IGCSE (9–1)  
Literature in English 0475 / 0992

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## Introduction

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This *Teaching Pack* supports teachers and learners when studying Cambridge IGCSE / IGCSE (9–1) and O Level Literature in English set texts.

Set texts regularly rotate on the syllabus and may change from one year of examination to the next. Before you begin teaching, check the set text list for the year in which your candidates will take their examinations.

Teachers may use this teaching pack to engage their learners when introducing a set text, or as a revision tool.

The content of these set text resources will need to be expanded on to cover what candidates are expected to know and be able to comment on in an examination.

To increase learners' understanding and appreciation of the set text we recommend learners to set up a **reading log**, which could include:

- brief synopses of chapters/acts (in no more than a couple of sentences in their own words)
- a timeline of events (useful when a narrative is arranged non-chronologically)
- a list or diagram of characters and their relationships with each other
- first impressions of main characters
- initial thoughts about the main themes or ideas in the text.

In this pack we have included some useful lesson resources to use with learners.

- Text summary
- Character summaries and quotations
- Reflection and activities
- A quiz.

## 1. Text summary

*The War of the Worlds* is a pre-1900 fictional novel by H.G. Wells that recounts the invasion of Earth by colonising Martians.

### Book 1

The opening chapter, 'The Eve of War', introduces the nameless narrator who tells the reader that the superior Martians have been observing Earth for some time, meticulously planning their invasion. Martian resources have run low as the planet is in its 'cooling' stage and they plan to fight for their 'existence' by relocating to Earth. The narrator explains that astronomers have seen flares on Mars and believe these to be the 'jetting of gas' from the planet, but that in reality, these flares were the well-timed launches of Martian craft heading for Earth.

A meteorite lands on the common near the narrator's home in Woking and he and some other scientists go to investigate. They find the great pit it has created and on inspection they find a cylindrical vehicle that contains 'beings' assumed correctly to be Martians. The beings appear to be either unresponsive or dead and very quickly a crowd develops on Horsell Common to see the spectacle.

The evening of that day the narrator returns to Horsall Common. As he arrives, he sees that there is a commotion as the object in the pit is starting to unscrew and rise. From out of the cylinder the narrator sees a large, jelly-like grey creature with two eyes and a V-shaped mouth push itself out; the Martian stands for a few seconds and then falls back into the pit. On seeing this the narrator, horror struck, but fascinated starts to move away.

As the narrator circles the pit he perceives a strange flash of greenish light in the distance. Then after a few more lights he reports that a heat-ray is being used by the Martians to sweep around the pit and instantly incinerate everything it comes into contact with. A great number of the scientists and the crowds that have gathered are killed by the heat-ray. The narrator runs home, crying like a child, only narrowly escaping death and tells his worried wife what has happened.

That Friday night around the area of the cylinder crash site, life continues fairly normally for suburban Woking. There is the background sound of the Martians hammering and working and occasionally the search light sweeps the common, followed by the heat-ray to exterminate anybody who has ventured too close to the pit. Later that evening there is a streak of greenish light across the sky and a second cylinder falls to the North-West.

Saturday starts fairly normally; the milkman delivers the milk. After a walk to the common and back and witnessing the carnage of the night before, the narrator decides that he and his wife must leave. He secures a dogcart and decides to leave with his wife and servant for Leatherhead. He will leave her there with a cousin and then return the dogcart.

After leaving his wife, the narrator sets out to cover the twelve miles back to Woking. As he approaches the town, he sees a third greenish cylinder falling to Earth and then he sees a huge metallic tripod/Fighting Machine rise in front of him. Following this a second tripod rushes towards him and he crashes the dogcart. Dazed, bruised and scared the narrator makes his way home, seeing the dead body of the dogcart owner.

After some time, the narrator looks out of the window and surveys the damage to the landscape, wondering what the tripods are and how they function. As he does this, he notices an artillery man hiding in his garden. He calls him in, gives him a whiskey and they talk. The artillery man talks about the battles in which all of his fellow men have died when the heat-ray vaporised them. Later, the artillery man and the narrator leave in the direction of Leatherhead. As they near the Thames,

## Book 1

the two men meet the 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars and become involved in telling their story. As they do this, they are attacked by Martians and a Tripod in a grand battle. One of the Martian devices is destroyed and the biological Martian inside it is slain. The Narrator barely escapes with his life as the heat-ray cleans up the scene and the Martians come to remove their dead comrade. Confused and disorientated, the narrator takes cover in a hedge with a curate who acts in a strange manner.

