

The War of the Worlds

Book 1, Chapters 1–8

by H. G. Wells

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: abstract, adjacent, bulk, circumference, deriving, inevitable, luminous, mean, scrutinised, trivial

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview 2

Answer Key — Preview 3

Caution: share only if self-checking

OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context 4

Answer Key — In Context 5

Caution: do not share with students

About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.

Vocabulary Sections for this Book:

Section 1 · Book 1, Chapters 1–8 · Strange lights on the planet Mars

Section 2 · Book 1, Chapters 9–13 · A Saturday of suspense at Woking

Section 3 · Book 1, Chapters 14–17 · The narrator's brother in London

Section 4 · Book 2, Chapters 1–6 · Book Two: the narrator and the curate

Section 5 · Book 2, Chapters 7–9 and the Epilogue · A night at the inn on Putney Hill

Bold = this section. Other sections are available at verbalworkout.com.



verbalworkout.com

(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.

1. The lecture was too **abstract** for a beginner.
 - A. about ideas, not things
 - B. full of difficult terms
 - C. long and detailed
2. The two shops stand on **adjacent** corners.
 - A. diagonal from each other
 - B. facing each other
 - C. next to each other
3. The **bulk** of the sleeping bear filled the cave mouth.
 - A. a dark shadowy outline
 - B. a large heavy mass
 - C. a strong unpleasant smell
4. We measured the **circumference** of the wheel with a tape.
 - A. the flat space inside it
 - B. the distance straight across it
 - C. the boundary around a circle
5. He was **deriving** real pleasure from the simple meal.
 - A. expecting ahead of time
 - B. remembering from the past
 - C. getting from a source
6. After weeks of rain, the flood seemed **inevitable**.
 - A. certain to happen
 - B. strangely sudden
 - C. unusually severe
7. The watch's **luminous** numbers were the only thing I could see.
 - A. giving off light
 - B. raised above the surface
 - C. printed in large type
8. The **mean** score for the class was seventy-two.
 - A. the highest one
 - B. the average
 - C. the total of all
9. The judge **scrutinised** every page of the contract.
 - A. copied out by hand
 - B. examined closely
 - C. read aloud in court
10. They argued for an hour over a **trivial** detail.
 - A. of little importance
 - B. hard to understand
 - C. often repeated

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

infusoria — tiny single-celled creatures found in pond water, visible only under a microscope

Tasmanians — the native people of Tasmania, an island off Australia, wiped out by British settlers in the 1800s

opposition — the point in a planet's orbit when it comes closest to Earth — the best time to observe it

leash — an old hunting word for a set of three; three whip-like arms flashed up at once

sensible — here, 'able to be noticed' — not 'reasonable'; there was no change he could detect

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY
1	A
2	C
3	B
4	C
5	C
6	A
7	A
8	B
9	B
10	A

Vocabulary in Context

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 "... 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."

As used in the passage, the word 'scrutinised' most nearly means...

- A. sorted and counted
- B. watched and examined
- C. measured and weighed

2 "The planet Mars, I scarcely need remind the reader, revolves about the sun at a mean distance of 140,000,000 miles, and the light and heat it receives from the sun is barely half of that received by this world."

According to the passage, the 140,000,000 miles named as Mars's distance from the sun is...

- A. an average distance
- B. its shortest distance
- C. its greatest distance

3 "He pointed out to me how unlikely it was that organic evolution had taken the same direction in the two adjacent planets. 'The chances against anything manlike on Mars are a million to one,' he said."

It can reasonably be inferred that Ogilvy expects two 'adjacent' planets to develop...

- A. life along very different lines
- B. no living things at all
- C. life of nearly the same kind

4 "About eleven, as nothing seemed happening, I walked back, full of such thought, to my home in Maybury. But I found it difficult to get to work upon my abstract investigations."

In the passage, the narrator's 'abstract investigations' characterize him as a man who...

- A. builds things with his hands
- B. gathers facts in the field
- C. works with ideas and theory

5 "But, looking, I presently saw something stirring within the shadow: greyish billowy movements, one above another, and then two luminous disks—like eyes."

Which statement about the two 'luminous disks' is best supported by the passage?

- A. The cylinder's metal was glowing.
- B. The setting sun lit the shadow.
- C. A living creature was inside.

6 "A big greyish rounded bulk, the size, perhaps, of a bear, was rising slowly and painfully out of the cylinder."

The description of the 'bulk' rising from the cylinder primarily functions to...

- A. explain how the cylinder opened
- B. record the crowd's reaction
- C. stress its size and heaviness

7 "We became silent, and stood watching for a time side by side, deriving, I fancy, a certain comfort in one another's company."

According to the passage, what did the two men get from standing side by side?

- A. a measure of comfort
- B. a better view of the pit
- C. news about the Martians

8 "This little group had in its advance dragged inward, so to speak, the circumference of the now almost complete circle of people, and a number of dim black figures followed it at discreet distances."

It can reasonably be inferred that dragging the 'circumference' inward left the crowd...

- A. standing in a tighter ring
- B. broken into scattered groups
- C. spread thinly across the common

9 "It was sweeping round swiftly and steadily, this flaming death, this invisible, inevitable sword of heat."

Which best describes the narrator's attitude toward the 'inevitable sword of heat'?

- A. curiosity about a new weapon
- B. dread of something unstoppable
- C. confidence that it will pass

10 "You may imagine the young people brushed up after the labours of the day, and making this novelty, as they would make any novelty, the excuse for walking together and enjoying a trivial flirtation."

The author most likely calls the flirtation 'trivial' in order to...

- A. show how crowded the road was
- B. mark their concerns as slight
- C. hint that the couples were unhappy

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	B	
2	A	Students most often meet 'mean' as unkind or as intent; here it is the mathematical sense they know from averages, and the shift is easy to miss in ordinary prose.
3	A	
4	C	
5	C	
6	C	
7	A	
8	A	Wells borrows a geometry term for a crowd. Students who know 'circumference' from math class may not expect it in prose, and picturing the onlookers as a circle that tightens is the whole image the word delivers.
9	B	
10	B	The word does quiet work: a 'trivial flirtation' is what these young people are enjoying while, not far off, the deputation has just been burned alive. Worth pausing on the contrast.

Teacher Context: Book 1, Chapters 1-8

Astronomers observe explosions on Mars; a cylinder lands on Horsell Common near Woking, opens, and the Martians destroy a deputation with the Heat-Ray. The narrator escapes home to his wife and takes her to Leatherhead. Break falls at the end of Friday night, before organized fighting starts.