

WORKSHEET 2 – THE MAGIC SHOP THE FATHER OF SCIENCE FICTION

H.G.Wells (1866-1946) is considered to be the father of the 'genre' of science fiction – a type of narrative in which 'real' science is used as the basis of the story.

Wells was trained as a scientist, studying biology and zoology at the Royal College of Science. He was a poor but clever boy who hoped to advance himself by his writing, and because of his interest in 'techology', began making up stories with a scientific basis. An number of these became all-time classics: *The Time Machine* (time travel), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (genetic engineering), *The War of the Worlds* (alien invasion) – all subsequently reprinted without cease, and made into movies. He also wrote novels of 'social realism', with a pointed political message (Wells was a socialist) – but it is his sci-fi which has made him immortal.

Task 1:

Research one or more of his works. *The Time Machine* is quite short, and you would probably enjoy reading it in full. There are also two interesting, if not perfect, film versions of the story – both different in important ways from the book, but certainly indebted to it. Write about why Wells was such an important figure in what has become a major 'genre' of fiction.

Task 2:

Wells was not the only one. Jules Verne (1828-1905) was a pioneer of the genre. His novels *Twenty Thousands Leagues under the Sea*, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and *Around the World in Eighty Days* were brilliant and prophetic imaginings – they actually predate real inventions like the submarine and show the technology of the time (air balloons for example) as vital to stories. There were others too – Edgar Rice Burroughs, Isaac Asimov, Arthur C Clarke and many others – who have been vital to this popular type of fiction. Do a project on one or several of them.