The narrator then switches to tell the reader his brother's story. The medical student was staying and studying in London, and after the strike decides he needs to make his way to the narrator. His journey is hard, and he eventually ends up being one of the six million Londoners trying to escape the city that Saturday night. Whilst travelling out of London he saves two women from the attack of drunken men using a revolver given to him by one of the women. Eventually, after a chaotic and dangerous journey, the three of them escape on a steamboat heading towards Essex. On this journey the narrator's brother witnesses the destruction of two Martian tripods by the sea vessel 'The Thunder Child' after it attacks at pace.

## Book 2

At the start of Book 2 the narrator describes the journey that he and the curate have been making on foot, moving from house to house looking for food and shelter. In Sheen, they find a stocked and abandoned house and stop for a rest. Whilst they are resting another blinding flash of light suggests that a fifth cylinder has made contact with Earth just outside where they are sheltering. The narrator is knocked unconscious and when he comes around the curate tells him to be quiet as there is a Martian outside; they can see the grey figure through a crack in the wall.

At this point in the novel the narrator also recounts everything he has learned about the Martians and their species. He tells us that they have no digestive system at all and are mostly comprised of just brain and nerves that feed this. They are fuelled by blood that they inject from living creatures directly into their veins in a process that the narrator describes as horrific. They have no need for sleep, so in twenty-four hours they do twenty-four hours of work. They have no sex and so are not driven by any of the complex emotions that drive humans. They can see and hear in much the same way as humans, but perhaps perceive colours differently. There is no need for them to wear clothing as they are apparently less sensitive to temperature.

Over the course of around a week, the narrator and the curate hide in the house moving between rooms to avoid the gaze of the second tripod/Fighting Machine and its elevated position. During this time the curate becomes slowly more unstable, talking to himself, incapable of discussion and prone to violence. Later, the narrator knocks the curate unconscious when he won't be quiet and threatens to bring the Martians down upon them. Hearing the noise, the Martian puts its tentacle into the house through the crack in the wall and explores the remains of the house and debris. The tentacle removes the body of the unconscious curate and only just misses snatching the narrator before he can escape.

After six days of hiding, the narrator takes his opportunity to escape as the Martians seem to have abandoned the pit outside the house. He sets about walking amongst the red weed back towards London and his wife. When he gets to Putney, the narrator starts to think that all of mankind has been exterminated. On his journey, the narrator meets the artillery man again. This man fills him in on what has been happening in London, its destruction and the movement of the Martians North. The man believes that it is the end of mankind, and the Martians will be victorious.

After the narrator departs from the artillery man, he resumes his journey through London. He passes dead bodies, red-weed and destruction along his way. Near Kensington Gardens he hears

**Book 2**

the strange wail of 'Ulla, ulla, ulla...'. Hungry, thirsty and sore, the narrator wanders the 'city of the dead'. Eventually, and close to the edge of sanity, at St John's Wood Station the narrator comes across the toppled corpse of a Handling Machine and its dead operator; the mechanics of the machine are making the terrible noise. Further inspection and research confirms that the Martians have unexpectedly died due to immune insufficiency. The bacteria and germs of Earth are what has attacked the biologically unprepared Martians, just as it is now killing their red-weed.

For three days the Narrator wanders, close to nervous exhaustion and breakdown. Luckily, he is found and then nursed back to health by some kind strangers. On the fourth day, he leaves their care and makes his way back to his house. At his now desolate home he finds his wife has survived and has journeyed back to him; they are reunited along with her cousin.

In the epilogue the narrator considers the issue of life beyond human life and the arrogance of man. He suggests that although they have won this battle, that this disaster should be regarded as warning; this may only be the beginning.

## 2. Character summaries and quotations

### The Narrator

The Narrator of the novel describes himself in Book 1 as a 'recognised writer on philosophical themes' and perhaps it is this thoughtful approach to the world and problems that makes him an ideal narrator for this story. He is a likeable, thoughtful and measured character who navigates the reader through his story in a first-person retrospective account. His determination to survive and return to his wife means that he is a survivor and so is well placed to observe the full story and then recount it. His detailed and thoughtful depictions and explorations give the reader a clear image of the Martians and the journey that mankind is challenged with. His scientific manner and eye for detail create the feel of an unbiased account of the events that unfold before, during and after the invasion.

