

# **Bradbury Classic Stories 1: From the Golden Apples of the Sun and R Is for... Study Guide**

**Bradbury Classic Stories 1: From the Golden Apples of the Sun and R Is for... by Ray Bradbury**

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# 'The Fog Horn,' and 'The April Witch'

## 'The Fog Horn,' and 'The April Witch' Summary

In 'The Fog Horn,' two men, McDunn and the narrator, work and live in an isolated lighthouse. The narrator will soon go on shore leave, but first McDunn warns him that something strange will happen tonight. Every year at this time, McDunn explains, something comes to visit the lighthouse. Sure enough, a little later when the fog horn has blown, a huge sea creature comes out of the depths and swims towards the lighthouse. The monster calls out to the lighthouse and its cry sounds exactly like the Fog Horn. McDunn thinks that it must be the last of its kind desperately looking for a mate. Last year it simply came and called to the lighthouse and then left. This year however, it seems angry. It charges the lighthouse and McDunn and the narrator quickly run to take shelter in the cellar. The monster knocks the lighthouse down, then cries out with loneliness for the rest of the night. Finally, it leaves. In the morning some men come to dig McDunn and the narrator out of the cellar. McDunn tells them that the tower simply fell down, and instructs for a new one to be built using steel-reinforced concrete. By the time it is built, the narrator has a new job and a wife and home. He does not go back to the lighthouse. McDunn returns to the lighthouse, but the monster never comes back.

In 'The April Witch,' Cecy is a young girl born into a family who can magically send out their minds into the bodies of other living things. Cecy longs to know what it is like to fall in love, but her parents warn her that if she loves an ordinary mortal man, she will lose her powers. Cecy decides to fall in love while inhabiting another girl's body. She enters the body of a girl called Ann who is drawing water from a well. A young man called Tom comes up to her and asks her to come to a dance with him. Ann does not like Tom and does not want to go, but Cecy manipulates her mouth and voice into saying yes. Cecy then forces Ann to get ready for the dance. Ann realizes that there is someone else controlling her and tries to fight back, but Cecy is too strong. At the dance, Tom seems to almost see Cecy and tells Ann that she is not herself. Cecy realizes she is actually falling for Tom, but Ann insists on being cold and rude. Tom is confused. He tells Ann that he was going to say goodbye to her tonight as he is leaving soon, but that now he thinks he is falling in love with her all over again. Cecy, through Ann, makes Tom promise that he will visit her friend in Illinois. She gives him Cecy's address. Later that night, when Cecy has left Ann's body, she takes over the body of a bird and watches Tom sleep. She hopes that he will come to visit her, where she will be able to love him properly as herself.

## 'The Fog Horn,' and 'The April Witch' Analysis

In 'The Fog Horn,' the author explores ideas of loss and loneliness through science fiction. The monster is the last of its kind and it seems to be desperately looking for companionship or a mate, something to make it feel less alone. It thinks it has found this



when the fog horn calls out, as the sound of the fog horn is like the sound of the creature's cry. The tall thin lighthouse also resembles the long thin neck of the monster. The monster cannot understand why the lighthouse does not come to it or call back. At first it is sad, then angry with the thing that has let it down so badly. It attacks the lighthouse and destroys it, but still gets no reaction from it. The monster is desperately sad and alone, and cries out for the rest of the night before leaving.

McDunn understands the monster's pain and sadness, and seems to share some of its feelings. He is also a very isolated and lonely man. He lives and works in the lighthouse, separated from the rest of human civilization. He has no wife or warm house to make him feel loved and connected. He makes up a story about the man who invented the fog horn, saying he wanted a sound that signified loneliness and despair, like a great cry in the night. This is what McDunn thinks of the lighthouse and his life there. In many ways he is like the monster, which is why he understands its sadness. Even when the narrator manages to find a home, a wife and happiness, McDunn continues with his lonely existence at the lighthouse. By the way he talks about love, it seems likely that McDunn has loved and been let down. He seems to think that it is inevitable that those who you love will either leave you or not love you back. This is symbolized perfectly by the monster's plight. It loves the lighthouse, but the lighthouse cannot love it back, and in the end there will only be deeper pain for the monster. McDunn does not seem to think that it is better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. Instead, he seems to think love is worthless because it will only lead to pain.

The setting of 'The Fog Horn' perfectly matches its theme. The lighthouse is isolated, built a long distance away from the nearest village. It rests on harsh rocks by a cold, choppy sea. The weather is mournful and depressing, and November is a cold and dismal month. November is a month associated with death and loss. It is too cold to be autumn, when leaves are golden and orange and people are cozy. The lighthouse's isolation is even compared to the warm houses of the village and their 'autumn' glows. In the village, where people have companionship, it is still cozy autumn. At the lighthouse, it is November, cold and wet. November is not yet Christmas with its associations of joy. November is simply the beginning of winter and of long, dark nights. Even the fog horn itself cries out with a pained, sad, mournful sound. The horn symbolizes the loneliness of the lighthouse of the monster and of McDunn.

