Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

0-5 5-7 7-9 9-12 12+

opening extract from

The War of the Worlds

written by

H. G. Wells

- retold by Eric Brown

published by

Real Reads

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Published by Real Reads Ltd
Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK
www.realreads.co.uk

Text copyright © Eric Brown 2008
Illustrations copyright © Felix Bennett 2008
The right of Eric Brown to be identified as author of
this book has been asserted by him in accordance with the
Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988

First published in 2008

All rights reserved
No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any
form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including
photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval
system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

ISBN 978-1-906230-12-8

Printed in Malaysia by Imago Ltd
Designed by Lucy Guenot
Typeset by Bookcraft Ltd, Stroud, Gloucestershire

CONTENTS

The Characters 4

The War of the Worlds 7

Taking things further 55



THE CHARACTERS



The narrator

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

The narrator's wife

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





The curate

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

The artilleryman

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





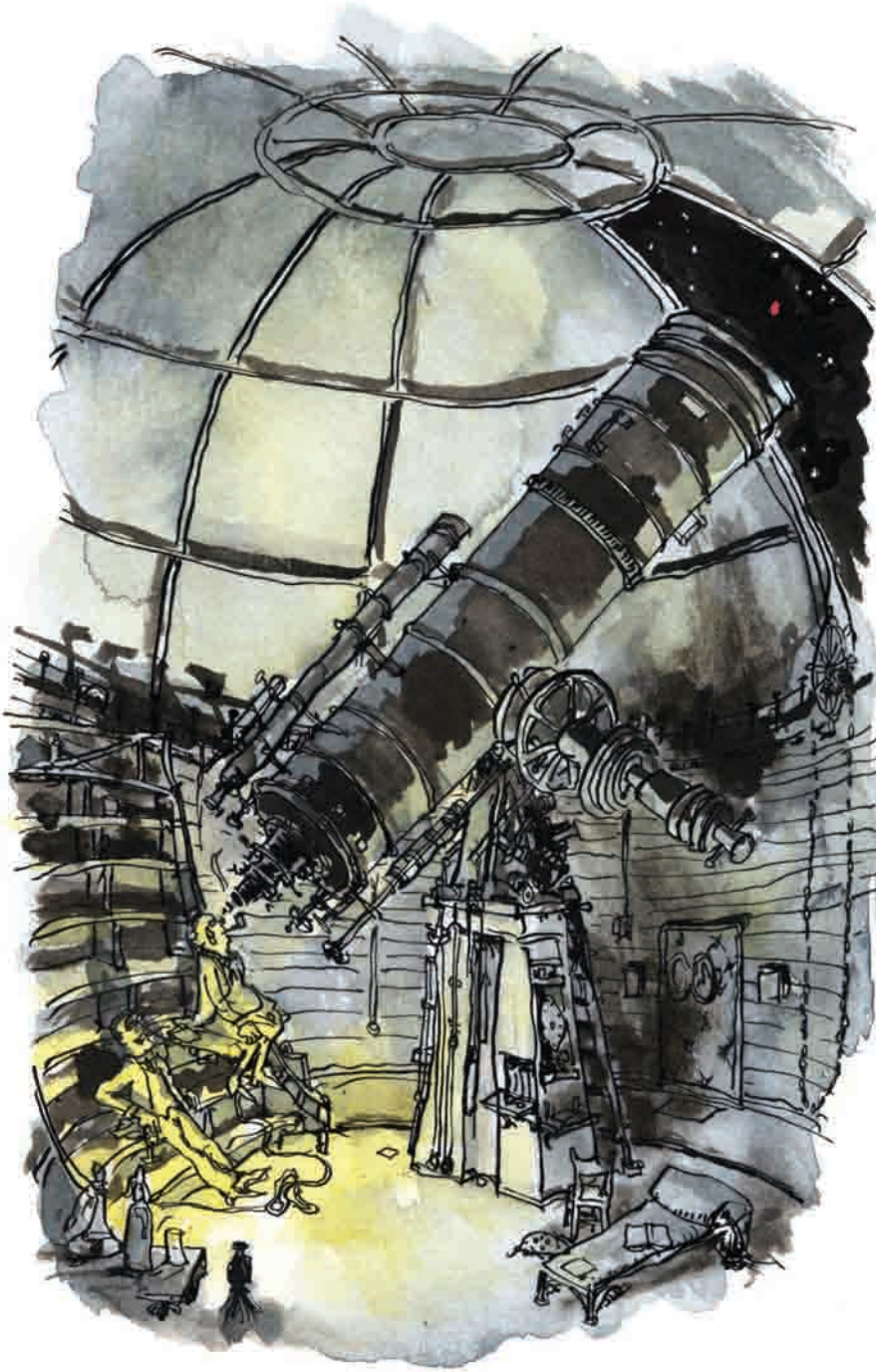
Ogilvy

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

The Martians

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





THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

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

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

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



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

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

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



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



Then he saw the thing itself, half buried in the pit. It was a metal cylinder, more than thirty yards in diameter. Ogilvy knew that it could not be a meteorite. A noise came from within the cylinder. 'Good heavens,' said Ogilvy. 'There's someone in it. They must be half roasted to death and trying to escape!'

He rushed forward to help, but was beaten back by the great heat radiating from the cylinder. Unable to assist, he turned and ran wildly towards town. His route took him past the house where a journalist acquaintance, Henderson, lived.

'Henderson,' he called, 'you saw that shooting star last night?'

'Well?' said Henderson.

'It's out on Horsell Common now. But it's not a meteorite. It's a cylinder! And there's something inside. I'm wondering if it has anything to do with the Martian flares.'

Ogilvy told him all that he had seen.

Henderson was a minute or so taking it in, then snatched up his jacket. The two men hurried back to the common, and found the cylinder still lying in the same position. The sounds inside had ceased, and a thin circle of bright metal showed between the top and the body of the cylinder. Air was either entering or escaping at the rim with a thin, sizzling sound. They listened, rapped on the scaly burnt metal with a stick and, meeting with no response, concluded that whatever was inside must be dead. As they were unable to do anything more, they set off for town where Henderson went straight to the railway station in order to telegraph the story to London.

Word of mouth travelled even faster than the newspapers, and by eight that evening, a crowd had gathered by the pit to see 'the dead men from Mars'.



Early next morning I hurried down to the common. Quite a crowd had gathered, and Ogilvy and Henderson and several workmen were down in the pit with spades and pickaxes. They had uncovered a large portion of the cylinder, though its lower end was still embedded.

As I looked, I noticed movement at the end of the cylinder. Very slowly the circular top was rotating.

Ogilvy and the others scrambled from the pit. 'I say!' Ogilvy shouted. 'Keep back! We don't know what's in that confounded thing!'

The crowd around the pit now numbered some two or three hundred. As I watched, the end of the cylinder screwed all the way out and fell to the ground with a clang.

I saw something stirring within the shadows – greyish billows, and two luminous disk-like eyes. Then something resembling a grey snake coiled up, followed by another. A sudden chill