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# The Radio Show that Frightened Thousands

## CONNECTIONS

### Literature Connection—*Guys from Space* by Daniel Pinkwater

*Guys from Space* is a humorous science fiction selection complete with aliens and a spaceship ride to a distant planet.

### Content Connections—Social Studies, Science Fiction

*The Radio Show that Frightened Thousands* is the true account of the panic that took place during Orson Welles's 1938 radio broadcast warning of a Martian invasion.

## OBJECTIVE

Students will use prior knowledge and experience to understand and respond to new information.

## VOCABULARY

1. Introduce the key vocabulary words from the script. Write each word on the board.
2. Describe the meaning of each word and point out its use in the script.
3. Review the definition of each vocabulary word. As you do, ask students to complete your statement by saying the vocabulary word. For example, say to students, "The \_\_\_\_ fell from the sky." Students should respond by saying *meteor*.
  - **astronomer**—a scientist that studies planets and space
  - **broadcast**—sounds or pictures sent out by television or radio
  - **entertainment**—anything done for fun
  - **hoax**—a trick
  - **meteor**—a rock from space

## BEFORE THE READER'S THEATER

1. Read the title of the script and discuss the various roles. Then ask students to make predictions about the selection. What do they think the script will be about? Is it fiction or nonfiction? Why do they think so? Does anyone listen to the radio? What kinds of things do they hear on the radio?

# The Radio Show that Frightened Thousands *(cont.)*

## BEFORE THE READER'S THEATER *(cont.)*

2. Introduce the Question Strips graphic organizer (page 35 or questionstrips.pdf). Give each student a copy of the graphic organizer
3. The question strips contain the following words: *who, what, when, why, how, and what if*. After practicing the script, students will work in groups to write one question for each strip.
4. Read the script aloud, modeling appropriate reading strategies while you read. To help build fluency and comprehension, it is important for students to hear the script read aloud before practicing on their own.

## DURING THE READER'S THEATER

1. Divide the class into groups of six to read and practice the script.
2. Students need to decide which character they will play and then highlight their parts in the script (Readers 1–6). They should also mark with a star any places where they need to pause while reading.
3. Give students a few minutes to practice reading with expression in their voices. Additionally, students may decide on a few props or materials to use during their reading. They need to use materials that can be easily acquired or assembled in the classroom.
4. After they have finished practicing, have each group perform the reader's theater for the rest of the class. You may also want them to perform for another class.

## AFTER THE READER'S THEATER

1. After reading the script, have the groups work together to finish the Question Strips graphic organizer. Then bring the class back together and have the groups share the completed questions and discuss possible answers.
2. Have students find other science fiction books that they would be interested in reading.

## RESPONSE QUESTIONS

### Group Discussion Questions

- What kinds of things do you think people did for entertainment before television?
- What does your family do if the electricity is out or if the TV isn't working?

### Written Response Question

- Would you have been scared if you had heard the "War of the Worlds" radio program? Why or why not?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Question Strips

<b>Who?</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
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<b>What?</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
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<b>When?</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
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<b>Why?</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
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<b>How?</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
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<b>What If?</b>	<hr/> <hr/>
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# The Radio Show that Frightened Thousands

BY CATHY DAVIS

A reader's theater with six parts



**Reader 1:** It was 1938 and many Americans had just finished dinner.

**Reader 6:** Television didn't exist, but families had other kinds of entertainment.

**Reader 2:** It was the Golden Age of Broadcasting, a time when the whole family gathered around the radio after dinner.

**Reader 4:** Everyone had a favorite radio program because there were shows for all ages.

**Reader 5:** On October 30, 1938, six million listeners were enjoying orchestra music on the radio.

**Reader 1:** Then suddenly, the music stopped and a reporter delivered an important message.

**Reader 4:** Astronomers had seen blue flames shooting up from planet Mars.

**Reader 3:** Everyone wondered what that could mean, but the radio broadcast returned to the regular music program.

**Reader 6:** Once again the music was interrupted for a special news bulletin.

**Reader 5:** A meteor had fallen to Earth and landed on a farm near Grover's Mill, New Jersey.

**Reader 6:** More announcements came throughout the night.

## The Radio Show that Frightened Thousands *(cont.)*

**Reader 2:** Families in New Jersey were glued to their radio sets.

**Reader 1:** Martians had landed on Earth and were blasting the crowd around them with deadly heat-rays.

**Reader 4:** The army was called in, but the Martians won the battle.

**Reader 5:** They began marching and releasing a poisonous black gas.

**Reader 2:** Many radio listeners panicked. Hundreds called the police.

**Reader 4:** Some people hid in their cellars, while others got into their cars and drove away.

**Reader 5:** Before the night was over, the people learned that the program was a hoax.

**Reader 2:** An actor named Orson Welles had done the program as an early Halloween spook story.

**Reader 6:** He had made an announcement before the show that the people were about to hear a radio play called "War of the Worlds."

**Reader 1:** However, many listeners had tuned in late and missed that announcement. They thought it was really happening.

**Reader 4:** In the 1950s, television overtook the Golden Age of Broadcasting.

**Reader 5:** But Orson Welles proved how believable the radio could be.