

# A warning to humanity in the war of the worlds

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



Could you imagine a world where people are herded like cattle, branded, and then used for selfless, personal, gain? In addition, could you fathom those same less fortunate and subjugated people, not having the ability to fight back, despite their best intentions. In the brief history of the world, there have been mighty nations that have yielded this type of power to do such things. The United States, for example, (despite the good it has done for many) may come across to some other nations in the world as an empirical bully. With a superior economic might, strategic military, and advanced technology, those who are in opposition to America may in fact, find itself succumbing to the will of the United States. The mother of all of Western Civilization, the Roman Empire, laid its foundation on the backs of those it conquered for centuries. To further explore the notion that the novel does in circumstances, critique society as a whole, some may point to its destruction of one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen. William Scheick notes that, "The War of the Worlds has now emerged as a critique of British imperialism that also dramatizes a psychological battle within its narrator." (Scheick, 1996). Therefore, history does provide specific examples of societies that appear to capitalize on the deficiencies of the less fortunate, but is it human nature to subconsciously revoke these notions of dominance to ensure an equal playing field for everyone? In H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* the author uses aliens to manifest the idea of that subconscious thought. H. G. Wells' "The War of the World's" echoes mankind's inner plea for civility for the less fortunate. The novel symbolizes multiple aspects in our everyday lives by illustrating human beings' susceptibility to be an inferior race. It also showcases man's uneasiness to comply with laws one

may find oppressive in nature. Lastly, H. G. Wells' work allows for one to consider what could happen if an advanced society suddenly becomes overwhelmed by a superior foe.

Through the annals of the creation, countries have been born on the strength and the might of a great military. During World War II, the Axis Powers were defeated due to the allied forces superior military strength and strategy. In the text, H. G. Wells describes the alien invasion as having an advanced technology that was seemingly impossible to stop. In the text the narrator notes that " It was the first time I realized that the Martians might have any other purpose than destruction with defeated humanity." (Wells p. 187) By suggesting it is the " first time" the narrator comes to the conclusion that the Martians may be more advanced than the human race. Up to that point, it may appear that the idea that humans could be conquered by any other species appears to be unheard of. Wells gives the reader a comparison by alluding to the Martians military capacity when equated to the humans. He states that " Never before in the history of warfare had destruction been so indiscriminate and so universal. And shining with the growing light of the east, three of the metallic giants stood about the pit, their cowls rotating as though they were surveying the desolation they had made. (Wells 83). In order for the reader to even imagine the true devastation or force of something superior Wells emphasizes the words " never in the history of warfare" to further illustrate man's feeble attempt to compete with the Martians. Furthermore, Downing also notes that, " The novel's working-class commoners are repeatedly compared to frogs, bees, wasps, and the like, ineptly struggling for existence as the intellectually superior Martians

implacably advance. (Downing, 2005). Wells again points out the power and the might of the Martians by comparing man's most domineering technological advances to creatures as miniscule as frogs, bees, and wasps, but in doing so again reveals how vain the species of man had become with his accomplishments. Wells idealistic view of humanity is prevalent throughout the text. David Kelley seems to also allude that mankind's hierarchy is ambivalent when compared to themselves or the other inhabitants of the planet.

During the Civil Rights Movement in America, countless people of all colors came together to resist the racist Jim Crow laws in the South. Despite discriminatory and unjust laws, unfair practices, and violent lynching's, they still sought to fight against the plague of racism. However, in the scenes that play out throughout the story, all of mankind is tested in a way that challenges his very existence and not simply his color of skin. Wells' fixation on allowing the reader to take into consideration the sheer annihilation of the human race is evident when he states, " Never before in the history of the world had such a mass of human beings moved and suffered together. The legendary hosts of Goths and Huns, The War of the Worlds 166 of 293 hugest armies Asia has ever seen, would have been but a drop in that current." (Wells p. 166). He notes that all people from each class were being subjugated to the same fate, death. Wells also makes the connection of people becoming dominated in this passage as he identifies with societies that have been defeated in war and becoming a part of a larger kingdom. " I felt the first inkling of a thing that presently grew quite clear in my mind, that oppressed me for many days, a sense of dethronement, a persuasion

that I was no longer a master, but an animal among the animals, under the Martian heel." (Wells p. 232) By asserting that he was no longer a master "but an animal" he seems to show empathy for the people that have suffered long under the many empires throughout the Earth. This notion of empathy also is seen here when Wells writes, " Surely, if we have learned nothing else, this war has The War of the Worlds 241 of 293 taught us pity—pity for those witless souls that suffer our dominion." (Wells p. 241). In his critical essay on Wells' The War of the Worlds, Antonio Sanna in his research titled, Are Human Beings Ultimately Ignorant? Huxleian Preoccupations in H. G. Wells' The Time Machine and The War of the Worlds notes how H. G. Wells is troubled by the notion of mankind's inability to reconcile with his neighbor. Sanna states that, " man's confidence in his understanding of the external reality as well as in his capacity to subjugate nature and to evolve towards an improvement of the individual self and of society is questioned by Wells." (Sanna, 2012). Lastly, H. G. Wells' descriptive narrative serves as a subtle wake up to society as he describes how life would be if human beings were treated how they sometimes treat each other. The War of the Worlds portrays humankind's panic at discovering it is not at the top of nature's hierarchy (Alleva, 2005).

