

How is humanity presented in war of the worlds



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Herbert George Wells (21 September 1866 - 13 August 1946) was an English author, now best known for his work in the science fiction genre.

He was also a prolific writer in many other genres, including contemporary novels, history, politics and social commentary. Together with Jules Verne, Wells has been referred to as "The Father of Science Fiction". One H G well's most iconic novels is War of the worlds which written in 1898. This is a time when the use of electricity hasn't gained prominence yet and the British Empire is the most powerful in the world. Much of the novel takes part in London and a number of small towns surrounding the city. London is in the post industrial revolution stage.

There's a great interest at this time in machinery and the sciences. The height of technology was in the British army and the people of England thought that there was no battle that they could not win even if it took some time and suffering. The attitude of the people in the novel can almost be described as arrogant even. This is shown many times during the course of the novel for example when the first cylinder lands on Earth in the village of Woking and the people first come to investigate the astronomer Ogilvy immediately exclaims " Good heavens There's a man in it -men in it! Half roasted to death! Trying to escape! " (pg.

15) This shows the way that the people immediately assume that it is manmade and could not be anything of alien origin. The arrogance of mankind is further shown many times during the course of the novel. One of the major themes in this novel is the possible submission of mankind. This is obviously shown by the Martian taking men from their homes to use for

injection. There is a sense of helplessness as all attempts to resist the Martians fail. The artillery of mankind is crushed under the ruthless superior technology of the Martians.

The artilleryman that the narrator meets during the course of the novel sums up the situation of mankind by saying "This isn't a war," said the artilleryman. "It never was a war; any more than there's war between man and ants". (pg. 173) This quote is very important as it highlights the massive gap between the technological differences between the invaders and mankind. Almost the whole novel is told from the point of view of an unnamed narrator apart from one instance when it jumps to the narrator's brother who lives in London. Not much is said about the narrators background other than that he is a philosopher by profession.

Wells present the story as a sort of autobiography repeatedly going back to the fact that it is a book. The book is also very self aware. One advantage of writing a book this way is that the reader can ask themselves that if they were in a situation like this, what they would have done. Also by doing this the author can set his view of the world and say how he thinks the world would have reacted if such a thing actually happened. The reader accepts the author's version of the truth which is interesting because the way society would have reacted is not always very flattering toward humans. In fact he almost criticizes many aspects of society many times during the course of the novel and sometimes adds in his own ideas about what might happen in the not too distant future.

Throughout the novel there also a sense that Mr. Wells does not take sides. Although he describes the Martians as repulsive he does not urge the reader to hate the Martians. HG Wells's teacher T H Huxley was a well known follower of the ideas of Charles Darwin. He has also been called Darwin's bulldog many times because of this.

It is very clear that his teacher has affected Wells's writing because in his book he describes the Martians having " extremely large heads with a huge brain and tentacle like arms clustering around a beak like mouth" not a very far jump from what Charles Darwin puts forth in his Theory of Evolution. He also describes the way the Martians feed themselves; by injecting the blood of living organisms such as humans directly into their blood stream. He then remarks that although this might seem repulsive to the reader he calls onto the fact that the way we eat might seem horrific to an intelligent rabbit. He also remarks about how that even if the idea for injecting blood in to the blood stream might seem disgusting it is not without its advantages.

He gives the theory that since they don't waste any energy on processing food they are a hundred times more efficient than a human who has metres of digestive system were food has to be processed and nutrients absorbed. The perfection of mechanical appliances must ultimately supersede limbs; the perfection of chemical devices, digestion; that such as organs as hair, external nose, teeth, ears and chin were no longer essential parts of the human being and that the tendency of natural selection would lie in the direction of their steady diminution through the coming ages. The brain alone remains a cardinal necessity. Only one other parts of the body had a

strong case for survival, and that was the hand, “ teacher and agent of the brain.

” “ While the rest of the body dwindled, the hands would grow larger. ” pg (127). With these words Wells illustrates his ideas or rather Darwin’s ideas of how the human beings would evolve. He further confirms this by saying “ To me it is quite credible that the Martians may have descended from beings not unlike ourselves by a gradual development of brain and hands at the expense of the rest of the body. “ Pg (127). In this way he doesn’t compel the reader to hate the Martians and shows that he has a great respect for the theory of evolution.

He also gives almost what can be called a warning implying that relying on machinery too much will result in serious repercussion in later generations. During the time this novel was written it was the post industrial revolution period. There was a great interest in machines during this time. With inventions of many great machines many men lost their jobs in factories as labour was replaced with these inventions.

Wells alludes to this point by implying that dependence on machines reduces the quality of life. He implies this by contrasting the fast swift and graceful movements of the machines that the Martians brought with them to earth against the Martians themselves who were ungainly clumsy and disgusting beings. He brings out this contrast many time in the novel such as in Chapter 3 Book 2 the narrator say “ The contrast between the swift complex movements of these contrivances and the inert panting, clumsiness of their

masters was acute, and for days I had to tell myself that these latter were indeed the living of the two things. "(pg.

