

Words from H.G. Wells's The War of the Worlds

Avocabo Word List 6



APERTURE, ARTICULATE,
COMPLACENCY, CONCUSSION,
CONTAGION, DESIST, FECUNDITY,
FUSILLADE, GALVANIZE,
HELIOGRAPH, INCESSANT,
INEFFECTUAL, INTEGUMENT,
IRRESOLUTE, LASSITUDE,
PHYSIOLOGY, SALVATION,
SCRUTINY, SENTINEL, TRANSFIX,
VESTIGES

No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that 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. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. At most terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment.

the opening paragraphs of H.G. Wells, The War of the Worlds

Exercise 6-1 Fill-in-the-blanks

Complete each sentence with the most appropriate word from those in the wordlist above. Write your choice in the space provided. The following sentences come from the Project Gutenberg etext of the novel. (21 marks)

1. With infinite _____ men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable.
2. I might not have heard of the eruption at all had I not met Ogilvy, the well-known astronomer, at Ottershaw. He was immensely excited at the news, and in the excess of his feelings invited me up to take a turn with him that night in a(n) _____ of the red planet.
3. 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 _____ 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.
4. But luckily the dull radiation arrested him before he could burn his hands on the still-glowing metal. At that he stood _____ for a moment, then turned, scrambled out of the pit, and set off running wildly into Woking.
5. In three other points their _____ differed strangely from ours. Their organisms did not sleep, any more than the heart of man sleeps. Since they had no extensive muscular mechanism to recuperate, that periodical extinction was unknown to them. They had little or no sense of fatigue, it would seem. On earth they could never have moved without effort, yet even to the last they kept in action. In twenty-four hours they did twenty-four hours of work, as even on earth is perhaps the case with the ants.

6. And this Thing I saw! How can I describe it? A monstrous tripod, higher than many houses, striding over the young pine trees, and smashing them aside in its career; a walking engine of glittering metal, striding now across the heather; _____ ropes of steel dangling from it, and the clattering tumult of its passage mingling with the riot of the thunder.

7. Forthwith the six guns which, unknown to anyone on the right bank, had been hidden behind the outskirts of that village, fired simultaneously. The sudden near _____, the last close upon the first, made my heart jump.

8. Over that, above the blackened heather and ruined buildings that stretched far and wide, stood one as _____, while the rest abandoned their vast fighting-machines and descended into the pit.

9. And then the light filtered in, not through the window, which remained black, but through a triangular _____ between a beam and a heap of broken bricks in the wall behind us. The interior of the kitchen we now saw greyly for the first time.

10. The curate, I found, was quite incapable of discussion; this new and culminating atrocity had robbed him of all _____ of reason or forethought.

11. But neither force nor kindness availed; he was indeed beyond reason. He would neither _____ from his attacks on the food nor from his noisy babbling to himself.

12. One of the men there, a reservist he said he was, told my brother he had seen the _____ flickering in the west.

13. The Ripley gunners, unseasoned artillery volunteers who ought never to have been placed in such a position, fired one wild, premature, _____ volley, and bolted on horse and foot through the deserted village, while the Martian, without using his Heat-Ray, walked serenely over their guns, stepped gingerly among them, passed in front of them, and so came unexpectedly upon the guns in Painhill Park, which he destroyed.

14. At first, I say, the handling-machine did not impress me as a machine, but as a crablike creature with a glittering _____, the controlling Martian whose delicate tentacles actuated its movements seeming to be simply the equivalent of the crab's cerebral portion.

15. The flying people on foot and in vehicles grew more numerous every moment. "Black Smoke!" he heard people crying, and again "Black Smoke!" The _____ of such a unanimous fear was inevitable.

16. A tumult up the road, a quarrel for a place in a waggon, sent the whole host of them quickening their pace; even a man so scared and broken that his knees bent under him was _____ for a moment into renewed activity.

17. In one cart stood a blind man in the uniform of the _____ Army, gesticulating with his crooked fingers and bawling, "Eternity! Eternity!"

18. Directly this extraordinary growth encountered water it straightway became gigantic and of unparalleled _____. Its seeds were simply poured down into the water of the Wey and Thames, and its swiftly growing and Titanic water fronds speedily choked both those rivers.

19. I was even afraid that that last _____ I had heard might mean the extermination of our invaders from Mars. I can best express my state of mind by saying that I wanted to be in at the death.

20. Saturday lives in my memory as a day of suspense. It was a day of _____ too, hot and close, with, I am told, a rapidly fluctuating barometer. I had slept but little, though my wife had succeeded in sleeping, and I rose early.

21. At the corner of the bridge, too, I saw one of the common contrasts of that grotesque time—a sheet of paper flaunting against a thicket of the red weed, _____ by a stick that kept it in place.

