

STEPPING STONES™

a chapter book

CLASSIC

# THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

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## Chapter 1

No one even dreamed that the planet Earth was being watched. No one even gave much thought to life on other planets. A few scientists, at most, imagined that there might be some sort of life on Mars. Some sort of plants or maybe animals. But no one thought of danger.

People went about their work and their play. They were sure that humans were more intelligent than any other living thing.

But those who watched us were more intelligent than we are. More intelligent than we could even imagine. And need had brightened their

minds and made them sharp. Need had hardened their hearts.

Mars is much older than Earth, and much smaller. It is also much farther from the sun. Mars has become very cold in its old age. Its seas have shrunk, and its icecaps have grown. Soon life there will become impossible.

The Martians must have watched Earth through telescopes. They saw green hills and blue water. And they felt hope. Warm Earth was a place they could live. They carefully planned their move.

The Martians think of people on Earth as we think of monkeys. Or even ants. Human life means very little to them. Killing us so that they could live would not matter.

But don't judge them too quickly. We humans have killed off many animals with no thought. The bison is gone. So is the dodo. When Europeans moved to new lands, they swept away the people living there. So who are we to judge the Martians?

Our problem with the Martians started six years ago, on August 12, 1902. An astronomer, a scientist who studies stars, was watching Mars. At midnight he saw a huge ball of fire shooting toward Earth very fast. It disappeared in fifteen minutes.

There was almost nothing in the newspapers about it the next day. Just a few lines on a back page. Only a few scientists knew about the strange ball of fire.

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At first, nobody seems to take much notice of the balls of fire heading from Mars to Earth. But the fireballs turn out to be spaceships filled with aliens from Mars! And when the Martians turn their terrible machines against the humans, it's all-out war. Can humankind survive? Or will the creatures from Mars take over the world?