Throughout history great nations have been born out of the failings of the less fortunate. In doing so, some of the leaders of these nations have abused this power and have sought to oppress those who are not in compliance with the rule of law no matter how unjust it may be. Jason West suggests that Wells' illustration of European oppression reflects a clearer view of how imperialism inflicts harm on those who are in opposition to it. West states

that, “ Even as the narrator criticizes imperialism’s colonial ambitions and its inevitable crimes, he reaffirms the hierarchical ranking of races and species that allows imperialists to destroy the populations that they consider inferior.” (Vest, J. 2005). This idea of inferiority is replayed over and over through time most notably in Nazi Germany. Adolf Hitler believed in the superiority of the Aryan race. He thought that the white race was superior than any other race and he used propoganda to strengthen his cause. However, during the 1936 Olympic games in Berlin, he was proven wrong when Jesse Owens and other athletes were not only able to compete but defeat many of the German athletes that Hitler had considered to be dominant. Furthermore, in the novel, the author reminds the reader how civility should be taken into consideration with the humans becoming the more subjugated species when compared with the invaders. The invaders, Martians from outer space, seek to dominate the humans by killing them with a heat ray and poisonous black smoke. Crystal Downing notes in “ Rime of the Ancient Martian” these unique observations. Downing states that, “ Wells develops a novel about ‘ natural selection,’ his narrator asserting that humans ‘ are just in the beginning of the evolution that the Martians have worked out. (Downing, 2005). This further alludes to the fact that Wells’ assertion that mankind needs to hold a mirror to its face to somewhat hold himself accountable with regards to acknowledging others that may not be as strong as others. Wells’ worrisome empathetic view of humanity is displayed all throughout the text. However, in certain instances, one can see how problematic the issue is as he uses a morbid sense of reality to further entrench the reader in his assumptions. J. D. Beresford captures this analogy

as when he describes these scenes. Beresford notes that, “ The fighting machines of these incomprehensible entities, the heat ray and the black smoke, are all excellent conceptions; and the narrative is splendidly graphic. But only in the scenes with the curate, when the narrator is stirred to passionate anger, and in his later passages with the sapper, do we catch any glimpses of the novelist intrigued with the intimate affairs of humanity.”

(Beresford, J. D., Vol. 19). What Beresford could be suggesting is that man’s overwhelming desire to conquer could be his own undoing as he continually wages war with himself even in the darkest hours.

In conclusion, *The War of the Worlds* is a novel written to remind mankind to reflect on their misdoings and govern with compassion. Near the end of the novel, Wells indicates that man’s reflection in the mirror of humanity is not lost as the Martian invasion seems to provide a type of reckoning that could have been coming for some time throughout the history of man. The writer sums up this notion with this entry:

It may be that in the larger design of the universe this invasion from Mars is not without its ultimate benefit for men; it has robbed us of that serene confidence in the future, which is the most fruitful source of decadence, the gifts to human science it has brought are enormous, and it has done much to promote the conception of the commonweal of mankind. (Wells p. 290).

This conception of the commonweal of mankind is a clear indication that Wells’ ideals for civility amongst men is something that is necessary if the inhabitants of the planet are to coexist peacefully.

Wells' ability to convince the reader to have a conscious about world events without actually grandstanding about the issue is important. He doesn't force the reader to bend to his political view, instead he allows the reader to be the judge by use of neutral characters. Beresford notes that, " Mr. Wells is far more subtle and more effective. He takes an average individual, identifies him with the world as we know it, and then proceeds gradually to bring his marvel within the range of this individual's apprehension." (Beresford, J. D., Vol. 19). In doing so, the reader is not forced to believe one thing or the other, instead he is able to consider the conditions and make a sound judgement on his or her own terms. Wells idealistic view of humanity is prevalent throughout the text. David Kelley seems to also allude that mankind's hierarchy is ambivalent when compared to themselves or the other inhabitants of the planet. He notes that, " Wells seems to be saying, as he was to throughout his writings, that humanity is nothing but a cog in the greater machine of science." (Kelley, 2005). Downplaying the importance of man's role in society is a constant allusion we see time and time throughout the text. It also stresses Wells' emphasis on having mankind remind itself that although it may be the top of the food chain, it still is a very important member of the planet and charged with taking care of the most important of all responsibilities.