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H.G. Wells

**The
Invisible
Man**

Read by

Daniel Philpott

1	The Invisible Man by H.G.Wells –	
	Chapter 1: The Strange man’s Arrival	6:40
2	‘He did not remove the serviette...’	6:49
3	Chapter 2: Mr Teddy Henfrey’s First Impressions	6:03
4	After Mrs Hall had left the room...	5:41
5	Chapter 3: The Thousand and One Bottles	5:26
6	Directly the first crate...	6:06
7	Chapter 4: Mr Cuss Interviews the Stranger	5:50
8	But whatever they thought of him...	3:33
9	When his nerves had been steadied ...	5:37
10	Chapter 5: The Burglary at the Vicarage	4:46
11	Chapter 6: The Furniture That Went Mad	4:57
12	Mrs Hall was left almost in a fainting condition...	3:53
13	Chapter 7: The Unveiling of the Stranger	6:39
14	It was worse than anything...	6:58
15	Several of the men folks ...	4:08
16	Chapter 8: In Transit	1:06
17	Chapter 9: Mr Thomas Marvel	6:17
18	The Voice made no answer...	6:18
19	Chapter 10: Mr Marvel’s Visit to Iping	6:22
20	Chapter 11: In the “Coach and Horses”	7:02

21	Chapter 12: The Invisible Man Loses his Temper	4:55
22	Mr Huxter was stunned...	6:09
23	Chapter 13: Mr Marvel Discusses his Resignation	5:01
24	Chapter 14: At Port Stowe	6:12
25	He nodded his head slowly...	6:22
26	Chapter 15: The Man who was Running	4:03
27	Chapter 16: In the “Jolly Cricketers”	7:36
28	Chapter 17: Dr Kemp’s Visitor	7:54
29	‘I am an Invisible Man...’	4:55
30	‘But how’s it done?’ began Kemp...	4:38
31	Chapter 18: The Invisible Man Sleeps	4:34
32	‘Wrapped up!’ said Kemp. ‘Disguised!...’	4:16
33	Chapter 19: Certain First Principles	5:53
34	‘And here is another fact you will know...’	6:02
35	Chapter 20: At the House in Great Portland Street	7:26
36	‘It was night outside long before...’	6:42
37	‘It was all done that evening...’	7:31
38	Chapter 21: In Oxford Street	5:16
39	‘Then I became aware of a blare of music...’	5:56
40	Chapter 22: In the Emporium	5:58

41	'Upstairs was a refreshment department...'	7:16
42	Chapter 23: In Drury Lane	3:04
43	'At last I reached the object of my quest...'	5:58
44	'I resolved to explore the house...'	6:41
45	'Then came a curious hesitation...'	6:07
46	Chapter 24: The Plan that Failed	5:02
47	'Humph!' said Kemp, no longer listening...	3:41
48	Chapter 25: The Hunting of the Invisible Man	4:04
49	Chapter 26: The Wicksteed Murder	5:18
50	Of course, he must have dragged this rod...	4:39
51	Chapter 27: The Siege of Kemp's House	5:32
52	A resounding smash of glass came from upstairs...	6:30
53	For a space Kemp remained staring...	6:31
53	Chapter 28: The Hunter Hunted	6:41
55	He glanced up the street towards the hill...	6:37
56	The Epilogue	4:31

Total time 5:16:19

H.G. Wells

(1866–1946)

The Invisible Man

Originality is rare and overrated. It is not often that the core idea of a work of art is completely new, and if it is the idea alone that is original then there is frequently not very much art to be found. Herbert George Wells is frequently referred to as an originator, an inventor, a father of the genre of science fiction. But the continuing appeal of his best stories is not so much in their innovative nature as in the way he took an idea and made it modern, stingingly relevant to his own time and to ours.

The Invisible Man is an example. The central idea has been around for at least 4,000 years in the West (a version of it is discussed by Socrates), but has very likely existed since the very first members of humankind were able to say 'What would you do if you were invisible?' to each other. The theme has re-emerged

in everything from Germanic myth to Tolkien's Middle Earth to Harry Potter. The idea of invisibility is utterly beguiling, for two interconnected reasons: it enables (at least potentially) actions without consequences and observation without being discovered. And from the first, the moral implications of this power have exercised thinkers, writers and artists. There is the initial moral query – if you weren't going to be caught, what would you do? This is generally answered with: 'Anything!' suggesting that the morality that humanity prides itself on is based on a rather flimsy fear of punishment. This leads to a deeper, second question – what does it say about your character that you would break the moral codes if you could avoid retribution? And therefore how moral are you and your choices?

Socrates is rather more optimistic than

Wells on the idea of human morality; but he is much less thrilling to read. Wells was a passionate devotee of science and its power to transform, but he was also an angry critic of certain core tenets of the world in which he grew up. Allied to these radical notions were the imagination of an enthusiastic young man, the frustration of his earlier years and a journalist's speed of execution. The result was four classics of science fiction in just three years – *The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr Moreau*, *The Invisible Man* and *The War of the Worlds*. In all of them, he sees a dark and violent vision of Victorian society degenerating into brutal repression, with mankind largely impotent and science corrupted by power. This bleakness would have been rather daunting were it not offset by Wells's vigour and *Boy's Own* sense of adventure. His novels are short, immediate and atmospheric, with so much action and cliffhanging suspense that the underlying social critique is hardly apparent, unless one chooses to look.

