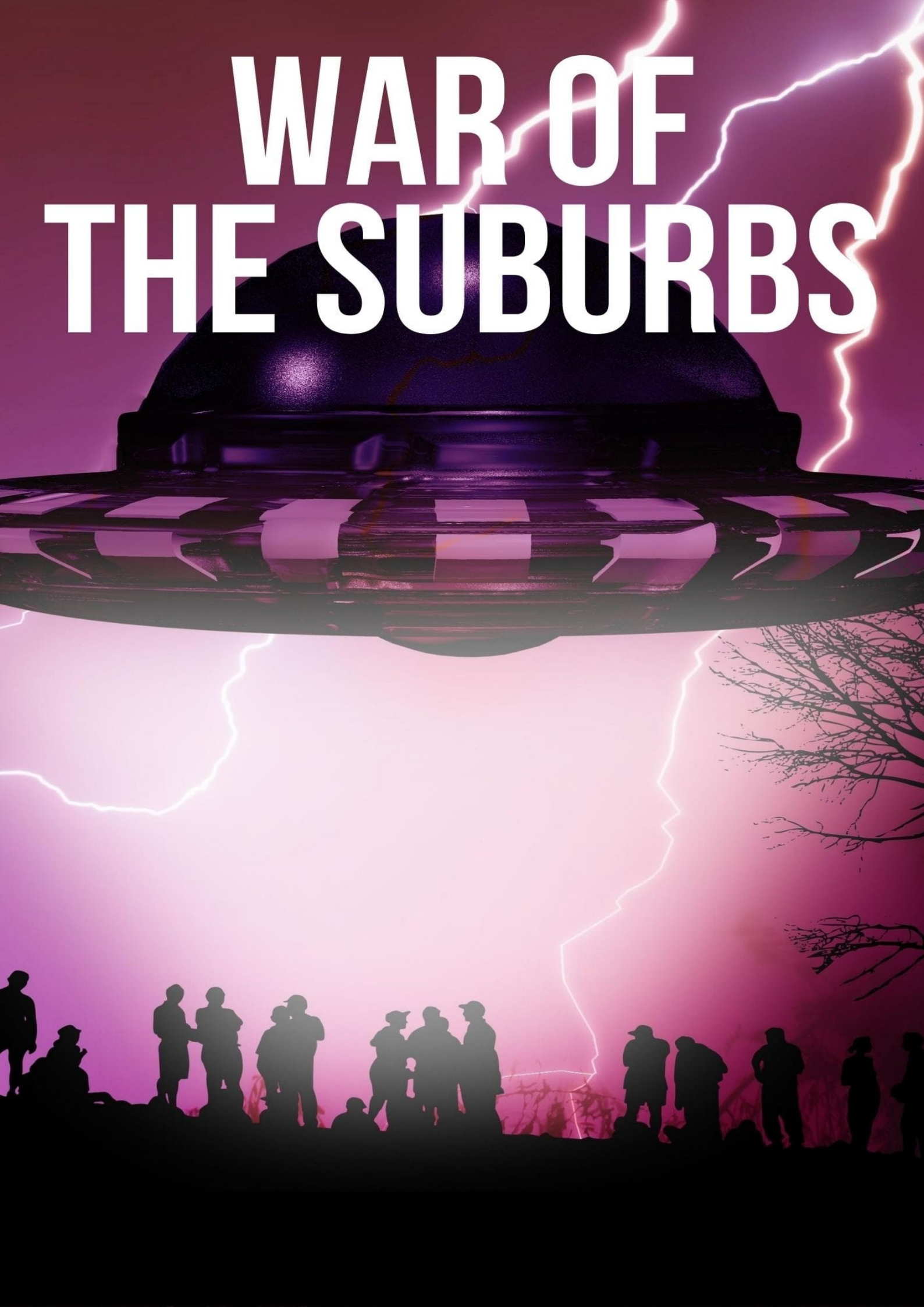


# WAR OF THE SUBURBS



## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
War of the Suburbs.....	4
Reading Comprehension Questions.....	9
True or False.....	12
Essential Vocabulary.....	14
Discussion Questions.....	16
Role Play.....	20
Debate: Are Aliens Real or Not?.....	21
Writing.....	25
True or False — Answers.....	26
Credits.....	28

# Introduction

Do you believe in life on other planets?

Do you think aliens could visit us one day?

Are aliens friendly or unfriendly?

# War of the Suburbs

**“Cup of tea, love?”**

Stan stood by the kitchen sink. His wife shuffled in and sat at the table.

“Yes, please,” she whispered.