133) Here Wells clearly says that if we were to rely too much on machines we would end in a similar state in which the Martians were in were the machines looked more lifelike than the beings. Another main idea that Martians represent in this book is the idea of imperialism. The Martians' unfeeling conquest is meant as a criticism of British imperialism. They subjected those in the colonies such as in India and Africa to a status below that of citizen, and occasionally, below human.

In fact if one of the battle scenes in the novel were taken and the word Martians was to be replaced with the British, the Spanish, the French etc and the humans replaced with the Mayans, the Indians, or the aborigines etc the text would still make perfect sense. The brutal nature in which the Martians wiped out any resistance in their path brings in to more stark light the way a lot of the big empire treated the people in their colonies. One very good example is the defeat of the Incan empire by a a small contagion of Spanish soldiers. The Incans were at the time one of the most powerful sovereignty in South America at the time and yet they were defeated by a very small group of Spanish conquistadors because the Spanish were more technologically advanced than them; the Spanish fought with guns while the Incans fought with spears.

To say the least the Incans were massacred not unlike what happened to what happened to the people in the villages of Woking and others. During the course of the novel many of the ideas introduced are introduced in the

form of a character. The curate is one of the main characters in this novel. The author represents his view of religion through the curate and it is not in a very positive light. The narrator first meets the curate in book 1 chapter 13. They stay together for many chapters and become immediately apparent that they are totally incompatible.

This is especially shown during the time the narrator and the curate become trapped in the abandoned house together with the martians outside. The narrator starts the chapter by saying " The fact is that we had absolutely incompatible dispositions and habits of thought and action, and our danger and isolation only accentuated this compatibility" (pg. 131). From the start they are always fighting and arguing with the curate continuously complaining and telling the narrator to repent for his sins and continuously moaning about how they were all going to die while the narrator is very focused on being realistic and trying to survive.

The narrator comes to really hate the curate saying that " He was lacking as lacking in restraint as a silly woman" and going as far as to condemn the curate saying " But he was one of those weak creatures, void of pride, timorous, anaemic, hateful soles, full of shifty cunning. " It can be said that the narrator and the curate is an example of the constant battle between religion and science. It is pretty clear that H. G Wells support science over religion and it is also clear that he criticizes organized religion saying that it has nothing practical to offer its followers. The curate frequent emotional outbursts and general lack of helpfulness further proves this point. When the narrator tries to reason with him, it is representative of the debate between science and religion, and this book clearly favours the former.

This is not to say that H. G Wells is not a religious person because at the end of the novel when the Martians are finally defeated the narrator raises his hands to the heavens and thanks God first. This shows that there is not a lack of belief on the author's part but he only criticizes the way it is practised. The artillery man that the narrator meets in his quest for survival is another example of a character being used to represent an idea. The artillery man specifically is being used to represent the military.

When the narrator first meets the artillery man he is shown to be very level headed and advise the narrator to stock up on provisions and advises him to only travel at night. When they meet again later in the novel on Putney hill it is shown that he still has not given up hope that the military would ultimately prevail. This shows the arrogance showed by most people at the beginning of the invasion though this begins to change later on when people realise the real power that their invaders held. But the artillery man has clearly not given up hope yet, he cheers the narrator up by talking of big plans to take control of a tripod and killing many Martians though it quickly becomes apparent that he has no wish to actually act on his thoughts and spend almost all his time playing games and eating. In the end the narrator gets fed up and leaves the artilleryman. Many people say that war of the worlds is more of a social commentary than a science fiction novel because it show the way human beings could react in such a situation.

This because Wells show how he thinks society would react if such a dramatic incident should happen. This is especially shown in the chapter "Exodus from London" which is told from the point of view from the brother of the narrator. This is mainly done to show London waking up to panic. News <https://assignbuster.com/how-is-humanity-presented-in-war-of-the-worlds/>

of the destruction and massacres at Woking had reached London. The narrator's brother realising the danger makes good of his escape. What he finds is huge stream of people trying to escape.

It just shows how society has collapsed under an impending doom. Chief Justices walk alongside tramps, all for survival. Again humans are not shown in such a good light. One example is the way an unnamed man jumped in the middle of the road to collect some fallen gold coins just for greed.

Although that Wells criticizes a lot of aspect of society like religion and imperialism he redeems mankind in the chapter "Thunderchild". In this chapter many people have boarded a steamer to flee from the Martian tripods alongside the battleship Thunderchild. When a group of Martian tripods pursue the steamer to kill the people on board the battle ship rushes forward to fight the invaders and manages to save the people but sacrificing itself and the crew in the process. This selfless act of the crew on the Thunderchild show that human being do have their good points It is almost as if Wells is reconciling with himself by saying, even though we are flawed in some respects, we also have our redeeming qualities. Altogether HG Wells gives his general impression of mankind through many aspects of his writing. He shows humanity with its many faults and issues like greed, arrogance etc But although the novel is mostly negative about human nature there are points he does recognize that human do have a number of redeeming points such as compassion sacrifice and so on.

In all through this novel Mr Wells gives his very interesting take on humanity and how he thinks it will end up in the future.