between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

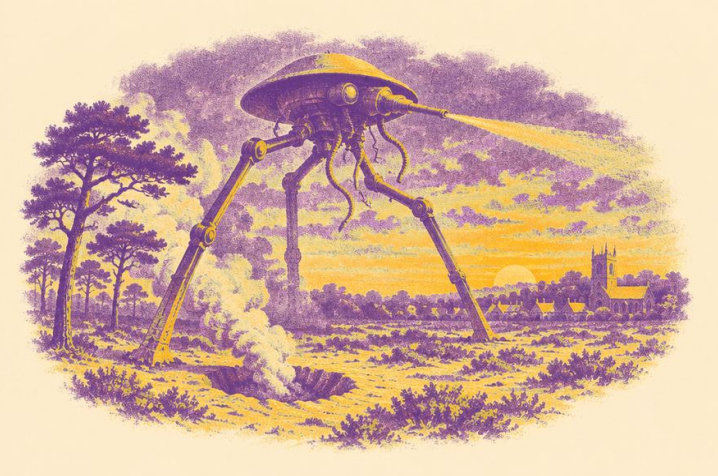
Science fiction: The War of the Worlds: The Thing in the pit

How does Wells make the first Martian horrifying?

Lesson 3 of 14 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the English national curriculum at Key Stage 3



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What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our Science fiction: The War of the Worlds scheme for Year 8. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model paragraph and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 3, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the student booklet: one question, with the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support side by side (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading. The five Do Now questions build on what students learned in Lessons 1 and 2 of the full scheme.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared question answered as a What–How–Why paragraph, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model paragraph and an exit ticket.

Three levels of support

Every student answers the same question in every lesson. What changes is the support on the page, so the whole class does the same lesson:

Securing	The most support: a word bank, a choice of quotations, a worked example and sentence starters.
Strengthening	Some support: prompts for What, How and Why, a planner and a checklist.
Soaring	The most challenge: a debatable statement, prompts to think further and an argument planner.

The names describe the support, never the student. The hinge question shows who might start where, and students move between levels from lesson to lesson.

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In the full scheme

- 14 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook (lesson notes, unit map, assessment guide and knowledge bank)
- A student booklet with every lesson and all three levels of support, plus the same lessons as one pack per level
- Six weeks of independent practice homework at three levels
- A checkpoint (Feedback Loop kit) with a whole-class feedback sheet and improvement tasks
- A two-part end-of-unit assessment with a teacher guide, band guidance and annotated models
- A catch-up sheet for every lesson, for students who missed it
- An inclusion guide: pre-teaching, SEND, EAL and pupil premium notes for every lesson

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Lesson 3: The Thing in the pit

SEQUENCE 1: FROM HORSELL COMMON TO THE THAMES: BOOK 1, CHAPTERS 1 TO 13 · 60 MINUTES

How does Wells make the first Martian horrifying?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain three details Wells uses to make the first Martian horrifying
- Describe how the extract moves from the Martian's skin to the narrator's feelings
- Write a What–How–Why paragraph on the first Martian

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lessons 1 and 2. Students check their answers from the answer slide.	2–3
8–18	Know	Pre-teach "alien", "revulsion", "simile" and "tentacle". Read the short introduction, then the extract aloud while students follow and underline every detail of the Martian's body.	4–6
18–28	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about the simile, then students annotate their copy. Before you reveal any notes, students try the four empty boxes on the first explode slide, on their own or after you model one box.	7–8
28–33	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	9–10
33–53	Master	Students write one What–How–Why paragraph using their level of support in the student booklet. Share the model paragraph in the last five minutes.	11–12
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of the next lesson.	13

Do Now answers

1	Which astronomer finds the cylinder on Horsell Common?	Ogilvy
2	What does the crowd on the common expect to find inside the cylinder?	Men from Mars, hurt or dead
3	In what year did Schiaparelli map the canali on Mars?	1877
4	Which scientist taught Wells and defended Darwin's theory of evolution?	Thomas Henry Huxley
5	Which word means a story printed one part at a time?	Serial

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Vocabulary

alien	a creature from another world
revulsion	strong disgust that makes you want to turn away
simile	a comparison that uses the word “like” or “as”
tentacle	a long, thin, bendy limb that an animal uses to grip

Reading

Book 1, Chapter 4: the first Martian

The lid of the cylinder has fallen. The crowd expects a man, but tentacles appear and people begin to run. The narrator stays and watches.

