

Time After Time

(Science Fiction/Romance) (1979)

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Major Characters

Herbert "HG." Wells.....Malcolm McDowell

In real life, HG. Wells was a famous British writer and social critic who lived from 1866 to 1946. He was best known for his idealistic views of socialism and for his science-fiction novels, including *The Time Machine*. In this movie, Wells is a young writer who actually invents a time machine that can travel into the future.

Dr. John Lesley Stevenson ("Jack the Ripper").....David Warner

Jack the Ripper was the name given to a famous serial murderer who slit the throats of numerous prostitutes in London in the late 1870s. He terrorized the city for years, but he was never caught. In the movie, Jack the Ripper is actually Dr. John Lesley Stevenson, a surgeon and friend of Wells, who has been able to keep his horrible secret from everyone.

Amy Robins.....Mary Steenburgen

A charming bank officer who lives in San Francisco, who meets and falls in love with Wells.

Plot Summary

The film begins in 1893 London, when HG. Wells reveals to a group of his friends that he has invented a time machine that will carry him to the future, where he hopes to find a "socialist utopia." Unfortunately, his friend Dr. Stevenson is the first to use his machine in a daring escape, the police Discover that he is actually the famous killer, Jack the Ripper.

Panicked that he has unleashed a monster on future generations, Wells also uses the machine in order to chase him through time to the year 1979 (when this movie was released). Both Wells and Stevenson end up in San Francisco, because it is here where a museum exhibit on the life of Wells (including the famous time machine) happens to be taking place.

After arriving in 1970s San Francisco, Wells searches for Stevenson in hopes of returning him to 1890s London. Wells wants to bring him back so that he will face justice for the crimes he had committed. Of course, Stevenson has no intention of returning, and in fact once again begins his compulsive murdering of prostitutes.

While the chase continues, Wells meets Amy Robins, who asks him out to lunch. They gradually fall in love with each other, but as Amy teaches Wells about the modern world, Stevenson continues his slaughter. Eventually, Wells is forced to tell Amy who he really is, since Amy herself soon becomes another possible victim of Stevenson's obsessive violence. Eventually, Wells discovers there is only one way to forever stop "Jack the Ripper."

Words and Expressions that You may not Know

Jack the Ripper strikes again.....

Jenny.

The name of the prostitute in the film's first scene.

Ta ta, love.

Very old fashioned for good-bye.

Its a raw night.

An old British way to simply say cold.

You come **straight to the point**, don't you, love?

If somebody comes "straight to the point," they quickly say exactly what they are thinking.

Free love, HG.?

A lifestyle that was popular with hippies in the 1960s in which people have lots of lovers instead of just one at a time. The real H.G Wells supported free love, but it has not been particularly popular since the emergence of AIDS in the 1980s.

I give you Casanova.

A famous lover in literature.

We'll have to listen to a sermon.

A speech by a religious figure (used sarcastically to mean any speech by a person convinced of the correctness of his ideas).

A physician's hours are not his own.

A poetic way to say "doctors always have to work."

Supper.

British English for dinner (or perhaps any meal).

We've begun to despair.

"To despair" is an interesting little verb meaning to lose hope.

I bid you farewell.

A British way to say goodbye.

Laboratory.

Note the British pronunciation!

Poppycock!

This is a funny old-fashioned word for nonsense (Today, "bullshit" is most likely the word of choice in similar contexts).

<p><i>Wells presents his greatest invention: A time machine.</i></p>

You've actually built the bloody thing.

In British English, "bloody" is an all-purpose (and overused) adjective to express intensity and emotion.

Practical jokes are not in your line, old sport.

Jokes in which one person plays a trick on another:
"Its not your style to do practical jokes."

From one time sphere...to another.

Refers to the mathematical reality of physical space.

A conscious but vaporized state.

The physical state in which gas or mist hangs in the air.

Bowlderdash! You go North and you get to Glasgow.

Another British word for nonsense (or, bullshit).
"Glasgow" is a major city in Scotland.

Without the key, its a bloody homing pigeon.

A type of bird that can be used to send written messages, and is trained to always return home.

The vaporizing equalizer.

A science-fiction term with no real meaning, though in the movie, it's critical for the functioning of the time machine.

Social utopia. No poverty, no disease....

A "utopia" is an ideally perfect place with no social problems (much discussed by philosophers & writers throughout history).

You astonish me.

"To astonish" is a strong verb meaning to amaze, or fill with wonder.

The future will tell.

A good little expression which means exactly what it says!

Human frailty, at last.

"Frailty" is weakness (either physical, emotional or intellectual).

Checkmate!

What the winning player says at the end of a game of chess.

We've cordoned off the neighborhood.

"To cordon off" an area is to surround it (usually with police, or literally with rope).

