

The Invisible Man

H. G. Wells

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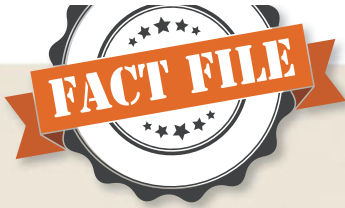
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About the Author

Herbert George Wells (or H. G. Wells) is considered, along with the French writer Jules Verne, to be the father of science fiction¹. He was born in Bromley, near London, in 1880, to a modest family. When he was eight, he broke his leg and was confined to² bed for a long time. His father brought him books from the local library and he became a keen³ reader.

Due to his family's economic situation, Wells could not go to school, but he read and studied on his own. He became so proficient⁴ that a school offered him the position of student-teacher. This meant that he was able to pay for his own education by teaching younger pupils.





From Horror to Science Fiction

MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

What happens when science goes beyond nature? This is one of the main themes of *The Invisible Man*. However, it was not the first time that this theme appeared in literature. It is also at the heart of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, first published in 1818.

In this novel, Victor Frankenstein, a brilliant young scientist builds a body using parts of corpses¹ and then brings it to

life. However, the "Creature" (as he is called in the book) is a monster² and Frankenstein rejects him. The Creature runs away and discovers that his appearance terrifies people. In his anger against his "father," he kills Victor's youngest brother.



Mary Shelley
(1797–1851)



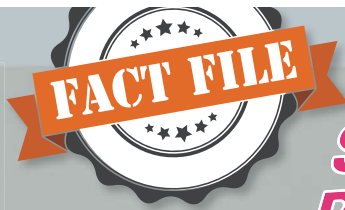
FACT FILE

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

SURVEILLANCE SOCIETY

An old legend tells the story of a man who knew what other people were thinking. He could read other people's minds and was unhappy as a result. He was lonely because nobody knew him the way he knew everybody else. One day he met another man who could read other people's minds. They instantly hated each other.

This is a reflection on the idea that we all want someone who understands us completely, but we also need privacy¹. We need to be free to choose who has information about us and what they know about us. We need people to trust us even if they don't know everything about us. We feel uncomfortable when we know people are watching us. We need some "invisibility." These are some of the reasons why privacy is a basic human right.



SO HOW MUCH PRIVACY DO YOU HAVE TODAY?



CCTV¹

Every time you go into a shop, public building and many private buildings, and when you move through the streets of your town or city, you are filmed by CCTV cameras.

SOCIAL MEDIA

If you have a social media account, you probably use it to share a lot of private information about yourself: your photos, where you are, what you are thinking, who you are with, what you are doing, other people's posts, who you follow and everything you "like" or react to.

Your personal data² and all these activities are recorded and sold to data analysts. They produce a secret profile that describes you. How did you set your privacy settings? Can people you don't know see your page? Who can see your data? What do they do with your data? Who can see your secret profile? Do you know what that profile says about you?



YOUR MOBILE PHONE

You are probably terrified by the thought of losing your mobile phone, because so much of your "life" is in it. However, how private is all that life you store³ in your phone? Your location, every text message, every phone call, every app you use and every website you visit are logged⁴. Do you know what happens to these logs? Do you know who can access them?

- Which of these types of surveillance are acceptable to you? Why?
- Which of them are not? Why?

- ¹ **CCTV:** closed-circuit television; cameras in public places that film everything that happens there
- ² **personal data:** information about people and their lives
- ³ **store:** keep for use in the future
- ⁴ **logged:** recorded



Before Reading

1 Match the jobs to the descriptions of what the characters do.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|---|--|
| ① policeman | _____ | a | Dr Kemp studies and researches science. |
| ② scientist | _____ | b | Mrs Hall is the owner of an inn. |
| ③ doctor | _____ | c | Mr Bunting is a priest in the Church of England. |
| ④ landlady | _____ | d | Mr Cuss looks after people who are ill. |
| ⑤ tramp | _____ | e | Mr Jaffers is called when someone breaks the law. |
| ⑥ chief of police | _____ | f | Colonel Adye is in charge of all policemen in the village. |
| ⑦ vicar | _____ | g | Mr Marvel has no home, job or money; he lives on charity. |


2 Read the two character descriptions from the story. Which characters from Exercise **1** are they describing?

- a _____ had a large face, a big nose, a wide mouth and a strange beard. He was fat, with short arms and legs. He wore a very old silk hat, and his coat had shoelaces instead of buttons. He was sitting by the roadside, not far from Iping.





