

## Life on Mars?

WORKSHEET A

A

1. Which of these words or expressions are used in English to refer to a creature that is not from Earth?
  - a) galaxian, ET
  - b) alien, extraterrestrial
  - c) spaceman, outsider
  
2. What is the name given to imaginary creatures from the planet Mars?
  - a) Martians
  - b) Marsicans
  - c) Marsinians
  
3. Which of these statements about Mars is true?
  - a) It is green.
  - b) You need a telescope to be able to see it from Earth.
  - c) It is travelling around the Sun, just like Earth.
  
4. What is the approximate minimum distance between the Earth and Mars?
  - a) 560,000 kilometres
  - b) 56 million kilometres
  - c) 560 million kilometres
  
5. What was the name of the 2005 film (starring Tom Cruise) about creatures from Mars attacking Earth?
  - a) *Mars Arrives*
  - b) *Fighting Planets*
  - c) *War of the Worlds*
  
6. When did spacecraft from Earth perform the first experiments on the surface of Mars?
  - a) The 1950s
  - b) The 1970s
  - c) The 1990s
  
7. Which of the following statements is true?
  - a) There is ice on the surface of Mars, just like on Earth, but there is no liquid water.
  - b) There are no rocks on the surface of Mars.
  - c) Scientists have discovered two small rivers on the surface of Mars.
  
8. There are currently two vehicles moving across the surface of Mars and performing experiments. What country are they from?
  - a) Russia
  - b) Japan
  - c) United States

# Life on Mars?

WORKSHEET B

Have you ever looked up at the stars on a clear night and wondered if humans and the other living things on this planet can really be 'alone' in the universe? We now know there are millions of other galaxies, so it is easy to believe there is life out there somewhere.

The idea of strange creatures living on other planets has recurred throughout the history of science fiction, and lots of books and films have imagined these aliens coming to Earth. Sometimes the extraterrestrials are friendly, as in the film *ET* (1982), but more often they are hostile, as in the film *Independence Day* (1996).

There is one place in particular that the creators of science fiction have often imagined as the base for alien invaders, and in comparison with other galaxies it is very close. It orbits the sun, just like Earth, and sometimes it is only about 56 million kilometres away from us. It can often be seen easily with the naked eye. It is, of course, the planet Mars.

The main reason Mars has played a major role in science fiction is probably because out of all the planets in our solar system its climate and atmosphere are the most similar to those here on Earth, and therefore it seems the most likely to be capable of supporting life. Its reddish colour, which can make it look mysterious or even slightly threatening, has also fed the imaginations of science-fiction writers.

One of the most famous books about hostile Martians attacking Earth is *War of the Worlds* (1898) by the English writer HG Wells. There have been two film versions of the story – the first was made in the 1950s and the second, starring Tom Cruise, in 2005.

In the last forty years the United States, the Soviet Union (later Russia), Europe and Japan have all sent spacecraft to orbit Mars, and a small number of these craft have landed on the planet. However, they certainly haven't found any Martians. Although there is ice on the surface of Mars, liquid water – which most scientists believe is necessary for the emergence of life – is absent. There was great interest in the two American 'Viking' spacecraft that landed on Mars in the mid-1970s and carried out the first ever experiments on the rocky surface of the planet, but they revealed no evidence of living organisms.

Two American 'rovers' (like small, remote-controlled cars full of scientific equipment) that landed on Mars in 2004 are currently still performing experiments and taking photographs. These recent experiments seem to show that there was liquid water on Mars in the past, which suggests the possibility of it returning at some point in the future.

Therefore, although *War of the Worlds* is not about to become reality, it seems unlikely that Martians will lose their place in the human imagination.

## Life on Mars?

WORKSHEET C

### B

Here are some simple definitions for words or expressions that appear in the text on Worksheet B. Can you find the words or expressions they refer to?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (noun) group of stars and planets existing in space
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) occur or happen again; be repeated
3. \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) unfriendly; behaving like an enemy
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) travel around something in a circular movement
5. \_\_\_\_\_ (phrase) without the help of,  
for example, a telescope or microscope
6. \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) important; significant
7. \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) appearing to want to harm you in some way
8. \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) arrive on a solid surface from the air, or from water
9. \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) able to flow; neither solid nor in the form of a gas
10. \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) not present; not existing
11. \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) do, perform
12. \_\_\_\_\_ (verb) to let something become known; disclose
13. \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ (adjective) controlled from a distance (for  
example by electrical equipment)
14. \_\_\_\_\_ (noun) a fact, event, or situation as it really exists