

Classic Readers

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

H. G. Wells

retold by Jenny Dooley



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The Man on Putney Hill

Trembling, I stood on the raised pile of ruins and stared around me. The land looked strange and over-bright—like the landscape of another planet. It made me feel like a rabbit returning to his home and finding it dug up by a dozen men. I was no longer a master but an animal among animals, completely under the control of the Martians.

That feeling was stopped by my hunger. Away from the pit and beyond a wall, I saw a small area of a garden that was not covered in red. I started walking through the overgrown alien plant—sometimes it reached my knee, sometimes my neck. I could easily hide between its divided leaves, which made me feel safe. In the garden, I found some onions and carrots. I took them and went on my way. I had to find more food and get as far away as possible. I found some mushrooms; I ate them, but I was still hungry. Then I came to some familiar fields; I was surprised because they had flooded with water.

This was caused by the red plant. It grew gigantic in water. In the rivers, its titanic leaves pushed the water out. As it poured out, the plant followed the water and grew even more—until it covered all the ruins and the damage the Martians had left behind. In the end, the plant died almost as quickly as it had grown. It is believed our bacteria killed it; its leaves lost their colour, became dry and then broke to pieces at the smallest touch. When I found some water to drink, I had a sudden strong wish to taste the red plant. It had a terrible, metallic taste.

The scenery changed when I reached Putney Common. It looked more human and, later on, areas were in perfect condition.

The trees were not covered by the red plant. I couldn't find any food, and I was too weak to continue. I lay down in the bushes for the rest of the day. All this time, I had seen no humans or Martians; only two human skeletons—not bodies, skeletons—and the bones of cats, rabbits and sheep.

After sunset, I set off again. I found a few potatoes in a garden, enough to stop my hunger. The view towards Putney was very sad: blackened trees, empty ruins and, down the hill, the flooded river painted red by the alien plant. And all over—silence. I felt like I was the last man alive. On the top of the hill, I found another human skeleton. I was certain that most humans were killed in this part of the world. The Martians, I thought, had gone to other countries to look for their food—perhaps to Berlin or Paris, or to the north.

I spent that night in an inn at the top of Putney Hill. I lay in a bed for the first time since the day I ran to Leatherhead. Hopeless, I searched every room for food; I found a piece of old bread, two tins of pineapple and some forgotten biscuits. I checked every window before going to bed, but I slept little. As I lay in the dark, I found myself thinking clearly again; something I hadn't done since my last argument with the curate.

Three things were on my mind: the curate's death, where the Martians were, and what had happened to my wife. I could not feel guilty about the first. A series of accidents had led me, step by step, to that attack. But the memory of it made me suffer. If I had known we wouldn't be able to work together, I would have left the curate in Halliford. I did not plan his death, so I believe this was not a crime. Then, I thought about the other two problems. I had no information about the Martians or my wife; I imagined a hundred things for each one. And, suddenly, that night became terrible. I sat up and prayed.

The Death of the Curate

Comprehension

Read or listen to Chapter 8 and circle the correct answer.

- 1 The curate was not or controlled as a person.
a hungry b calm c spoilt
- 2 The alien machines were
a clumsy b lively c quick
- 3 The curate's voice became
a louder b healthier c weaker
- 4 The narrator was when he was in the cellar.
a blind b screaming c scared
- 5 Drinking rainwater made the narrator feel
a encouraged b better c hurt
- 6 The houses in Sheen were
a smashed b red c buried

What do you think?

A Discuss the following questions.

- 1 Do you know of any animal with strange feeding habits? Do you find any of them disgusting? Why (not)?
- 2 What do you think about the curate's death? Could the narrator have handled the situation differently? What would you have done?

B Find the following extracts from Chapter 8 and discuss their meanings.

- 1 p. 59: 'I don't like to remember these things, but I am writing them down so that nothing is missing from my story.'

- 2 p. 61: *'It sounds impossible, but I think the curate's weakness and madness made me stronger, and kept my mind clear and healthy.'*
- 3 p. 65: *'By contrast, the day seemed so bright, the sky a glowing blue. A gentle breeze blew on my face. And oh! The sweetness of the air!'*

Language Practice

What was the conversation like when the narrator tried to persuade the curate to save their food? Use the suggestions below or your own ideas to complete the following dialogue.

We must
make the
food last.

I must go out
and speak!

Because
we're so
weak!

I will bring
the Martians
in!

This carelessness will cost us our lives!

We can still eat!

- Narrator: Leave the food! 1)
- Curate: Our lives? It's too late! We've been careless, and now we'll all die. I beg you! Let's eat the food that remains!
- Narrator: Control yourself! 2)
- Curate: Forgive us, Lord! Give us safety, food and water.
- Narrator: 3)
- A little every day. Don't you see?
- Curate: Oh, we're being punished! Punished! 4)
-
- Narrator: Be strong, man! Let's make the food last and then escape!
- Curate: Oh, I will shout! I will scream! 5)
- Come in, you monsters!
- Narrator: Look. Drink all you want, but leave the food. Please be still!
- Curate: We have been still for too long. That was our mistake! I must do the right thing. 6)

Make a Solar System Model

I The sun and the group of planets that move around it is called the solar system. There are many solar systems in the universe, and more are discovered every year. What do you know about our solar system? Find information to answer the following questions:

- 1 How many planets are there in our solar system?*
- 2 Which order are they in (from closest to furthest away from the sun)?*
- 3 What are the planets made of?*
- 4 What do they look like?*
- 5 How big are they? Put them in order according to size (from smallest to biggest).*
- 6 What is the difference between a planet and a star?*
- 7 What are dwarf planets, moons, comets and asteroids?*
- 8 How did the planets get their names?*

II Make your own solar system model! There are many ways to make a solar system model. You can think of your own way, or follow the ideas below.

- You will need:*
- a shoe box
 - a large black sheet of card
 - a large white sheet of card
 - paints and crayons (red, white, orange, yellow, blue, green, silver and gold)
 - gold paper
 - glitter glue
 - sticky tape
 - bottle tops
 - scissors
 - nylon string

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

After strange lights appear on the planet Mars, large metal objects begin to fall out of the sky. What happens next changes the world forever. Will the people of Earth survive? What will happen to the society we know? And how can we avoid disaster?



Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Level 6

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