

Unit 7

Unit 7 Extension

1 Read the text and complete the sentences with one word in each space.

- 1 Many people had missed the of the broadcast of *War of the Worlds*.
- 2 Many listeners believed the broadcast to be
- 3 During the broadcast, up to a million people believed that the Martian was actually happening.
- 4 Orson Welles thought the broadcast would damage his acting, but it didn't.
- 5 This event took place before the invention of

Is there anybody out there and if there is, are they friendly? Those are questions human beings have been asking for centuries as they wonder whether life exists on other planets. On the evening of 30 October 1938, many Americans thought that both those questions had been answered when the Earth was invaded by Martians. The fact that many ordinary people believed they were under attack by extra-terrestrials seems extraordinary, but it relied on a series of coincidences and misunderstandings.

In 1938, there was no television and Sunday evening was a time when average Americans sat at home and listened to the radio. At the time, the young Orson Welles was a well-known actor and director. At 8 p.m. on 30 October 1938, the radio announcer introduced that evening's play: Orson Welles in *War of the Worlds* by H.G. Wells. At exactly the same time, on another channel, there was a popular comedy show. Many people listened first to that and did not start to listen to *War of the Worlds* until fifteen minutes into the programme. And they were just in time to hear that explosions from Mars had been detected and that a farm in New Jersey had just been the site of a meteor crash. The announcer described how hideous Martians were slowly appearing and firing 'heat-rays' at their victims. When the US military finally attacked the Martians with planes and artillery, the aliens responded with poisonous gas.

This was, of course, not actually happening. But as the play described how ordinary Americans were running for their lives, up to a million people were said to have believed that the invasion was actually happening. Men, women and children went out into the streets or tried to hide from the Martians. Police received calls from people asking for gas masks, convinced that New York had been destroyed.

It was not until the programme had almost finished that Orson Welles himself went on air to remind listeners that the play was fictional. Welles thought he had made a big mistake by making what seemed like a real news report and felt he would never work again, but the opposite was true. He subsequently went on to make *Citizen Kane*, thought by many to be the best movie ever.

2 Read the text again and choose the best option.

- 1 What happened on the evening of 30 October 1938?
 - a Martians invaded the Earth.
 - b A radio dramatisation of *War of the Worlds* was broadcast.
 - c People in New York believed there was an alien invasion.
- 2 Why did many radio listeners think that an alien invasion was happening?
 - a They had not heard the start of the radio programme and did not realise it was a drama.
 - b The radio station told them it was true.
 - c Because the acting in the drama was so good.
- 3 Where did the Martians land first?
 - a power plants in New York
 - b police stations in Chicago
 - c a farm in New Jersey