1. The Strange Man's Arrival

 The stranger¹ came to Iping on the 29th of February, through a cold wind and snow storm, walking from Bramblehurst railway station with a large suitcase. He was wrapped up² from head to foot, with big blue goggles³, a scarf and a hat that together hid every bit of his face except the tip of his nose. There was snow on his shoulders and chest. He staggered⁴ into the Coach and Horses more dead than alive and dropped his suitcase.

"A fire," he cried, "Please! A room and a fire!"

He followed Mrs Hall, the landlady⁵, into the guest sitting room. She lit the fire and went into the kitchen. She started cooking the bacon, then went back into the sitting room to lay the table. Although the fire was burning nicely, she was surprised to see that the stranger was still wrapped up.


"Can I take your hat and coat, sir?" she said, "and give them a good dry in the kitchen?"

"No," he said looking out of the window. "I prefer to keep them on."

"Very well, sir," she said. "In a bit the room will be warmer."

¹ **stranger:** person who is not known in a particular place

² **wrapped up:** covered with clothes

³ **goggles:** 

⁴ **staggered:** walked unsteadily

⁵ **landlady:** (here) woman who owns a pub or an inn



He didn't answer. Mrs Hall laid the table quickly and left the room. When she returned, he was still standing there.

She put down the eggs and bacon noisily, and said loudly, "Your lunch is served, sir."

"Thank you," he said, and did not move.

When Mrs Hall went back, she knocked and entered without waiting for an answer. The stranger was sitting at the table and moved quickly to pick something up from the floor.

She noticed his coat and hat on a chair in front of the fire. She looked at them and said, "May I take them to dry now?"

"Leave the hat," said her visitor, in a muffled¹ voice.

She turned and for a moment she was too surprised to speak.

He was still wearing his gloves and he was holding a white cloth² over the lower part of his face. That was the reason for his muffled voice, but it was not what startled³ Mrs Hall. It was the fact that all of his head above his blue goggles, including his ears, was covered by a white bandage⁴. The only visible part of his face was his pink nose. He was still wearing his scarf, and strands⁵ of thick black hair were coming out between the bandages.

She put the hat back on the chair. "I didn't know, sir . . ." she began.

"Thank you," he said.

1 **muffled:** unclear and quiet

2 **cloth:** piece of material used for clothes

3 **startled:** surprised

4 **bandage:**

5 **strands:** long pieces

6 **accident:** unexpected event that hurts someone





"I'll have it dried, sir," she said, and took his coat and left.

"The poor man has had an accident⁶ or an operation that disfigured⁷ him," thought Mrs Hall as she put his coat in front of the kitchen fire.

Mrs Hall

- Why does Mrs Hall think the stranger has had an accident?

When she cleared away the stranger's lunch, he said that his luggage was at Bramblehurst station.

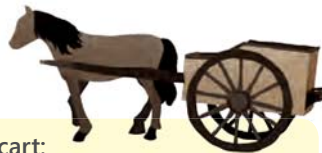
"Can I have it sent here?" he asked.

Mrs Hall said a cart⁸ could go there the next day.

"Not earlier?"

Mrs Hall saw the opportunity to find out the reason for her guest's appearance. "It's a steep⁹ road, sir," she said. "A cart lost control there about a year ago. Two men died. Accidents, sir, happen in a moment, don't they?"

"They do."



⁷ **disfigured:** changed his appearance in an unpleasant way

⁸ **cart:**

⁹ **steep:** (of a hill) that goes up or down very quickly



"But people take a long time to get well again, don't they? My sister's son, Tom, cut his arm at work, and he was bandaged for three months. My sister had to do his bandages, and then undo them. So if you don't mind, sir, could I ask . . ."

He interrupted her. "Will you get me some matches? My pipe¹ is out."

His rudeness² upset Mrs Hall. She stared³ at him for a moment, then she went for the matches.

"Thanks," he said, turning his back to her to look out of the window.

"He's very sensitive on the topic of accidents and bandages," thought Mrs Hall. But his rudeness irritated her.

He remained in the sitting room for the rest of the day.

The Stranger

1. What is unusual about the stranger?
2. Why do you think the stranger is rude?
3. If someone is rude to you, what do you do or say?
Tell a partner.



1 pipe:

2 rudeness: way of behaving that is not polite

3 stared: looked directly