Wells was born Herbert George, but known as Bertie, and lived in the kind of poverty usually described as lower

middle class, but which equated to a very lowly form of misery. His parents ran an unsuccessful shop, and their income was increased by what his father could earn as a professional cricketer. But even that was stopped when he broke his leg, and with the family facing real poverty, the mother went back to work in service, and the boys (there were two other brothers) were apprenticed out. Bertie, who had found solace and inspiration in books and ideas, went into drapery, but after two years managed to persuade his parents to let him out of his contract, so deep was his wretchedness. He managed to continue his education, at which he excelled, becoming fired with a sense of the possibilities of science, in particular Darwinism. He went on to teach, but had already started writing, and had decided that was how he wanted to earn his living. Within three years, he was one of the best-known writers in England, and for the next 30 or so he was one of the most successful and influential writers in the English language.

His radicalism could be traced back to his childhood – its repressions, its

limitations, the grimness of the family's home-life, the middle-class Victorian morality that crushed individuality under the heavy cloth of acceptable convention. He raged against the inequities of life for the poor, mocked the institutionalised repression of women and men, and created warmly comic characters who struggle against them. But it may also be traced to the fact he was an imaginative and passionate man who wanted to address palpable injustices, and thought books were a short-cut to the imagination and intelligence, and thus to action – as they had been for him. Some of his ideas now seem entirely reasonable: a league of nations, a world encyclopaedia, sexual equality. Some seem radical but understandable: Wells felt the social obligation of monogamy to be profoundly wrong; he preached and practised free love, fathering at least two children outside his second marriage.

But some of his beliefs seem to demonstrate precisely the dangers of science stripped of humanity that he warned against in his earlier works. He believed in eugenics, in the capacity

to improve mankind's development by essentially selective killing; and although his views on race-hate seem to suggest a sympathy for the victims, there is little doubt that he was a racist. His contradictions are to some extent a product of his time; he was by no means the only liberal socialist to promote sterilisation, nor the only pacifist who came to support the First World War (although Wells was the one who coined the term 'war to end war').

But he should have known better. In *The Invisible Man*, the central character convinces himself of his status outside the law, imagines he will hold ultimate power and intends a reign of terror, all on the basis of a freak of science that he cannot control. Wells took an old, old idea, made it sound chillingly plausible by tapping into the social and scientific concerns of his time, and wrapped the whole thing up as an adventure story. That's why he is an original.

Notes by Roy McMillan



Daniel Philpott trained at LAMDA and, after success in the prestigious Carleton Hobbs Award for Radio Drama, has been prolific in BBC Radio and the Spoken Word industry. His theatre work includes numerous productions on the London fringe. For Naxos AudioBooks he has recorded *A Life of Shakespeare, Famous People in History – Volume 2, Dracula, Frankenstein, Pygmalion* and *Our Island Story*.

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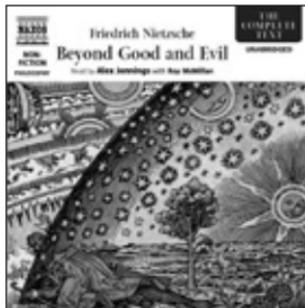
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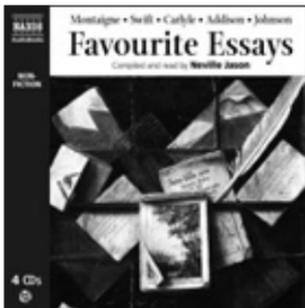
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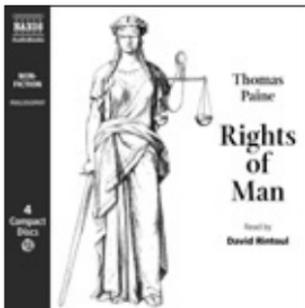
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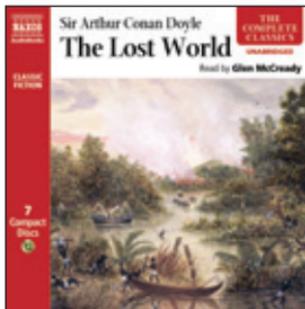
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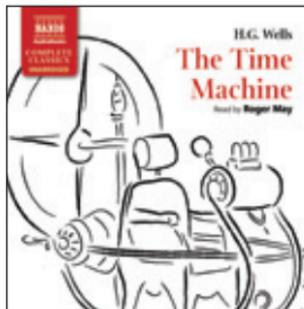
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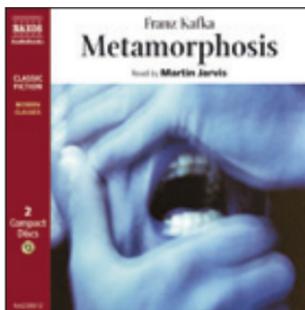
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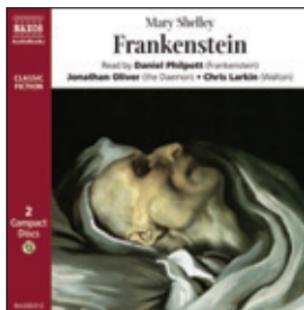
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H.G. Wells

The Invisible Man

Read by **Daniel Philpott**

A stranger arrives in a small English town, wreathed in a hat, coat, goggles and bandages. It's not just his identity he's hiding, though; he has discovered the secret of invisibility, and believes it will lead him to ultimate power. But he needs to be able to control the process, and when the terrified villagers refuse to help him, he decides on bloody revenge.

An immediate success when it first appeared, H.G. Wells's adventure is at once chilling and thrilling, and one of the undisputed classics of science fiction.



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