

Ben Kuleshov

Professor Sarah Cole

H.G. Wells ENGLGU4500.001

12 December 2025

H.G. Wells: A Brief Biography

H. G. Wells was an English novelist, journalist, and intellectual whose work laid the foundations of modern science fiction while engaging directly with social and political issues. Trained in the sciences and deeply influenced by evolutionary theory, he used his unique narrative style to explore the future of humanity, the impact of technology, and the fragility of modern civilization.

Born Herbert George Wells on the 21st of September, 1866, in Bromley, Kent, England, to a shopkeeper and a former domestic servant, he grew up in a lower-middle-class household. A childhood accident that left him bedridden for months developed his love for reading, and his educational journey eventually led him to the Normal School of Science in London, where he studied under T. H. Huxley, a famed English biologist who voiced strong support for Charles Darwin's theories of evolution. Wells' experiences with economic struggle and his proximity to a high level of scientific debate shaped his lifelong interest in education, class, and the social role of science.

Wells rose to fame in the 1890s with a series of "scientific romances," better known today as early science fiction. His 1895 work, *The Time Machine*, cast his views on Victorian class inequality onto an evolved version of humanity in a distant future. 1896's *The Island of Dr.*

Moreau painted a horrific picture of experimentation on humans and animals, with the hapless main character trapped in the realm of a mad scientist. 1897's *The Invisible Man* had similar themes of the horrors of scientific power paired with a lack of moral restraint, but focused on society's response to the consequences. 1898's *The War of the Worlds* subjected England to a "reverse-colonial" invasion by technologically superior aliens, similarly to how England had invaded the cultures it colonised. These works laid the foundation for modern science fiction, with their impact still felt more than a century later. They helped establish Wells as one of the most widely read authors of his generation.

Wells shifted his attention toward social and educational issues. In the novel *Tono-Bungay*, he used the rise and fall of a snake-oil medicine to capture the essence of commercial life, heavily drawing from his own experience. In general, Wells put a lot of himself into all of his characters. During the First World War, *Mr Britling Sees It Through* follows a comfortable middle-class intellectual as the conflict shatters his world, forging a profound examination of how war affects civilian communities.

The Outline of History attempted nothing less than a continuous narrative of the human past, presenting a relatively affordable account of world history in an accessible format as a tool for creating better-informed, scientifically literate citizens, in the hopes of bettering society in the future. Wells became increasingly involved in politics and social reform. He was an outspoken socialist for much of his life, though he frequently clashed with other prominent socialists over strategy and ideals. Across his essays, lectures, and further speculative works, he argued for a form of "world government" to prevent future wars.

Wells's later years were marked by both public prominence and growing pessimism. He was a loud advocate for writers and against censorship and fascism. The rise of totalitarianism and the devastation of the Second World War killed his earlier optimism about humanity progressing in what he deemed a rational fashion. When he died in London on the 13th of August, 1946, he left behind dozens of novels, short stories, and works of non-fiction. The legacy of his influence on literature and pop culture endures to this day.

Works Cited

- Biography.com Editors. “H.G. Wells Biography.” *Biography.com*, A&E Television Networks, 23 June 2020, www.biography.com/authors-writers/hg-wells.
- Desmond, Adrian J. “Thomas Henry Huxley.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Henry-Huxley.
- Kuiper, Kathleen. “Tono-Bungay.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, britannica.com/topic/Tono-Bungay.
- “Mr. Britling Sees It Through.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Mr-Britling-Sees-It-Through.
- Nicholson, Norman Cornthwaite. “H.G. Wells.” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 29 Oct. 2025, www.britannica.com/biography/H-G-Wells.
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. “H.G. Wells.” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/hg-wells.
- Wells, H. G. *The Outline of History: Being a Plain History of Life and Mankind*. Edited by Ernest Barker et al., Project Gutenberg, 12 Apr. 2014, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/45368.
- Wells, H. G. *World Brain*. Foreword by Bruce Sterling, introduction by Joseph Reagle, The MIT Press, 2021, mitpress.mit.edu/9780262542562/world-brain/.