Stan knew that Margaret needed at least another ten minutes before she fully awoke. This was their usual morning routine and had been for the last thirty-two years. Him stood by the sink, waiting for the kettle to boil, and her sat at the table staring into space.

Bonnie, their pet dog, snapped and barked at Stan’s ankles.

“What’s the matter with you?” said Stan. He turned to his wife.

“Dog’s gone mad.”

“She needs to go outside,” said Margaret, rubbing a hand over her face.

The dog ran to Margaret, put its paws on her knees, and yapped frantically.

“You need to go wee-wees?” said Margaret, leaning down

towards the dog.

Stan stared out into the back garden. It was in near-total darkness.

“Bit of a gloomy day,” he said. “Still, it is November.”

Outside, the garden was still. The trees at the back, the well-tended rose bushes — *Stan’s pride and joy* — and the plants and lawn all shrouded in dark grey.

“Lisa’s coming over today,” said Margaret. “She wants lasagne for lunch. There’s one in the freezer.”

“Oh well,” said Stan. “Lasagne for lunch it is then.”

He didn’t mind. He would eat anything that Lisa wanted. His granddaughter. Seven years old and she could do no wrong.

Bonnie yapped and snarled at Stan’s feet again.

“What’s got into this dog?” he said. “She’s going frantic.”

The kettle whistled as the water boiled and Stan turned off the gas.

“I hope she hasn’t been next door again,” said Margaret.

“Maybe she’s had some of the fertilizer like last time.”

Stan poured hot water into the teapot.

“We never really knew if it was the fertilizer,” said Stan. “We just said it might have been.”

Their next-door neighbour had used a new fertilizer on his lawn. Margaret thought that Bonnie had eaten some of it and it had made her ill.

But no one really knew.

Stan put the lid on the teapot. He always gave it two minutes to stew. Then, a proper cup of tea. Just right.

He crouched down to take a closer look at the dog. As he reached out a hand to stroke her head, she cuddled under his arm and whimpered. Her eyes were wide open in fear.

“What’s the matter, girl?” said Stan.

“Can you hear that?” said Margaret.

Stan stood upright and peered out into the garden again. Why was it so dark?

It was nearly seven. The days were shorter in November, but it shouldn’t be this dark.

“There it is again,” said Margaret. She stared down the hallway to the front door. “Stan?”

Stan could hear it too now. Voices coming from outside.

“There’s something going on outside,” he said. “I’ll just take a quick look.”

“Mind the dog, Stan,” said Margaret. “Don’t let her out.”

He went to the front door and opened it. Outside was like the middle of the night. In the small drive of their house, their neighbour stood, dressed in his underwear and a pair of slippers.

“I can’t believe it,” he said. “I just can’t believe it.”

Stan stared back at him. He looked comical standing there in his shorts and vest. The slippers on his feet were for a woman. His wife’s slippers.

“Bob?” said Stan. “What’s going on?”

Bob the neighbour shook his head and gave Stan a grin. “I can’t believe it. It’s — It’s just incredible.”

Over the road, Stan saw the woman who lived in the house opposite. They didn’t speak that often, just said hello, and that was about it. In her arms was her daughter. The girl had her arms wrapped around her mother’s waist, holding her tight.

Bonnie barked and whimpered behind him.

Margaret called out to him. “Stan? What is it?”

Other neighbours were in the street. All dressed in their pyjamas or in their underwear, all staring up at the sky. A car had stopped in the middle of the road. The driver stood by his car and gazed up above his head.

Stan tilted his head and looked above.

**Then he saw it.**

A huge expanse of metal. A great network of shining steel where the sky should be. It covered the entire space above their heads. A spaceship, bigger than the entire road, larger than anything in the whole town.

A stream of small lights flickered and raced from one end to the other.

“I can’t believe it,” said Bob the neighbour. He let out a laugh, like a child. “I just can’t believe it.”

“Stan, what is it?” Margaret called out from behind him.

“What’s going on?”

The edges of the spaceship veered off into the far distance. Just outside the perimeter of the spaceship, Stan could make out a strip of early morning sunlight.

***“Margaret,” he said. “I think you might want to take a look at this.”***



# Reading Comprehension Questions

Who are the characters in the story?

Where are they?

What time is it?

How long have Stan and Margaret been married?

What is the usual morning routine for Stan and Margaret?

How long have Stan and Margaret been following this routine?

Who usually makes tea in the morning?

How does Stan prepare the teapot for tea?

Why does Stan know that Margaret needs another ten minutes before fully waking up?

Who is Bonnie, and why does she bark at Stan's ankles?