Exercise 6-2: Synonyms

From three choices, circle the one that is closest in meaning to the bold list word in the context displayed (21 marks)

1. light entered the cavern through a small **aperture**
(a) opening (b) waterfall (c) vertical shaft

2. an **articulated** bus
(a) well spoken (b) decorated (c) jointed
3. shun vain **complacency** and ostentation
(a) bitterness (b) overdressing (c) self-satisfaction
4. **concussion** of thunder
(a) headache (b) shock (c) flash
5. the **contagion** of the disease of idleness
(a) transmission (b) termination (c) extinguishing
6. if thou dost not **desist** I will certainly stone thee
(a) fight (b) refrain (c) continue
7. nature's inexhaustible **fecundity**
(a) fertility (b) thoughtlessness (c) variety
8. driven back by a violent **fusillade**
(a) pasta (b) malodor (c) salvo
9. **galvanize** dead languages into a semblance of life
(a) impel (b) smother (c) restructure
10. **heliograph** his orders to distant camps
A signalling apparatus using:
(a) telepathy (b) sunlight (c) sound
11. an **incessant** gnawing toothache
(a) ceaseless (b) grinding (c) sharp
12. a few **ineffectual** efforts on my part to leave
(a) overt (b) futile (c) halfhearted
13. the oily gleam of his **integument**
(a) eyes (b) toupee (c) covering
14. **irresolute** and pointless gestures
(a) hesitant (b) lukewarm (c) doomed
15. she seemed sunk in **lassitude**
(a) femininity (b) languor (c) swampy mire
16. knowledge of comparative **physiology**
(a) athletics (b) sciences of the functioning of organisms (c) faces
17. it grew clearer under closer **scrutiny**
(a) eyesight (b) inspection (c) engineering

18. possessed the elements of ultimate **salvation**
(a) redemption (b) healing by use of unguents
(c) ruination
19. began pacing to and fro like a **sentinel**
(a) soldier (b) dancer (c) guard
20. he stood like one **transfixed** by a dragon
(a) mesmerized (b) rebuked (c) regurgitated
21. **vestiges** of the ancient country
(a) suit jackets (b) smells (c) traces

Exercise 6-3: Parts of Speech

Change the given word to the part of speech indicated. If the word may not take that part of speech, write "Ha ha, you cannot trick me!" -- or **X** for short. (10 marks)

1. _____ verb form of *aperture*
2. _____ noun form of *articulate*
3. _____ adjectival form of *complacency*
4. _____ verb form of *concussion*
5. _____ adjectival form of *contagion*
6. _____ adjectival form of *fecundity*
7. _____ verb form of *heliograph*
8. _____ verb form of *ineffectual*
9. _____ a noun form of *irresolute*
10. _____ verb form of *scrutiny*

Exercise 6-4: Etymologies (5 marks)

- _____ 1. Which word derives from two Latin words meaning "to bring to a standstill"?
- _____ 2. Which word derives from the French word *fusil*, meaning firearm?
- _____ 3. Which word describes a process for weatherproofing nails and screws?
- _____ 4. Which word derives from Latin words for *not* and *stop*?
- _____ 5. Identify the word that stems from the Latin word *lassus*, meaning *weary*.

Exercise 6-5 Making connections.

In one or two sentences, describe the relationship between each pair of words. Use a good dictionary to clarify unclear words. (10 marks)

1. sentinel vedette

2. aperture operculum

3. nitroglycerin concussion

4. ineffectual Walter Mitty

5. desist avast!

Website Links

Many Flee Homes to Escape ‘Gas Raid From Mars’—Phone Calls Swamp Police at Broadcast of Wells Fantasy

So ran the headline in the October 31, 1938 New York Times following a radio broadcast of Wells’ novel by actor Orson Welles. Visit the websites below for more about H.G. Wells, his life and works. Read the transcript of the scandalous radio broadcast (which is often re-broadcast each Hallowe’en on many radio stations) and the full NY Times response. The Internet links below were verified as of October 2001.

The H.G. Wells Society

<http://www.rdg.ac.uk/~lhsjamse/wells/wells.htm>

A Study Guide for H. G. Wells: The War of the Worlds (1898)

http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/science_fiction/warofworlds.html

An Etext of the Novel

<http://www.fourmilab.ch/etexts/www/warworlds/warw.html> (see also *Project Gutenberg*)

The 1938 Radio Broadcast and Aftermath

<http://members.aol.com/jeff1070/wotw.html>

Other great alien invasion novels include:

[Childhood’s End](#) by Arthur C. Clarke and

[The Puppet Masters](#) by Robert Heinlein