In 'The April Witch,' the author explores love and loneliness from a completely different angle. Cecy is one of a very rare kind of magical being. Her parents warn her that she will lose her powers if she loves a mortal man. She is different, and a little lonely. She longs to feel what it is like to fall in love. Unlike the previous story, however, this is not full of loneliness and despair. Instead, the story explores first love, the beginnings of passion and growing up. Whereas the last story was set in the cold, dying month of November, at the end of the year, this story is set in April. April is springtime, when the world is beginning to wake up and be born afresh. Cecy is young like the year. She is just beginning to bud, like the April flowers. She is almost grown up, on the cusp of becoming an adult, and she is very curious about boys and love. She is full of youthful hope. This is strongly contrasted with the jaded, old McDunn of the previous story, who has finally given up on love and remains in his isolated lighthouse. Cecy is the opposite



of McDunn. She is determined to find love, and she is still naive and delighted with the world. She leaves her place of isolation to connect with others. Unlike McDunn, she is capable of entering the bodies of other beings and so she can never be truly alone. When she finds Tom she is overjoyed and determined not to give up on him. She decides that love is beautiful, and more important even than her magical powers. She gives Tom instructions to find her. The story ends before the reader finds out whether Tom does come to her. We never know if they stay together, or whether Cecy comes to regret her decision. This is because the end of the story is actually inconsequential. This story is about new beginnings.



# 'The Wilderness,' and 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl'

## 'The Wilderness,' and 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl' Summary

In 'The Wilderness,' Janice and Leonora are packing to go to Mars. Most of the men of their community have already made the move and now the women are following. Janice's fiancé is already there and has built a house for her that looks exactly like her old one on Earth. She wants to go, but is frightened of the idea of space, of moving, and of starting a new life. Together, Janice and Leonora use flying packs to fly over their town for one last look. For the first time they really appreciate its beauty. When they get home, the phone rings and Janice answers. It is her fiancé, but the connection is bad and she only hears a few words. They are enough to comfort her, and she tells him that she has changed her mind and will come to Mars after all. That night she lies in bed and thinks about all the people who have ever migrated to new places.

In 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl,' William Acton kills a man called Huxley who was going to run away with his wife. He murders him in the heat of the moment, and then worries about how to remove the evidence. He starts wiping his fingerprints off the body and nearby furniture, and then remembers all the things he touched in the house before committing the murder. He starts to see fingerprints everywhere and drives himself mad. He begins polishing the entire house and is still at it when the police arrive in the morning.

## 'The Wilderness,' and 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl' Analysis

In 'The Wilderness,' Janice and Leonora are contemplating moving to Mars to join Janice's fiancé. The men of their community have already moved and now the women are beginning to follow. This is compared to similar pioneers of the past, such as the first European settlers of America. The men always move first, begin to set up a new community, and build houses. The women then follow when the groundwork of civilization has been laid. Life is still hard, and the women and men must work together to begin a new town. It takes a few generations before the same comforts of civilization are truly established. After this, more and more settlers follow. Janice and Leonora will be like those first women who moved to America to join their husbands and fiancés. This story uses a science fiction idea and setting to explore age-old ideas of the joys and fears of beginning a new life in a new place, and discovering a new world. The author is telling the reader that this journey into the unknown, into the wilderness, will always go on. History repeats itself and mankind will always keep moving forwards as the desire to expand and explore new frontiers continues. For the people of the past,



starting a new life in America was just as daunting and just as much science fiction as starting a new life on Mars would be to us.

A possible criticism of this story is that it has not aged particularly well since the 40s in which it was written. In the story, the men are the pioneers who risk the dangers of space and the new world in order to build the framework of a new society. The women then follow when things are a little safer and more settled. Leonora and Janice reflect on how it will always be the lot of women to follow their men into frightening new territories. This may have been true of the past, but it does not really apply to today's society, and will presumably not be true of the future. If people do emigrate to Mars one day, then it will be both men and women who lead the way, followed by civilians of both sexes. The ordinary people who move there after the first pioneers will still have the feelings of trepidation and wonder described in this story, so the message and feeling of the story remain the same. Mankind will always push forwards, and there will always be new pioneers. History will repeat itself in this way, but the details will continue to change.

