



## The War of the Worlds

H. G. Wells (1866 - 1946)

Read by:	Multiple readers	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	6 hours 40 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1077
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Genre:	Science Fiction		

In 1938 a radio broadcast describing the invasion of earth by Martians presented as a news bulletin by narrator Orson Welles led to widespread panic by listeners who believed actual events were taking place. In fact, the broadcast was a close adaptation of *The War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells. Public interest in the possibility of intelligent life on Mars had first been aroused by the discovery of canals in 1877. On August 2, 1894 the British journal *Nature* reported that French astronomers had observed a light emanating from the edges of the disk of Mars “in the region of the planet not illuminated by the sun at the time of the observation”, prompting speculation that inhabitants of the planet were attempting to send signals at a time when the orbits of the planets were close and intensifying interest in alien encounters.

*Book 1 – The Coming of the Martians* begins with a fictionalized account of this observation. In short order a cylindrical object lands in Surrey. The

narrator, an author with a philosophical bent who is never named, is among the first to encounter the “intense, inhuman, crippled and monstrous” Martians, and proceeds to document entire invasion. The human artillery is no match for the Martian heat-rays, black smoke, and three-legged Tripod fighting machines. Opposition is incinerated, millions of Londoners are evacuated and the Martians inherit the devastated landscape.

*Book 2 – The Earth Under The Martians* finds the narrator scavenging for food when he encounter Martians harvesting humans, presumably for nourishment. The arrival of the fifth Martian cylinder demolishes his hideaway. After some weeks in hiding he escapes to a barren West London where he finds the invaders dying from infections for which they have no resistance just in the nick of time.

*The War of the Worlds* was appeared in serial form in *Pearson’s Magazine* in the UK and *Cosmopolitan* in the United States in 1897 before publication in book form in 1898. In many ways it created the formula for alien invasion stories and can be seen in direct descendants such E.T. and Close Encounters. Always popular, the book has never gone out of print and continues to influence the genre.

**Herbert George “H. G.” Wells** (September 21, 1866 – August 13, 1946) was an English author best known for his science fiction novels; along with Jules Verne, he is sometimes called the father of science fiction. He was born the youngest of four in Bromley, Kent to a father who was a professional cricketer and shopkeeper with a small private income; his mother had been a domestic servant. He became an avid reader at age 8 when a broken leg left him bedridden and likely set him on a path of intensive self-education. At age 11 he was taken from school and apprenticed to a draper after his father’s fractured thigh drastically reduced the family income. Family connections later helped him secure a position as a pupil-teacher at Midhurst Grammar School, which enabled him to win a scholarship to the Normal School of Science. There he studied biology under the tutelage of the noted Thomas Henry Huxley and co-founded the *Science School Journal*, where an early version of the Time Machine appeared. He obtained a teaching certificate and taught at Henley House School. He married his first cousin Isabel in 1891; they separated in 1894 and Wells married Amy Catherine Robbins, later called Jane, in 1895. At that time he published his four great novels called scientific romances in rapid succession: *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). These books invented the classic scientific themes, made his name and gave him the resources to build a substantial home near Folkestone. He turned to non-fiction in the early 1900’s, addressing subjects of history, politics, and social commentary in addition to science. *The Outline of History* in 1920 was an immensely popular and commercial success. This and other works, many concerning utopian notions of social organization, made him enormously influential, to the degree that critic Malcolm Cowley stated “his influence was greater than any other living writer.”