CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The First Men in the Moon

H. G. Wells · *1901 · original English text*

As he sits down to write amidst the vine-leaves under the blue sky of southern Italy, the narrator is astonished that his part in Mr. Cavor's adventures was the outcome of the purest accident. He had gone to Lympne to find peace and a chance to work. The hosted text is Wells's original English, Project Gutenberg #1013, complete.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What do two Englishmen find when a new substance carries them to the moon, and how should a school read a scientific romance that is also a warning about greed and about a strange order of life?

"As I sit down to write here amidst the shadows of vine-leaves under the blue sky of southern Italy, it comes to me with a certain quality of astonishment that my participation in these amazing adventures of Mr. Cavor was, after all, the outcome of the purest accident."
opening

Bedford, who needs money, and Cavor, who has found a substance that cuts off gravity, go to the moon. They find a world, and an intelligent order, not a barren prize only. Teach the wonder, and the greed, and the cost, for a wide band (catalogue 7–12). Quote "any one" as two words, as printed. This is a scientific romance, not a later film, and not a textbook of spaceflight.

KEY CHARACTERS

Mr. Bedford
The narrator, who writes from Italy, and whose need of money is part of why he goes

Mr. Cavor
The inventor of the substance that makes the voyage possible

THE PUREST ACCIDENT

> *"As I sit down to write here amidst the shadows of vine-leaves under the blue sky of southern Italy, it comes to me with a certain quality of astonishment that my participation in these amazing adventures of Mr. Cavor was, after all, the outcome of the purest accident."*
> opening

Grades 7–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
A Book from Italy
THE OPENING

The narrator writes under vine-leaves in southern Italy. He had gone to Lympne because he imagined it the most uneventful place in the world. "Here, at any rate," said he, "I shall find peace and a chance to work!" And this book is the sequel. So utterly at variance is destiny with all the little plans of men.

- The first sentence is exact, including "vine-leaves," "southern Italy," and "the purest accident"
- "It might have been any one." — two words, as printed
- Cavor is already named before we have met him in the story's present
- The tone is already half comic, half astonished

> *"As I sit down to write here amidst the shadows of vine-leaves under the blue sky of southern Italy, it comes to me with a certain quality of astonishment that my participation in these amazing adventures of Mr. Cavor was, after all, the outcome of the purest accident."*
> opening

02
Cavor, and a Substance
THE EARLY CHAPTERS

At Lympne the narrator meets Cavor, whose work produces a substance—Cavorite—that will cut off the pull of the earth. A sphere is made. A voyage becomes possible.

- Keep "Cavor" and "Cavorite" as Wells names them
- Bedford's need of money is part of why he goes; the book will not forget that motive
- The invention is a wonder; it is also a temptation
- For a wide grade band (7–12); the science is of 1901

03
The Moon, and What Lives There
THE VOYAGE AND THE ARRIVAL

They reach the moon and find it not empty in the way they had imagined. A strange life, and an order of beings, will meet them.

- Teach the wonder first, then the danger
- The Selenites, when they appear, are an imagined people, not a joke only
- Do not flatten the moon into a mere treasure-ground; Bedford will be tempted to do that
- The book is still a romance of escape and of seeing

04
Messages, and a Cost
THE LATER CHAPTERS, AND THE CLOSE

The record continues, in part, as messages. The close is not a simple flag planted. Greed, wonder, and a parting of the two men are the later matter.

- Do not invent a last triumphant colony the book does not give
- A later passage already speaks of an "intermittent trickle of messages" and of a change "mankind has scarcely imagined heretofore" — if you cite it, quote exactly
- Teach the warning about greed and about treating another world as a prize only
- The Italy of the opening is the place of writing, after the adventure

05
The Hosted File
PG #1013

The hosted text is complete, original English, 1901 (serialized 1900–01).

- Quote "any one" as two words, and "Lympne" as printed
- It may be read with When the Sleeper Wakes as Wells's range of imagined worlds, not as the same book twice
- A scientific romance, for 7–12, taught as wonder and as warning
- This is not a later film's plot; quote only what is here

Accident and Destiny | Invention | Wonder | Greed and Seeing | Companionship under Strain | Another World

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 7–12

1. The book opens: "As I sit down to write here amidst the shadows of vine-leaves under the blue sky of southern Italy, it comes to me with a certain quality of astonishment that my participation in these amazing adventures of Mr. Cavor was, after all, the outcome of the purest accident."
2. "It might have been any one." — two words, as printed. He had gone to Lympne for peace and a chance to work.
3. The hosted text is complete, original English, PG #1013, 1901. A scientific romance, for 7–12, taught as wonder and as warning, not as a later film.
4. Bedford's need of money is part of the voyage. The moon is not a mere treasure-ground. Do not invent a last triumphant colony the book does not give.
5. Keep "Cavor," "Cavorite," and "Lympne" as Wells names them.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #1013, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-first-men-in-the-moon/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.