One of the early signals that the reader should like the Narrator, is the obvious love and care he has for his wife. As soon as he feels that there is a threat posed by the Martians, he sets about relocating her and the servant to her cousin's house in Leatherhead. He does in fact go to quite some lengths and danger to get his wife to safety, finding and borrowing the dog-cart and then promising to return it after his wife is safe.

The Narrator has a curiosity and interest in the Martians that seems to go beyond the basic responses that he sees around him. He starts the novel displaying some of the arrogant traits of man that Wells is evidently critiquing, believing that humans will defeat the Martians quickly and easily. On the first night he happily and vainly chats during dinner, drinking wine, safe in his presumed superiority as a human. Quickly, the Narrator then experiences fear and even terror as he realises that perhaps humans have been too quick to assume their place in the hierarchy. He is also intensely intrigued by these beings and tries to observe them in a rational scientific manner. He goes as far as to physically put himself in danger so that he is able to observe them a little more closely. The detail with which he recounts these observations appears scientifically objective and it gives the reader a vivid picture of these other-worldly beings. He is methodical and logical in these observations, commenting on small details and then linking these together to create a whole picture for the reader. It is interesting to observe, through the Narrator's eyes and with his commentary, how these beings have evolved to become a superior power to humans.

It is in these observations that the Narrator reveals his newly found humility. Not only is he fearful of their power, but he acknowledges that in some ways they are no different to humans in their drive to save their species. As humans are doing, they have wasted and used their planet and now they find themselves in danger of extinction. They are not evil, they are simply trying to save themselves and whilst watching the horror yet efficiency of the feeding process, the narrator realises this.

Despite the chaos, terror and injury that the invasion causes the Narrator, he remains hopeful to the end of the novel. He never wavers from the challenge of saving his wife and then returning to her, he helps as many people as he can and he believes that man has the capacity for change. In the epilogue he expresses that this change is essential as this may only 'be the beginning'.

Quotation	This suggests...
'The immediate pressure of necessity has brightened their intellects, enlarged their powers, and hardened their hearts.' Book 1 Chapter 1	That the Narrator understands and is engaged with ideas of Evolution. Darwin's 'On the Origin of Species' had been released just prior to this novel and it caused much commotion, with many disagreeing with Darwin's theories. The Narrator uses a triplet that addresses the brain, the body and the emotions to present the ways in which the Martians have adapted to ensure their survival.



Quotation	This suggests...
'We must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought' Book 1 Chapter 1	That the Narrator understands the folly of mankind in thinking that he is a superior being. This is possibly a reference to the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the landscape of Britain during Wells' era. The adjective 'ruthless' and the abstract noun 'destruction' are emotive and convey the Narrator's horror at the realisation of what man is capable of. In this sense, man and the Martians are no different, they have both caused destruction to their home planets.
'Never before in the history of the world had such a mass of human beings moved and suffered together.... it was a stampede... without order and without a goal, six million people unarmed and unprovisioned, driving headlong.' Book 1 Chapter 17	That the Narrator understands the change that is occurring under the reign of the Martians. The humans, when faced with terror at their own extinction behave like animals and are dehumanised as such. The loss of their humanity is emphasised by the repetition of 'without' in the descriptive list. The metaphor that compares them to animals in blind panic, acting only on instinct reminds the reader of how humans exploit their power over animals, just as the Martians are now doing to them.

## The Martians

The Martians are the antagonists in the novel. Greyish, gelatinous figures they are comprised mostly of a head/brain element that has two eyes, one auditory socket and a V-shaped mouth. The Narrator describes how they do not seem to need clothes because they are not sensitive to atmospheric temperatures, they have no sex and so are free of the chaotic emotions of humans and they have no digestive system and so no need to eat. They are fuelled by the blood of other living creatures that they inject intravenously into their bodies.

The Martians are invading earth with a view to conquering and then inhabiting because they have depleted the natural resources of their own planet and this planet is now in the cooling stage and will not be able to sustain Martian life. The Martians have evolved over many years to have greater technologies than mankind, to have a sharper intellect and to have harder hearts meaning that their invasion poses real threat to Earth and to mankind.

