The Time Machine and The Invisible Man, by H. G. Wells, is part of the Barnes & Noble Classics series, which offers quality editions at affordable prices to the student and the general reader, including new scholarship, thoughtful design, and pages of carefully crafted extras. Here are some of the remarkable features of Barnes & Noble Classics: New introductions commissioned from today's top writers and scholars Biographies of the authors Chronologies of contemporary historical, biographical, and cultural events Footnotes and endnotes Selective discussions of imitations, parodies, poems, books, plays, paintings, operas, statuary, and films inspired by the work Comments by other famous authors Study questions to challenge the readers viewpoints and expectations Bibliographies for further reading Indices & Glossaries, when appropriate All editions are beautifully designed and are printed to superior specifications; some
include illustrations of historical interest. Barnes & Noble Classics pulls together a constellation of influences—biographical, historical, and literary—to enrich each reader's understanding of these enduring works. The Time Machine, H. G. Wells's first novel, is a tale of Darwinian evolution taken to its extreme. Its hero, a young scientist, travels 800,000 years into the future and discovers a dying earth populated by two strange humanoid species: the brutal Morlocks and the gentle but nearly helpless Eloi.

The Invisible Man mixes chilling terror, suspense, and acute psychological understanding into a tale of an equally adventurous scientist who discovers the formula for invisibility—a secret that drives him mad.

Immensely popular during his lifetime, H. G. Wells, along with Jules Verne, is credited with inventing science fiction. This new volume offers two of Wells’s best-loved and most critically acclaimed “scientific romances.” In each, the author grounds his fantastical imagination in scientific fact and conjecture while lacing his narrative with vibrant action, not merely to tell a “ripping yarn,” but to offer a biting critique on the world around him. “The strength of Mr. Wells,” wrote Arnold Bennett, “lies in the fact that he is not only a scientist, but a most talented student of character, especially quaint character. He will not only ingeniously describe for you a scientific miracle, but he will set down that miracle in the midst of a country village, sketching with excellent humour the inn-landlady, the blacksmith, the chemist’s apprentice, the doctor, and all the other persons whom the miracle affects.” Alfred Mac Adam teaches literature at Barnard College-Columbia University. He is a translator and art critic.

**Personal Review: The Time Machine and The Invisible Man (Barnes & Noble Classics) by H. G. Wells**
Before you read this story, make sure you have all the equipment. First, go to Wikipedia and get a copy of the expanded Chapter 11. I'm not sure why this has not been reintegrated into more texts, or at least included as an appendix. My George Pal movie tie-in edition did have it reinserted, which, by the way, caused me a lot of consternation when I read other books, but . . .

The second thing you need is a public domain copy of "The Chronic Argonauts." It is not a rough draft, but more of a prequel or concept-forming work that led up to the classic book.

Third, get a copy of "The Time Ships," the sequel authorized by the Wells estate.
So begin with "The Chronic Argonauts," picturing Dr. Moses Nebogipfel as a cousin or uncle to the protagonist of in the full novel. This story is jerky, and is merely Gothic techno-horror, but by comparing the two, you do get a chance to see what makes an otherwise moderately interesting story into a great classic.

So to the book. Like Mark Twain's "Connecticut Yankee," "The Time Machine" is social commentary disguised as science fiction. Wells was a dyed-in-the-wool socialist, and was concerned with the social conditions of bifurcated England. Remember the late 1800's was the era of the capitalist and proletariat that Marx and Dickens wrote about. Taking that as his starting point, Wells uses his novel to illustrate the long term consequences--the very long term consequences--of the social split.

Via the Time Machine, we see that in AD 802,701, the overclass evolved into the Eloi (Aramaic for "My God"), with the underclass evolved into the Moorlock. History's irony is that the Eloi are the fatted cattle, and the underworld Moorlocks have the upper hand. Apparently the Communist Revolution took longer than Marx and Engels thought, and with a bitter ending to the dialectic materialism.

Americans who come from the tradition of railsplitter Abe Lincoln, we are not sensitive to how social standing locks people into place and position. To a European, however, this class-consciousness is very obvious--think of Harry Potter's mudbloods. Considering this, Wells's criticism was well founded and well placed.

Yet, there is something more to this story than just social commentary that has been reiterated time and time again. For example, JRR Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-Stories," which is ostensibly about fantasy, cites "The Time Machine" several times. Keep in mind that the early roots of "The Lord of the Rings," especially the story "The Lost Road," was actually a time-travel story set in Atlantis.

Chapter 1 and the discussion of the fallacy of the instantaneous cube suggests that the book's appeal may just be the added fourth dimension to the story. Other books are limited to space--the moon, the Island of Dr. Moreau, the Lost World, the center of the earth, or 20,000 leagues under the sea--but this book adds another dimension to the story. In this way, the story is not flat and two-dimensional. It is not even three-dimensional like a pop-up book. Its strength is that it is fourth dimensional. As stereo speakers add to the sound, and the red-blue anaglyphic glasses add to a film's dimension, this temporal consideration enhances the story's texture. We are looking along a hitherto unseen axis, and therefore have a deeper and thus more comprehensive understanding and vision of the book's theme.

Most of contemporary Time Travel stories--beginning with the Hugo winning "City on the Edge of Forever" episode of Star Trek and perfected in "Back
to the Future"--have revolved around variations of the Grandfather Paradox. The original, however, is different. It is social commentary disguised as a classic Victorian Adventure story. We don't get logic games, or any temporal reset buttons--Star Trek: Voyager's Deus Ex Time Machina--just a heart-pounding and mind-expanding adventure.

I think time travel lends itself to social commentary because, as mortals, we are near-sighted. We have the obvious present around us, and first and second hand memories of the past, but how do we see the future? How can we get beyond Stage One of existence, to, say Stage Twenty, or even Stage 802,701? Yet long term thinking, which we are really incapable of doing, is existentially essential. The idea of Time Machines aids our thinking--we can imagine, or better yet, extrapolate from the present to a hypothetical future.

This is exactly what Wells's did with his book. He took the grubbing existence of the poor, contrasted it with the silver spoon existence of the rich, and added a touch of gritty Serling-esque irony with the Moorlock-working class living off the flesh and blood of the Eloi luxury class.

I'm not sure how successful Wells was in his day. Nowadays, he is a household name. There have been two film adaptations of this story. Certainly the situation he described has changed for the First World. The moral message seems to have worked: and it began with changing hearts by this story.

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