What does Margaret suggest when Bonnie barks and snaps at Stan?

How does Stan describe the weather outside?

What can Stan see in the garden?

Which month does the story take place?

Who is Lisa, and what is she coming over for?

What will they eat for lunch?

What does Stan say about his feelings towards Lisa?

Why does Bonnie yelp and snarl at Stan's feet repeatedly?

What does Margaret think the dog ate from next door?

According to Margaret, why did Bonnie get sick previously?

Does Stan think this is true?

What makes Bonnie act fearful and whimper under Stan's arm?

What does Margaret hear outside?

What does Stan hear near the front door?

What does Stan do next?

Describe what he sees before him.

What is the first thing Stan notices when he opens the front door?

What does Stan see above his head?

What size is this object?

Describe the appearance of the spaceship that Stan sees.

How does Bob, the neighbour, react to the situation?

How do the neighbours around Stan react to the spaceship's appearance?

What does Stan see just outside the spaceship's perimeter?

What do you think Margaret's reaction will be when she sees

the spaceship?

What does Stan want Margaret to do?

What is the tone of the story at the end, when Stan suggests that Margaret takes a look at what's outside?

## True or False

Check all the statements below. Say if they are true or false.

*You can find all the answers at the end of the lesson plan.*

Stan is making a cup of tea.

Stan and Margaret have been married for 33 years.

Their dog is called Bonnie.

The garden is in bright sunlight.

The story takes place in October.

There are roses in the garden.

Their grandson is coming to visit for lunch.

They will have pasta for lunch.

The dog is barking throughout the story.

Margaret thinks the dog has consumed fertilizer.

Margaret hears a noise before Stan.

Stan tells Margaret to take a look.

The neighbour's name is Bob.

Bob is wearing jeans.

Stan always talks to the woman opposite his house.

There is a spaceship above the street.

Stan tells Margaret to stay indoors.

# Essential Vocabulary

Cup of tea	Pride and joy	Stream
Shuffle	Fertilizer	Pyjamas
Whispered	Ill	Underwear
Awoke	Teapot	Vest
Routine	Stew	Comical
Ankles	Cuddle	Sunlight
Frantically	Whimpered	Incredible
Gloomy	Perimeter	Amusing
Lasagne	Expanse	Witnessing
Freezer	Shining	Curiosity
Convey	Symbolize	Dynamics
Atmosphere	Metaphor	

## Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Cup of tea** — *A cup of tea refers to a serving of hot or cold beverage made by infusing tea leaves in hot water.*

**Stream** — *A continuous flow of liquid or air, or the action of something flowing continuously.*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

***After a long day at work, I like to relax with a soothing cup of tea.***

***She turned on the radio and listened to a stream of her favourite songs.***

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help improve all your English skills — reading, writing, speaking and listening.

## Discussion Questions

How would you describe Stan and Margaret's life?

How would you describe the relationship between Stan and Margaret based on their morning routine?

Where do you think they live? A big city or a small town? Why do you think this?

Why do you think Bonnie was behaving strangely at the beginning of the story? What might have caused her behaviour?

The dog is clearly agitated. How can the dog know about the spaceship?

What do you think happened with the dog and next door's fertilizer? Tell the story as you think it happened.

Discuss the significance of Lisa's visit and the fact that Stan is willing to eat anything she wants. What does this reveal about their relationship?

Margaret hears something. What do you think she can hear?

How do Stan and Margaret react when they hear the voices outside? How does their curiosity influence their actions?

Describe the neighbours' reactions to the appearance of the



spaceship. How does the author use their reactions to convey the scale of the event?

How would you describe Bob's behaviour? Is he acting normally? Or do you think there is something wrong?

What emotions are conveyed through Bob's laughter when he sees the spaceship? Why do you think he finds the situation incredible and amusing?

Analyse the role of Bonnie in the story. How does her behaviour change as the events unfold? What could her behaviour symbolize?

Stan looks up and sees a huge spaceship. Describe what thoughts immediately go through his mind.

Stan says, "I think you might want to take a look at this." Why do you think he reacts this way? What is he trying to convey to Margaret?

Stan and Margaret hear nothing in the night to wake them. How could the spaceship arrive without making a noise?

Why do you think this story is called War of The Suburbs?

What did you think of this story? Discuss in the class and each give your views.

How does the author use descriptions of the environment, such

as the dark garden and the spaceship's appearance, to set the mood and atmosphere of the story?

Imagine you are one of the neighbours witnessing the spaceship. How would you feel and react in that situation? Why?