> 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. There was something fungoid in the oily brown skin, something in the clumsy deliberation of the tedious movements unspeakably nasty. Even at this first encounter, this first glimpse, I was overcome with disgust and dread.

H. G. Wells, The War of the Worlds (1898), Book 1, Chapter 4

Word help **appendage**: a limb or part that sticks out from a body · **convulsively**: in sudden, jerking movements · **Gorgon**: a monster in Greek myth with snakes for hair · **fungoid**: like a fungus, soft and damp · **tedious**: slow and dull

Explode the quotation

Method
A simile that compares the Martian’s skin to a familiar material.

Zoom in
The verb “glistened” suggests a wet shine, and leather comes from animal skin. Together they feel unpleasant.

“it glistened like wet leather”

Effect
An ordinary material becomes sickening, so readers can picture the creature and dislike it at once.

Purpose
Wells makes the Martian disgusting before it does anything, so readers fear it before they know its powers.

Hinge question

The longest sentence in the extract begins “The peculiar V-shaped mouth with its pointed upper lip” and lists the Martian’s parts one after another. Why does Wells do this?

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A. To slow the reader down, so that the horror builds as the narrator stares. (the right answer)

B. Because the narrator is calm and has time to describe it.

C. To show that the Martian is moving fast.

What the answers tell you

B shows the student reading the length as calm: ask how the narrator feels in the last line. C confuses the length of a sentence with speed: ask which words say the Martian is slow. These may be your students who start on Securing.

Why the answer is right

A long list makes the reader stare at each detail, so the horror builds until the narrator feels disgust and dread.

Master task

How does Wells make the first Martian horrifying in this extract?

Securing the most support

Quotations to choose from

"the lipless brim of which quivered and panted, and dropped saliva"

"the strange horror of its appearance"

"inhuman, crippled and monstrous"

Starters

Wells makes the first Martian horrifying by ____. Wells uses ____ in "____". The ____ (word class) "____" suggests ____. This makes readers feel ____ because ____, and it prepares us for ____.

Strengthening some support

Prompts

What: Make a clear point that answers the question.

How: Choose a quotation. Name the method (a simile, a list or a sound) and zoom in on one word. How does the description change later in the extract?

Why: Think about what the narrator expected to see. What does Wells want readers to feel, and what might they expect next?

Soaring the most challenge

The debate

"The narrator's fear comes more from what he expected to see than from the Martian itself."

Write two paragraphs. In the second, argue against the statement, beginning with "Alternatively".

Model paragraph

What	Wells makes the first Martian horrifying by describing it as something alive and half familiar, so that the narrator's disgust grows as he keeps looking.
How	At first the Martian "glistened like wet leather", and the simile turns an ordinary material into something sickening. Wells then piles up details in one long sentence, from "the lipless brim" of the mouth to the "Gorgon groups of tentacles". The list of harsh adjectives "inhuman, crippled and monstrous" ends the sentence by naming what the narrator can hardly say.
Why	The long sentence makes readers stare as the narrator stares, so the horror builds. By the last line "disgust and dread" have replaced his curiosity, and readers feel the same unease before the Martian has done any harm.

Exit ticket

The first Martian is horrifying because…

Teacher notes

Subject knowledge

The narrator, like the crowd, expects a man, and what rises out of the cylinder is something else. Wells describes it in steps. A simile for the skin comes first, then the eyes and mouth, then one long sentence

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