

## Investigating the genre

1. Science fiction is called a 'genre' of writing: that is you can find similar elements of stories (such as similar plot, themes, imagery, setting etc) in a number of Science fiction stories. Romance and comedy are also genres. Can you think of any others?
2. What similarities can you name that quite often occur in science fiction stories? Discuss your ideas and make a list with a partner.
3. *War of the Worlds* is the title of a book. What do you think the story might be about? Explore your ideas with a partner and feedback your suggestions to the class; do other pairs have similar ideas?
4. Without worrying about any of the vocabulary that you don't recognise or understand, read the extract below which is from the opening of the novel.

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 gulfs of space beings 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.

From: *The War of the Worlds* by H G Wells (1898)

5. Discuss with a partner any words or phrases that suggest to you that the extract is from the science fiction genre. Make a list and compare it with another pair's list to see if you have picked out the same words.
6. Why are these words associated (linked) with the genre of science fiction?
7. What sort of feelings do you get from the extract above? Does the narrator sound happy; uneasy; shocked? Choose one word to summarise the atmosphere of the paragraph and then illustrate it with examples of words and phrases from the extract to reflect why you have chosen the word.
8. What do you think will happen next in this story? Discuss your ideas with a partner or have a go at writing the next few sentences. Be prepared to share your thoughts with the class.