The story ends on a suspenseful note, with Stan suggesting that Margaret take a look outside. What do you think she will feel and think when she sees the spaceship? What might be her initial thoughts?

If you were the author, how would you continue the story from this point? What do you think would happen next?

How does the author create a sense of mystery and tension in the story? What techniques are used to build suspense?

Do you think there could be aliens on the spaceship? What do they want?

Do you believe in UFOs? Do you believe in life on other planets? Explain your reasons.

If you saw something similar in the story in your own neighbourhood, how would you react? What do you think the local authorities would do?

If aliens exist, are they friendly or not?

Surely, alien life must be very intelligent. Would they do us

harm, or could we learn a lot from them?

Why are we so obsessed with aliens? Why are there so many movies and stories about aliens? Do we secretly yearn to see life from other planets?

What do aliens look like, do you think?

Maybe aliens are already here. How could they live among us without our knowing?

# Role Play

**This is a role play activity.**

There are two main characters in this role play from the story above.

## **1. Stan**

## **2. Margaret**

Take all the lines from the story and put them in order. Add any other lines that you think Stan and Margaret might say and include those in your role play.

***Take some time to prepare and when you are ready, show it to the rest of the class.***

# Debate: Are Aliens Real or Not?

**This is a debate activity.**

Divide the class into two teams. Choose one person to act as chairperson to chair the debate.

The chairperson will moderate the discussion to ensure fairness and equal participation on both sides.

## Objective

In this exercise, you will engage in a friendly debate to explore the topic of extraterrestrial life or aliens.

The class will be divided into two groups:

**Group A:** who believes in the existence of aliens

**Group B:** who does not believe in aliens

## Preparation

### Topic Introduction:

Explain the topic to the class. Clarify that Group A will present arguments supporting the idea that aliens are real, while Group B will present arguments against the existence of aliens.

## **Preparation Time:**

Give both groups some time to gather their thoughts and prepare their arguments. Encourage them to think creatively and research if necessary.

## **Debate Structure**

### **Opening Statements (5 minutes each):**

Group A: Present your reasons for believing in the existence of aliens.

Group B: Present your reasons for doubting the existence of aliens.

### **Rebuttal Round (3 minutes each):**

Group A: Refute the arguments made by Group B and reinforce your own points.

Group B: Counter the arguments made by Group A and strengthen your own stance.

### **Cross-Questioning (3 minutes each):**

Members from both groups can ask questions to the opposing team, seeking clarification or challenging their arguments.

### **Closing Statements (5 minutes each):**

Group A: Summarize your main points and emphasize why you believe in aliens.

Group B: Summarize your main points and reiterate why you don't believe in aliens.

## **Debate Duration**

The debate will last for a total of 20 minutes — 5 minutes for opening statements, 3 minutes for rebuttal, 3 minutes for cross-questioning, and 5 minutes for closing statements.

## **Post-Debate Discussion**

After the debate concludes, the class will come together for a discussion to reflect on the arguments presented by both sides. The adjudicator can lead this discussion by asking questions such as:

- "What were the most convincing arguments from each group?"
- "Did any arguments make you reconsider your initial stance?"
- "How did the debate influence your perspective on the topic?"

## Language Focus

You should try to use persuasive language, express your opinions clearly, and engage in respectful dialogue.

Support your arguments with logical reasoning and evidence whenever possible.

***When you are ready, begin the debate!***



# Writing

**This is a creative writing exercise.**

Read the story again and think about what happens next.

- What does Stan do?
- How does he react and what actions does he take?
- What does Margaret do?
- How does she react?

Maybe they decide to leave their house immediately.  
Or maybe they decide to barricade themselves inside.

***But whatever they decide to do, you should continue the story.***

Try to write at least 500 words to describe what happens next.

**Write your story.**

When you have finished, read your story out loud in front of the class.

***Or hand it in to your teacher for review.***

## True or False — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

*How many did you get right?*

Stan is making a cup of tea. True.

Stan and Margaret have been married for 33 years. False.

Their dog is called Bonnie. True.

The garden is in bright sunlight. False.

The story takes place in October. False.

There are roses in the garden. True.

Their grandson is coming to visit for lunch. False.

They will have pasta for lunch. False.

The dog is barking throughout the story. True.

Margaret thinks the dog has consumed fertilizer. True.

Margaret hears a noise before Stan. True.

Stan tells Margaret to take a look. False.

The neighbour's name is Bob. True.

Bob is wearing jeans. False.

Stan always talks to the woman opposite his house. False.

There is a spaceship above the street. True.

Stan tells Margaret to stay indoors. False.

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