

# ENGLISH



## PRACTICE QUESTIONS

### THE WAR OF THE WORLDS: 25 PRACTICE QUESTIONS

SCORE

/

PERCENTAGE

%

STEMUP

**Prose: The War of the Worlds**

Read this passage from Book One, Chapter I of *The War of the Worlds*, and then answer the question that follows it.

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; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. At most terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us.

Explore how Wells vividly presents humanity as complacent and vulnerable at this moment in the novel.

[25]

**Prose: The War of the Worlds**

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How does Wells make this such a dramatic moment in the novel, in terms of human arrogance and the threat from the unknown?

[25]

### Prose: The War of the Worlds

Read this passage from Book One, Chapter IV of *The War of the Worlds*, and then answer the question that follows it.

A big greyish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder. As it bulged up and caught the light, it glistened like wet leather.

Two large dark-coloured eyes were regarding me steadfastly. The mass that framed them, the head of the thing, was rounded, and had, one might say, a face. There was a mouth under the eyes, the lipless brim of which quivered and panted, and dropped saliva. The whole creature heaved and pulsated convulsively. A lank tentacular appendage gripped the edge of the cylinder, another swayed in the air.

Those who have never seen a living Martian can scarcely imagine the strange horror of its appearance. The peculiar V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip, the absence of brow ridges, the absence of a chin beneath the wedgelike lower lip, the incessant quivering of this mouth, the Gorgon groups of tentacles, the tumultuous breathing of the lungs in a strange atmosphere, the evident heaviness and painfulness of movement due to the greater gravitational energy of the earth, above all, the extraordinary intensity of the immense eyes, were at once vital, intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous.

Explore how Wells vividly presents the Martians as alien and horrifying at this moment in the novel.

[25]

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How does Wells make this such a dramatic moment in the novel, in terms of fear of the unknown?

[25]

### Prose: The War of the Worlds

Read this passage from Book One, Chapter V of *The War of the Worlds*, and then answer the question that follows it.

It was sweeping round swiftly and steadily, this flaming death, this invisible, inevitable sword of heat. I perceived it coming towards me by the flashing bushes it touched, and was too astounded and stupefied to stir. I heard the crackle of fire in the sand-pits and the sudden squeal of a horse that was as suddenly stilled. Then it was as if an invisible yet intensely heated finger were drawn through the heather between me and the Martians, and all along a curving line beyond the sand-pits the dark ground smoked and crackled. Something fell with a crash far away to the left where the road from Woking station opens out on the common. Forth-with the hissing and humming ceased, and the black, dome-like object sank slowly out of sight into the pit.

All this had happened with such swiftness that I had stood motionless, dumbfounded and dazzled by the flashes of light. Had that death swept through a full circle, it must inevitably have slain me in my surprise. But it passed and spared me, and left the night about me suddenly dark and unfamiliar.

Explore how Wells vividly presents the Martians' weapons as terrifying and unstoppable at this moment in the novel.

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How does Wells make this such a dramatic moment in the novel, in terms of technology, power and destruction?

[25]

### Prose: The War of the Worlds

Read this passage from Book One, Chapter XVII of *The War of the Worlds*, and then answer the question that follows it.

Keeping his footing on the heaving deck by clutching the bulwarks, my brother looked past this charging leviathan at the Martians again, and he saw the three of them now close together, and standing so far out to sea that their tripod supports were almost entirely submerged. Thus sunken, and seen in remote perspective, they appeared far less formidable than the huge iron bulk in whose wake the steamer was pitching so helplessly. It would seem they were regarding this new antagonist with astonishment. To their intelligence, it may be, the giant was even such another as themselves. The Thunder Child fired no gun, but simply drove full speed towards them. It was probably her not firing that enabled her to get so near the enemy as she did. They did not know what to make of her. One shell, and they would have sent her to the bottom forthwith with the Heat-Ray.

Explore how Wells vividly presents human courage in the face of a superior enemy at this moment in the novel.

[25]

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How does Wells make this such a dramatic moment in the novel, in terms of bravery and sacrifice?

[25]

### Prose: The War of the Worlds

Read this passage from Book Two, Chapter II of *The War of the Worlds*, and then answer the question that follows it.

They were, I now saw, the most unearthly creatures it is possible to conceive. They were huge round bodies, or, rather, heads, about four feet in diameter, each body having in front of it a face. This face had no nostrils: indeed, the Martians do not seem to have had any sense of smell, but it had a pair of very large dark-coloured eyes, and just beneath this a kind of fleshy beak. In the back of this head or body, I scarcely know how to speak of it, was the single tight tympanic surface, since known to be anatomically an ear, though it must have been almost useless in our dense air. In a group round the mouth were sixteen slender, almost whiplike tentacles, arranged in two bunches of eight each. These bunches have since been named rather aptly, by that distinguished anatomist, Professor Howes, the hands. Even as I saw these Martians for the first time they seemed to be endeavouring to raise themselves on these hands, but of course, with the increased weight of terrestrial conditions, this was impossible. There is reason to suppose that on Mars they may have progressed upon them with some facility.