Chief of Surgery.

Head surgeon at a major hospital.

Skylight.

An overhead window in a roof .

We'll round him up.

In this context, "to round up" someone is to capture them.

There's bound to be an explanation.

Another good way to say "There almost certainly is..."

He was always such a gentleman.

In this case, a well behaved and polite man.

The coppers couldn't find him.

An old-fashioned version of cops (i.e....the police).

We've searched high and low.

"We've searched everywhere..."

I've turned that bloody maniac loose on utopia!

"To turn someone loose" on something is to free them to do whatever they want to it (often something destructive).

15 pounds and 6 pence

Pounds and pence are English money.

I may have to trade with the natives.

The people who were born and raised in a particular country.

Estimated time of arrival.

Official language used by airlines, trains, etc. (Often referred to as ETA).

<i>H.G. Wells, time traveler, joins the modern world.</i>

Hey you! Get away from that exhibit!

What is often said when a person doesn't know the name of the person they are screaming at!

You people, Christ almighty!

A rarer version of "Jesus Christ" (to show anger or other emotion).

"Colts Maul Rams"

The newspaper headline: Refers to two Pro Football teams (Colts & Rams are animals. "To maul" is to physically attack).

I beg your pardon. Could you tell me what city this is? :: Come on!

The greatest and most widely used phrasal verb in all of English, meaning everything from "Stop doing that!" to "Please be serious." In this case, meaning "Stop being an idiot!"

The current rate of exchange.

A common reference to money (i.e.....the pound-dollar exchange rate).

Pommes frites.

The French word for French fries (perhaps used in the UK, but not the US).

Constipated.

A sad word meaning the inability to use the toilet ("plugged up").

I haven't seen stones like this since before the war.

Used to refer to some types of jewelry, such as diamonds.

I couldn't give you top dollar.

"I couldn't pay you what its really worth"

May I see some **I.D.**?

The abbreviation for identification (driver's license, passport, etc.).

How do you know they're not **hot**?

An interesting slang word: Goods that are "hot" are stolen.

Give me a break. What's this gentlemen's **stuff**?

Like "come on," this is a great expression with many meanings, depending on the context. Here, the speaker is essentially saying

"Stop acting like I'm a moron and show me some respect."

"Stuff" is a very generic word that usually refers to physical things, though in this case, it refers to concepts such as behavior or attitude.

Wells meets Amy, who leads him to Stevenson.

The officer in charge of foreign exchange? :: **You're looking at him!**

A clever way to say "I'm the person you are looking for."

What's the matter? Don't you believe in **woman's liberation**?

A term popularized in the 1960s to describe the equal rights women were demanding (An idea H.G. Wells had believed in).

He had a **money belt** that must have weighed a **ton**.

A "money belt" is a type of belt tourists use to store money and other valuables. A "ton" is 2,000 pounds, which is very heavy!

The Hyatt Regency.

An expensive, famous and beautiful San Francisco hotel.

Give me a ring...if you feel like it.

"Call me" (A meaningless request if you don't know telephones exist!)

A pick-up.

A great noun (and phrasal verb): A meeting where a person charms someone else, in hopes of a future relationship or sexual contact.

At least he's not **gay**.

The essential adjective for referring to homosexuals. San Francisco is well known in the United States as a major center of gay culture.

How about that suit? Early American?

Note that in rapid speech, "about"---> "bout."

What's up, doc?

"What's up" is a very common way of asking "What's new?"

"Doc" is a short word for doctor, and the entire sentence is a famous line from the TV cartoon character Bugs Bunny.

Wells and Stevenson finally meet up, and both discover that the 20th century is not yet utopia.

Bless my soul.

A very rare way to express complete surprise.

You managed to find the nerve to track me down.

"You found the courage to come and find me."

You're a regular Sherlock Holmes.

A very famous detective in English literature, created in the late 19th century (In the movie, Wells is unaware that Holmes is known today by most Americans). This is a way of saying "You're quite an impressive detective."

I thought you'd lost your wits.

A rare way to say mental health, or sanity.

You're the Columbus of a new age.

Refers to Christopher Columbus: "You're a great explorer"

I'm not here for idle banter.

A useful expression meaning mindless conversation.

On the contrary, I belong here completely and utterly.

Usually used as an adverb to mean "absolutely," as in the expression "I am utterly shocked".

Your absurd notions of a harmonious society are drivel.

"Absurd" is a great word for totally ridiculous, and "drivel" is an interesting little word for stupid or senseless talk.

I was a freak...and now I'm an amateur!

A "freak" is a shocking and abnormal outcast. (This is a key line in the movie on the explosion of violence in 20th century culture). An "amateur" is a beginner, or someone who is not yet professional.

Violence? It's catchy, isn't it?

