2.25 Literature: The War of the Worlds (H.G. Wells): 10-minute Pack

Total Marks

AQA / EDEXCEL / EDUQAS GCSE Literature 19th-century novel · about 10 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Explain how Wells builds a growing sense of dread and threat around the Martian fighting machines in the early chapters of the novel.

(Total for Question 1 is 6 marks)

2 Explain how Wells draws on contemporary scientific and evolutionary ideas in his presentation of the Martians and their eventual defeat.

(Total for Question 2 is 8 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.25 Literature: The War of the Worlds (H.G. Wells): 10-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 3 Clear explanation: analyses more than one method Wells uses to build dread around the Martians and their machines, with well-chosen reference to the text. **5-6**

Level 2 Some explanation: identifies a relevant method with some reference to the text. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple, limited explanation: makes a simple or general comment on the Martians or their machines with little development. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- the fighting machines are first heard and glimpsed only partially, through smoke and heat-haze, before being fully seen, delaying and intensifying the reveal
- their unnatural size and jointed, mechanical way of moving makes them seem alien rather than simply a new kind of military vehicle
- Wells uses precise, almost scientific description, with measurements and comparisons to recognisable objects, to make the impossible machines feel disturbingly exact and real
- the sudden, silent use of the heat-ray to destroy people and buildings before any warning shows the Martians' overwhelming and unfair advantage
- the setting shifts from a familiar, ordinary Surrey landscape to a scene of destruction, so the contrast with normal life increases the shock for the reader

Question 2

Level 4 Clear, well-supported explanation: analyses more than one way scientific and evolutionary ideas shape the Martians and their defeat, with well-chosen reference to the text and clear understanding of context. **7-8**

Level 3 Clear explanation: explains at least one clear way scientific or evolutionary ideas are used, with relevant reference to the text and some understanding of context. **5-6**

Level 2 Some explanation: identifies a relevant point with some reference to the text. **3-4**

Level 1 Simple, limited explanation: makes a simple or general comment with little development. **1-2**

Indicative content:

- the Martians are presented as a more evolved form of intelligent life, with enlarged brains and reduced bodies, reflecting late-Victorian ideas about where human evolution might eventually lead
- their method of feeding, taking nutrition directly rather than through digestion, is presented with pseudo-scientific explanation, reflecting Wells's own scientific training and interest in plausible extrapolation
- the eventual destruction of the Martians by ordinary earthly bacteria, organisms they have no natural resistance to, presents natural selection and adaptation, not human effort, as the deciding factor
- this ending reflects contemporary evolutionary ideas that survival depends on adaptation to environment rather than intelligence or technological power alone
- context: Wells studied biology under a prominent supporter of Darwin's theory of evolution, and his scientific background shapes the novel's exploration of what advanced evolution might look like, and what it might cost
- a stronger response might note the irony that the Martians' advanced evolution, which sacrifices physical strength and adaptability for intelligence, ultimately proves to be a weakness

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