Explore how Wells vividly presents the Martians as alien, scientific and unsettling at this moment in the novel.

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How does Wells make this such a dramatic moment in the novel, in terms of evolution and the fear of the alien?

[25]

### Prose: The War of the Worlds

Read this passage from Book Two, Chapter VIII of *The War of the Worlds*, and then answer the question that follows it.

The farther I penetrated into London, the profounder grew the stillness. But it was not so much the stillness of death: it was the stillness of suspense, of expectation. At any time the destruction that had already singed the northwestern borders of the metropolis, and had annihilated Ealing and Kilburn, might strike among these houses and leave them smoking ruins. It was a city condemned and derelict. . . .

In South Kensington the streets were clear of dead and of black powder. It was near South Kensington that I first heard the howling. It crept almost imperceptibly upon my senses. It was a sobbing alternation of two notes, “Ulla, ulla, ulla, ulla,” keeping on perpetually. When I passed streets that ran northward it grew in volume, and houses and buildings seemed to deaden and cut it off again. It came in a full tide down Exhibition Road. I stopped, staring towards Kensington Gardens, wondering at this strange, remote wailing. It was as if that mighty desert of houses had found a voice for its fear and solitude.

Explore how Wells vividly presents London as a silent and ruined city at this moment in the novel.

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How does Wells make this such a dramatic moment in the novel, in terms of destruction, isolation and the fragility of civilisation?

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### Prose: The War of the Worlds

Read this passage from Book Two, Chapter VIII of *The War of the Worlds*, and then answer the question that follows it.

For so it had come about, as indeed I and many men might have foreseen had not terror and disaster blinded our minds. These germs of disease have taken toll of humanity since the beginning of things: taken toll of our prehuman ancestors since life began here. But by virtue of this natural selection of our kind we have developed resisting power; to no germs do we succumb without a struggle, and to many, those that cause putrefaction in dead matter, for instance, our living frames are altogether immune. But there are no bacteria in Mars, and directly these invaders arrived, directly they drank and fed, our microscopic allies began to work their overthrow. Already when I watched them they were irrevocably doomed, dying and rotting even as they went to and fro. It was inevitable. By the toll of a billion deaths man has bought his birthright of the earth, and it is his against all comers; it would still be his were the Martians ten times as mighty as they are. For neither do men live nor die in vain.

Explore how Wells vividly presents nature as more powerful than human technology at this moment in the novel.

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How does Wells make this such a dramatic moment in the novel, in terms of nature, science and survival?

[25]

### Prose: The War of the Worlds

Read this passage from Book Two, Chapter X of *The War of the Worlds*, and then answer the question that follows it.

I go to London and see the busy multitudes in Fleet Street and the Strand, and it comes across my mind that they are but the ghosts of the past, haunting the streets that I have seen silent and wretched, going to and fro, phantasms in a dead city, the mockery of life in a galvanised body. And strange, too, it is to stand on Primrose Hill, as I did but a day before writing this last chapter, to see the great province of houses, dim and blue through the haze of the smoke and mist, vanishing at last into the vague lower sky, to see the people walking to and fro among the flower beds on the hill, to see the sight-seers about the Martian machine that stands there still, to hear the tumult of playing children, and to recall the time when I saw it all bright and clear-cut, hard and silent, under the dawn of that last great day. . . .

Explore how Wells vividly presents the narrator as haunted and changed by the invasion at this moment in the novel.

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How does Wells make this such a dramatic moment in the novel, in terms of trauma and the uncertain future of humanity?

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**Prose: The War of the Worlds (essay question)**

How does Wells memorably portray The narrator in *The War of the Worlds*?

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**Prose: The War of the Worlds (essay question)**

How does Wells memorably portray The Martians in *The War of the Worlds*?

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**Prose: The War of the Worlds (essay question)**

How does Wells memorably portray The narrator's brother in *The War of the Worlds*?

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**Prose: The War of the Worlds (essay question)**

In what ways does Wells strikingly present human arrogance and the threat from the unknown in *The War of the Worlds*?

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**Prose: The War of the Worlds (essay question)**

In what ways does Wells strikingly present fear of the unknown in *The War of the Worlds*?

[25]

**Prose: The War of the Worlds (essay question)**

In what ways does Wells strikingly present technology, power and destruction in *The War of the Worlds*?

[25]

**Prose: The War of the Worlds (essay question)**

In what ways does Wells strikingly present bravery and sacrifice in *The War of the Worlds*?

[25]

**Prose: The War of the Worlds (essay question)**

In what ways does Wells strikingly present evolution and the fear of the alien in *The War of the Worlds*?

[25]

**Prose: The War of the Worlds (essay question)**

In what ways does Wells strikingly present destruction, isolation and the fragility of civilisation in *The War of the Worlds*?

[25]