"Catchy" is a very useful word for contagious (ie...quickly spreading from one person to another).

It's fortuitous, isn't it?

If something is "fortuitous," it happens by good luck, or chance.

You can't follow me from time to time like The Flying Dutchman.

A famous literary character.

Herbert, what you cannot do is bluff.

"To bluff" means to mislead, or engage in a false display of strength or confidence (A critical verb in card games such as poker).

A tall flaxen haired distinguished looking Englishman.

A rare word for a gray-yellow color.

He died 20 minutes ago. We had him listed as John Doe #6.

"John Doe" is the name given in official documents when the name of a person is not known (In this case, for a death certificate).

Amy offers to show Wells around San Francisco.

Lunch on me.

If a meal is "on you," then you agree to pay for it.

This is what you had in mine?

"This is what you were thinking?."

All set?

This is a common way to ask people if they are ready.

We've had no trouble since the big one in 1906.

A reference to the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

(Remember that this film was made in 1979, 10 years before the 1989 San Francisco earthquake).

Knock (on) wood.

A interesting way of saying "I hope the good situation continues."

It leveled the whole schabang.

A slangy way to say "the whole thing" (In this case, the whole city).

We had a bit of a falling out.

If two people have a "falling out," they usually have had a serious argument, and thus have stopped communicating with each other.

You probably move in different circles.

"You probably have different friends."

Are you a scientist? Just a hunch.

A "hunch" is an excellent word for an intuitive feeling or guess.

I have the impression you're cloistered away.

To be "cloistered away" is to be secluded, often in a quiet place like a library.

I wrote on whatever struck my fancy.

A pretty and British way to say "...whatever interested me."

Did you think it was forward of me to invite you?

Here, "forward" means too assertive, or perhaps lacking restraint.

It's not often that a strange man turns me on.

A truly great phrasal verb, both semantically and grammatically.

If you "turn somebody on," as in the case above, then you have basically excited them, in a sexual sense. But if you "turn on somebody," this means that you have decided to go against, and even physically attack them ("Even though I fed it, the dog turned on me"). Of course, you can always just "turn on a light," or any other appliance or machine. For lovers of English grammar, all of this is "a turn-on" (i.e....like most really cool phrasal verbs, it can function as a noun!).

I don't sleep around.

Common colloquial phrase meaning "to have sex with lots of people."

Dyke.

A somewhat crude word for lesbian.

I go for months without anyone who does it for me.

"...without anyone who excites or interests me."

I have to like the guy or it's a no-go.

A grammatically unique noun which implies nothing will happen!

When I get nervous, I tend to babble.

"To babble" is to talk aimlessly, or say lots of nonsense.

The Golden Gate.

The world-famous bridge crossing the San Francisco Bay.

Wells discovers modern romance.

You're a good driver. :: Damn straight!

Amy's way of saying "you're right about that!"

He taught me, and he was in stock-car rallies.

These are auto races that are popular with working class Americans.

My ex.

A very common way to refer to one's former husband or wife, or even ex-boyfriend or girlfriend.

He wanted me to do the housewife routine.

Here, "routine" is used to mean something that is done mechanically, over and over again.

She wanted me to be routine.

When used to describe a person, "routine" can mean average or common place, though it's rarely used this way.

I like the "little boy lost" quality that you give off.

"To give off" is a good phrasal verb meaning to resonate or emit.

Red Shoes. I really got off on that.

Another idiomatic classic: Here, "to get off" means to really enjoy, and used as such, it can have a strong sexual connotation. Of course you can simply "get off the bus," and if someone tells you to "get off of it," they're probably telling you to stop fooling around and be serious.

What on earth is that?

A way to add a sense of surprise to any "Wh question."

Hell, I've never even been to London.

Often used colloquially at the beginning of a sentence to show mild anger or frustration.

Cosmopolitan.

An important word meaning worldly or sophisticated.

The TV is mainly **crap**.

"Crap" is a **crude** but important word meaning horrible or bad (or literally, "shitty").

My friend Carol is **checking up on you**.

"To check up on" someone is to make sure that they are doing OK.

Let me **get on** with it.

Here, a good way to say start or continue.

Is London **crawling with** Arabs? She wants to marry into oil.

If a city is "crawling with" a certain group of people, this means that there are lots of them around.

A modern "Jack the Ripper" strikes in San Francisco, and Wells decides that he must warn the police.

There are no **leads** as yet.

"Leads" are clues or evidence that help people find the truth of a situation, often used in the context of a criminal investigation.

A detective in **Scotland Yard**.

The English equivalent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

They'd pack me off to a **lunatic asylum**.

This is a home where crazy people are housed.

Try to **sort things out**.

"To sort things out" is to organize things in order to see them clearly.