The Martians are biological beings, yet the Narrator encounters them in different forms and machines in different situations. There are the tripods/fighting machines and handling machines that he observes on his journeys. The different technological forms of the Martians use different advanced technologies to perform their duties effectively. The heat-gun easily and quickly vaporises vast expanses of land and the humans in its path. They also have a 'black vapour' they release that kills everything it comes into contact with. The 'black vapour' sweeping across the land is reminiscent of the dark destructive sweep of the industrial revolution in Britain.

The Martians are merciless and cold killers, yet they are not presented as evil or malicious agents of death, simply necessity killers. The continuation of their species necessitates them finding, conquering and then inhabiting a new planet and that is simply what they are attempting via their invasion of Earth. It is during the observation of their feeding that the Narrator begins to make this distinction. The Narrator also starts to see them and their actions as strangely similar to the actions of man; man is destroying his own planet and if he doesn't stop he will end up in the same position as the Martians.

Quotation	This suggests...
'No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own.' Book 1 Chapter 1	That by the end of his invasion experience, the Narrator understands that man's vanity could be his downfall. The idea of man being 'watched keenly' from above creates imagery of specimens under the microscope, inferior beings at the mercy of greater 'intelligences'.
'This isn't a war... It never was a war, any more than there's war between men and ants.' Book 2 Chapter 7 (Artilleryman)	That although eccentric and misinformed, the Artilleryman has seen the immense power of the Martians and appreciates what the outcome of this invasion could have been. The juxtaposition of the 'men' at war with the 'ants' effectively conveys the weakness and inferior position of mankind in this battle, whilst emphasising the evolved effectiveness and power of the antagonists.
'But there are no bacteria on Mars... when I watched them they were irrevocably doomed...' Book 2 Chapter 8 (Narrator)	The Martian's downfall is not deficiency in their technological advancement or their brute power, but their insufficient immunity to Earth's 'bacteria and germs'. In this sense, mankind does not defeat the invasion because of skill or power, but because of a biological quirk in the opponent. Man is not victorious, he is lucky in the same way that the Martians are 'doomed'.

## The Narrator's brother

Unlike the Narrator, who is contemplative and reflective in his approach to challenge, the Narrator's brother is brave and heroic. He is a leader of men and a defender of women and children. He makes courageous decisions and then acts upon them with little regard for himself. This is exemplified in the way he fights to save the two women who are being attacked, but also suffers great injury himself in doing so.

The Narrator's brother shows great care for his sibling and great concern for his welfare. This feeling of responsibility for him is what drives him through his perilous journey.

The Narrator's brother symbolises the resilience and adaptability of human nature and mankind. He is essential to the story because he helps to illustrate the range of responses humans can have to catastrophe. Ultimately, his character arc within the larger story symbolises hope; this is the hope that when faced with the most extreme challenges, mankind will find the resources within themselves to survive.

Quotation	This suggests...
"My brother immediately grasped the situation, shouted, and hurried towards the struggle.' Book 1 Chapter 16	That the Narrator's brother should be seen as a man of action and a heroic figure. He makes decisions quickly and then acts without fear. The triplet of verbs 'grasped', 'shouted' and 'hurried' all present him as a man who is quick to defend the innocent and isn't scared of conflict.
'My brother, very luckily for him... preferred to push on at once to the coast, rather than wait for food, although all three of them were very hungry.' Book 1 Chapter 17	That the Narrator's brother is capable of making difficult and challenging decisions in the fight for survival. He is able to look outside of the immediate threat and see beyond his fear to the actions that need to occur to get the three of them to safety. The plosive alliteration of his decision to 'prefer[red] to push on', gives a power to this action which mimics his determination to succeed.
'It was the first Martian my brother had seen, and he stood, more amazed than terrified...' Book 1 Chapter 17	That, like the Narrator, his brother has an interest and curiosity that lessens his 'fear' and so means that he is not paralyzed by terror and incapable of decision making. Neither does he run or panic like many of the 6 million Londoners, instead, he 'stood' and was 'amazed' at the sight.

Create your own character summaries including quotation tables:

[Character name]

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Quotation	This suggests...

