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# Aliens Are Coming!: The True Account Of The 1938 War Of The Worlds Radio Broadcast



## Synopsis

It was an ordinary night in October of 1938 until a news bulletin interrupted the dance music on CBS radio—“aliens were invading the United States! Meghan McCarthy’s hilarious *Aliens Are Coming!* tells the true story of the Halloween radio prank that duped much of the country into believing that Martians had invaded. The book uses excerpts from the actual War of the Worlds radio broadcast and includes information about the importance of radios in the 1930s (before the time of televisions and computers) as well as facts about Orson Welles and H. G. Wells, author of the novel on which the broadcast was based.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 690L (What’s this?)

Hardcover: 40 pages

Publisher: Knopf Books for Young Readers (February 14, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0375835180

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Product Dimensions: 10.3 x 0.4 x 10.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars— See all reviews— (15 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,256,671 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #95 in Books > Children’s Books > Arts, Music & Photography > Performing Arts > Television & Radio #682 in Books > Children’s Books > Education & Reference > History > United States > 1900s

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

Picture book non-fiction. A hard format to write in, or the hardest format to write in? Every year countless libraries get inundated with the same old same old. Your bee books. Your dinosaur books. Your fifteen different biographies of Teddy Roosevelt. So you can imagine my surprise when I picked up a book that looked... different. You don’t expect something called, “Aliens Are Coming” to be factual. You especially don’t expect it to tell the truth when you flip through the pages and see large multi-tentacle-laden outer space beasties terrorizing the natural landscape. But then, it helps to know your history. Seeing the 1938 radio broadcast of “War of the Worlds” for what it truly was (perfect picture book fare), McCarthy gives us, thrills, chills, and some wonderful little factoids in the

back of what I might well call my favorite non-fiction picture book of 2006. It's the 1930s! Good old 1930s. Open the book and here's a cheery announcer telling kids that back in the thirties the primary source of entertainment and information was the radio. It then explains that some people "were easily fooled by a radio play that sounded like an actual news bulletin". Turn the page, and everything is black and white. We're looking at a typical American street scene. "It was October, 30, 1938, the day before Halloween". We next see a nice black and white scene of a family gathered in their living room. The noise coming out of the radio forms into colorful dancing sequences. Suddenly an announcer comes on and starts talking about a flaming meteorite that has fallen in New Jersey. As the listeners grow worried, the scene shifts to a field where a group of people stand around as a flying saucer slowly begins to open up. It's aliens! And they've come to conquer us all! They ransack the farmlands. They invade the cities. They land all over the country. "Was this the end of the world?" Certainly a lot of people listening thought so. The pictures are back to black and white and we're seeing clogged highways and jammed phone lines, and police investigating perfectly calm fields in the country. It wasn't the end of the world. It was Orson Welles and his troupe of actors at the Mercury Theatre performing a realistic version of "War of the Worlds". Interesting factual information rounds off the book with the true story and fun info about subsequent readings of the story (with similar results). Part of the fun of this book is that there is no indication that any of this story might not be entirely on the up and up until you reach its end. Then it finishes a bit abruptly. Still, imagine introducing this book to a room full of second graders. You tell them in all seriousness (preferably around Halloween time) that this book is a true story. True true true. Then you fill their little heads with a wacked-out tale of alien invasion and widespread panic. The fact that they've been duped only makes them (like those poor 1938 American citizens) only more intrigued and want to read the book again and again later. The pictures make it ideal read-aloud material, to say nothing of the haunting scenes, colorful during the broadcast and bleak in real life. Though McCarthy works with a misleadingly simple palette, her pictures have a great deal of depth, tone, and character to them. Actually, author/illustrator Meghan McCarthy has always struck me as being underrated. She first came to my attention when she wrote, "The Adventures of Patty and the Big Red Bus". Like a cohesive Lauren Child, McCarthy is particularly good at her atmospheric round-eyed cartoonish illustrations. She seems at her best when she's writing non-fiction too. Her factual information bringing up the book's rear is just amazing. All in all, this is one of the most amusing and wonderful titles to grace libraries and bookstores this or any year. A great idea for a book and superb follow-through. Amusing to its core.

The Occupy Mars Band is southern California will play sound effects behind this book as it is read to young children in California public libraries. It is a wonderful story to tell children and to explore the golden days of "Old Time Radio." So, we are including this book when we perform the "Occupy Mars Learning Adventures."

I used this to teach The War of the Worlds radio broadcast & the effect of media on the people. At the time, only one child had heard of the broadcast, so the end was a great surprise and sparked thoughtful discussion. The illustrations are also wonderful--their comic book look makes the book even more relevant today. Also fantastic is the bit at the end that gives more of the history and aftermath of the book. And after reading the story, all the kids wanted to know more and were interested in the straight informational text.

The story tells the main points surrounding the broadcast and tells some of War of the Worlds. While it was fun to read, I think I would have enjoyed if Meghan McCarthy wrote a kids-style version of the War of the Worlds based on the broadcast. However, being that I'm such a fan of story of the broadcast, I did enjoy it quite a bit. At the end of the book, the author goes more in depth about the story in the author's notes. This part is more lengthy than the actual story, I enjoyed this part the most. However the first part is definitely more geared for kids and easier to read. All-in-all, this book is definitely worth checking out. Please see full review at [...]

One of the most famous - or infamous - hoaxes in American history, an event that terrified hundreds of thousands and sent normal people into panic-driven frenzies, may not be the first thing you'd think of when you consider writing a picture book for young readers, but thank goodness Meghan McCarthy had a vision for this book that presents this very significant snippet of Americana in a way that not only won't scare the bejeezus out of your little alien hunter, it will entertain them with great, kid-friendly art, and educate them with photos of the period and some really well-researched historical information in the back pages that will make this one a staple in American classrooms. A must for anyone studying the time period.

I would recommend this book. It was interesting for me, and captivated an older child and a younger child. My older child actually heard me reading it and came into the room to listen. We've read it three nights in a row. The older child just looked up the original broadcast on you tube. Great job, thanks!

Aliens Are Coming is about a false radio broadcast about aliens. This book illustrates how a little prank could affect so many people. I thought this book was great and you should too.

This is a great book that children of all ages will enjoy!

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