

seen as weak creatures to be protected by men. And so the Time Traveller protects Weena, and she cares for him. Nothing more happens in the relationship between them. This book is not a love story.

At times in the book we may feel that all the human work of Wells's time, all the scientific progress, has been useless in the end. Wells left his course at a London science college before he finished it because he had lost interest in his studies. At one point the Time Traveller sees some old books that have fallen to pieces. He thinks about the scientific papers he wrote himself, which have now turned to dust.

After he leaves the year 802,701 the Time Traveller travels forwards, further and further in time, until he finally stops his machine on a frozen beach under an enormous red dying sun. The world has stopped turning and its end is near. In the end the power of nature is greater than the power of science, and there is no real purpose to human life. This sadness in the book may be the result of the mood of the time. The story was written at the very end of the 1800s, when many people were afraid of the new century. Some felt – correctly – that a great war between European countries was coming, and that things would never be the same again. But it may be that Wells could see beyond the daily lives of people, with their hopes and fears, beyond life and death, to a greater picture in which all of us simply live in this world and, one day, will leave it.

HG Wells wrote about the ideas and problems of his time, but he also wrote about feelings which are true in any time, including our own. That is one reason why *The Time Machine*, like a number of his other books, is still popular today.

Herbert George Wells was born in England in 1866. He did not come from a rich family. His parents had a small shop but it was not successful and closed when he was thirteen. He worked at

different times in a clothes shop and a chemist's. He always read a lot and later managed to get a place at a science college. After he left there he became a teacher, but he was badly hurt while playing football and this meant that he could not continue. He then worked in London, writing for newspapers and doing some teaching of small groups. None of this made him much money.

*The Time Machine* was his first fictional work. It appeared in weekly parts in a magazine in 1894 and as a book the following year. At the time, Wells was married to his second wife and was trying to support both her and her mother. He needed to make money, so he wrote it quite quickly. Although he was never really happy with the finished book, it was a great success and allowed him to continue as a writer.

It is not easy for us to understand how different this book was from others of the time. It is the first real science fiction book. It introduces the reader to the idea of time as the fourth dimension, with the three dimensions of space, ten years before Einstein made it part of scientific thinking. Wells also describes a simple mechanical answer to the problem of time travel – a time machine. Nobody had ever described time travel in a machine before, and the words 'time machine' entered the English language.

After the great success of this book, Wells wrote more science fiction. His most famous books are *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897), *The War of the Worlds* (1898) and *The First Men in the Moon* (1901). All of them have been filmed, some more than once. *The War of the Worlds* and *The Invisible Man* are also Penguin Readers. HG Wells died in London in 1946.