[illegible]

## Explore the characters in the novel

Create practice questions around the characters of the novel, for example:

- Explore the ways in which [author] portrays the differences between [character] and [character]?
- Explore the ways in which [author] strikingly portrays [character's] relationship with [character].
- How does the writer memorably depict the life of [character]?

Choose **one** of your questions and complete the following activities:

Compile a QUOTATION + COMMENT table to record your ideas about specific characters.

Add notes to each quotation about what it reveals about the character and their relevant contexts.

Learn some key quotations.

Answer the question. Peer-evaluate each other's answers.

Note examples of:

- irrelevant points (which perhaps narrate or describe)
- repeated points (where no more credit can be given)
- unsupported assertions (which do not constitute analysis)
- long quotations (which indicate a lack of clear focus).

Tick:

- ✓ points that are valid and thoughtful
- ✓ quotations that are concise and relevant
- ✓ critical comments on key words or aspects of structure and form.

[illegible]

**Explore the themes of the novel**

Create practice questions around a theme (listed in section 1), for example:

- How does [author] portray [theme] in the novel?
- In what ways does [author] convey [theme] in the novel?
- How does [author] present his ideas about [theme] in the novel?

Choose **one** of your questions and complete the following activities:

- Compile a QUOTATION + COMMENT table to record your ideas about specific characters.
- Add notes to each quotation about what it reveals about the character and their relevant contexts.
- Learn some key quotations.
- Answer the question. Peer-evaluate each other's answers.

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## 4. Quiz

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**1. At the start of Book 1, what are the greenish flares the astronomers observe on Mars?**

- A) Jetting of built-up gas.
- B) Communication signals.
- C) Launches of Martian craft.
- D) Evidence the planet is cooling.

**2. Which of these statements is false?**

- A) The biological Martians are grey.
- B) The biological Martians have a singular eye.
- C) The biological Martians have a V-shaped mouth.
- D) The biological Martians are jelly-like.

**3. Where does the narrator plan to take his wife for safety?**

- A) Leatherhead.
- B) Surrey.
- C) Woking.
- D) Horsall.

**4. On returning from Leatherhead, who does the narrator find taking cover in his garden?**

- A) His brother.
- B) A curate.
- C) The dog-cart owner.
- D) An artillery man.

**5. Which of these statements is true?**

- A) The narrator's brother witnesses the destruction of two Martian tripods.
- B) The narrator's brother is on 'The Thunder Child'.
- C) The narrator's brother saves two women from Martian attack.
- D) The narrator's brother is travelling towards London.



**6. Why does the narrator knock the curate unconscious?**

- A) Because he is making a noise.
- B) Because he is violent to the narrator.
- C) Because he needs to create a distraction.
- D) Because he needs a sacrifice to save himself.

**7. After escaping from the house in Sheen, the narrator starts to journey back towards London and meets the artillery man. What does this man tell him?**

- A) That mankind is close to victory.
- B) The Martians have moved South.
- C) That mankind is nearly defeated.
- D) The Martians have retreated.

**8. What does the narrator find making an 'Ulla, ulla, ulla...' noise?**

- A) A tripod.
- B) A Handling Machine.
- C) A biological Martian.
- D) A dying man.

**9. What finally ends the invasion of Earth by the Martians?**

- A) They retreat due to Earth's superior power.
- B) Earth's resources are not enough to sustain them.
- C) Earth's bacteria and germs kills them.
- D) The pressure of Earth's gravity kills them.

**10. In the epilogue the narrator suggests that...?**

- A) Mars will invade again after this failure.
- B) Humankind won because they were well prepared.
- C) The threat is over now.
- D) This may only be the beginning.

## Quiz answers

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**1. At the start of Book 1, what are the greenish flares the astronomers observe on Mars?**

C) Launches of Martian craft.

**2. Which of these statements is false?**

B) The biological Martians have a singular eye.

**3. Where does the narrator plan to take his wife for safety?**

A) Leatherhead.

**4. On returning from Leatherhead, who does the narrator find taking cover in his garden?**

D) An artillery man.

**5. Which of these statements is true?**

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B) A Handling Machine.

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C) Earth's bacteria and germs kills them.

**10. In the epilogue the narrator suggests that...?**

D) This may only be the beginning.

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