I never would have **pegged** you as a detective.

"To peg" someone is to think of them as being a particular way.

You look like the cat that ate the canary.

A clever way to say that "You look like you feel guilty about having done something bad."

You're the one who **took off** the whole afternoon.

When you "take off" time at work, you take a break, or stop working.

Giddings.

English money.

The rate fluctuates. I wouldn't want you to get gypped.

"To fluctuate" means to move back and forth, or to vary.

"To gyp" someone is an interesting slang verb meaning to cheat or take advantage of that person, usually in the sense of charging too much money for something. Note however that some people think this word is offensive since it originally came from the word "gypsy." Perhaps a safer phrasal verb is to "rip off."

He asked you to detain me?

"To detain" someone is to keep them from leaving.

Leave the keys, or take the consequences.

An important word that means the logical outcome or conclusion of a particular action (In this case, physical harm).

Do you have spiritual powers? Are you a medium or a mystic?

These are people who claim they can know things through religious or other paranormal powers. When the police get desperate, they sometimes use them.

I'm traveling incognito.

If you travel "incognito," you travel without anyone knowing your true identity.

Sherlock Holmes.

The famous detective of late 19th century British literature (Wells is unaware how famous he is in 20th century America).

All buildings have their little quirks.

A "quirk" is a great little word for a peculiar thing, or an odd behavior (Most often used in reference to people).

Wells tells Amy who he is and where he's from, and at the museum, she finds the horrible truth about Stevenson.

I swear to god that I'm telling you the truth.

This is the strongest thing you can say to convince someone that you are speaking honestly (often used in the redundant sentence, above).

A bigger crock of shit I never heard!

This is an odd grammatical construction (typical of Amy), but the crude expression "a crock of shit" is a wonderful and cool way to refer to a bunch of lies, or more specifically, "bullshit."

I know I sound mad.

Mad means both angry, or as in the case here, crazy.

Holy shit! Flowers!

Another crude but fun and interesting way to express surprise.

No, nobody says "Sacred excrement!" Yes, language is arbitrary.

You want some grass?

An old-fashioned word for marijuana. "Pot" is now more common.

I like to hang out.

A great phrasal verb that varies with the context. Here it simply means to do nothing in particular, sit around, and enjoy life with friends.

What's this gizmo?

A great little word for "thing," often used with strange technological devices or tools.

This is completely bananas.

A common but somewhat dated way to say crazy.

Do you think this is poppycock? :: Not the word I had in mind.

The British word for nonsense, or more specifically, bullshit.

I'll just sit tight here, and be off.

"To sit tight" is to stay and be patient and "to be off" is to leave, though the latter is really only used in the set expression "I'm off."

What is this Victorian chivalry?

A way of treating women with extreme courtesy, as was done by knights in the middle ages (and certain people in Victorian England).

We're playing for keeps, here!

"What we do will have life-long consequences."

I'm not going to stoop to that man's barbaric level!

"To stoop" is to crouch down on bended knee, or to descend to.

The first man to raise a fist has run out of ideas.

A poetic statement against violence: A "fist" is a closed hand and a symbol of physical fighting.

There is brandy in the flask.

A small bottle for liquor.

Valium.

A drug for calming people down, which was popular in the 1970s.

Preposterous!

A fun little word that means totally ridiculous.

Wells returns to save Amy, but the police seize him before he can.

Let's take it from the top.

"Let's start again at the beginning of the story."

I want the truth. Not this cock and bull story.

A story designed to fool people.

You cretinous idiot!

A strong and bitter insult, similar to stupid jerk, fucking moron, etc.

Novelty shops will run off a paper.

Boutiques that sell gifts for tourists.

I'll strike a bargain! I'll confess to anything you like!

British English for "I'll make a deal."

Mother had many failings, but one was not raising mentally deficient sons.

An interesting expression meaning stupid, or perhaps retarded.

On your honor? :: You have my word as a gentleman.

A very formal way of asking "Do you promise?"

If I go any faster, I'm going to wrap us around a phone poll.

The large polls that carry telephone wire.

What are you babbling about?

"To babble" is a great verb meaning to talk nonsense.

Infinity.

Space, time or quantity without limits.

Until we master ourselves, we have no use for time.

For Wells, to "master oneself" would be to control one's own behavior.

Susan B. Anthony.

A famous leader in the woman's rights movement of the 19th century.

Time After Time

Some Potential Questions for ESL Class Discussion

1. What was this movie trying to say about humanity, violence and the 20th century?
2. In what ways was H.G Wells ahead of his time?
3. Would it be harder for Wells to live in 1979 San Francisco or for Amy to live in 1893 London?
4. What were the most important historical developments between 1893 and 1979? What about between 1979 and now?
5. If a time machine existed, would you use it? To go where?