In 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl,' the guilty conscience and paranoia of Acton drive him quickly mad. He killed in the heat of the moment and he was not prepared for it. His mind cannot take the shock, and so it begins to play tricks on him. At first he is thinking sensibly, trying to remove any evidence that he was in the house, but then he becomes more and more obsessed with fingerprints. He sees them everywhere and begins to clean in more and more unlikely places. Eventually he is polishing the entire house, forgetting the fact that the most important thing for him to do is get well away from the crime scene before someone finds him. Acton's mind snaps, and instead of being worried about the murder anymore, he sees the fingerprints as his enemy. All that he can think about is getting rid of them. As his madness increases, the writing becomes more frenzied, mimicking his emotions. Phrases and words are repeated to emphasize his obsession. The pace of the story quickens continuously towards the end, showing that Acton is desperate and that his thoughts are no longer calm or coherent. Imagery of spiderwebs is used to convey the sense of menace and disgust that the fingerprints hold for Acton. They have taken on a life of their own, and he imagines little spiders coming out to weave new ones when he is not looking. By using language to emphasize and mimic the main character's distress, Bradbury puts the reader in Acton's position, giving the story a greater impact.



# 'The Flying Machine,' and 'The Murderer'

## 'The Flying Machine,' and 'The Murderer' Summary

'The Flying Machine' is set in China in 400 A.D. The current Emperor, Yuan, has a palace near the Great Wall of China. One morning a servant comes running in and tells the Emperor that there is a miracle happening; a man is flying. He takes the Emperor outside and points to a man in the sky, soaring around on a flying contraption. The Emperor calls the man down and asks him if anyone else knows about his flying machine. He says that no-one does, not even his wife. The Emperor then orders the executioner to kill the man. He explains that if he allows him to live, someone else will one day find out about the flying machine and use it to attack China by flying soldiers over the Wall. The Emperor warns the servant to stay silent about what he saw.

In 'The Murderer,' a psychiatrist speaks to a man who has been arrested for destroying public property. The man, Brock, explains that he cannot stand all the noise of the modern world anymore, or the constant need to always be in touch. He hates inventions such as the watch radio, which is also a phone. He hates all the gadgets in his home that control his life and tell him what to do. He reacted by destroying things. He poured ice-cream into his car phone, and destroyed all the tech in his house. He was arrested, as the equipment in his house actually belongs to the state. The psychiatrist asks why he didn't make his displeasure known in a more democratic way. Brock answers that he tried and it didn't work. The psychiatrist tells him he is simply out of touch with other people and modern life, but Brock thinks he may start a revolution. The psychiatrist decides to let Brock wait in the comfort of his silent cell for a while longer. The psychiatrist then goes back to his world of constant noise and communication.

## 'The Flying Machine,' and 'The Murderer' Analysis

In 'The Flying Machine,' the Emperor must decide whether the life of one man is more important than his kingdom's safety. He explains that it is not the inventor or even the invention itself that is evil, but what other people might choose to do with it. As a famous expression states, once the genie is out of the bottle it cannot be put back in. In other words, when the invention has been invented and has been made known to the public, it cannot be made secret again. The Emperor must decide now whether the flying machine is too dangerous, as it will be too late to think about this when others find out about it. The Emperor decides that it is too dangerous, as bad men may use it to fly armies over the Great Wall to attack China. Thousands would suffer and die, the country would go to war, and happy, peaceful lives would be ruined. This is not worth the ability to fly. Is it worth one man's life? The Emperor decides to kill the flying machine's inventor, as he cannot trust him not to reveal how to make it. Even letting those who have seen it live is risky, though the Emperor decides this is an acceptable risk. The Emperor laments having to make these kinds of decisions, but he sees himself as responsible for a whole kingdom. It is his job to weigh lives. He reminds himself of





this by looking at his miniature garden, which is a symbol of the beauty of the land that he protects. However, although the Emperor feels justified in making this decision, the question is thrown open to the reader. Was he right to kill the inventor? Is he justified to commit this terrible act in order to protect thousands more, or should he simply let be what will be?

This creates an interesting analogy for modern times. It is not always the inventions themselves, or even the inventors, who are evil, but the uses to which the invention can be put. For example, there is nothing wrong with atomic power and atomic power can achieve amazing things. However, atomic power can be used to create the atom bomb, which can then be used to kill millions. There are many other similar examples. Gunpowder can be used in mining or in beautiful fireworks, or it can be used in a gun to kill someone. Planes can take people to new places or drop bombs from above. Electricity can enhance lives or end them. If all these wonderful inventions can be used for such terrible things, then perhaps the inventions themselves should have been suppressed or destroyed by men like the Emperor. This would mean that people would have to live without the benefits and conveniences they bring too. Perhaps it is simply better to let science and history take their course, to let inventors create new things and then live with the consequences. Perhaps there needs to be something between the two, some kind of committee that reviews inventions for potential harmful uses. Or perhaps the inventors themselves should stop and think about the things they are creating, and regulate themselves. There might not even be a solution to this problem. By using an ancient setting and a fictional story about something as innocent as a hang-glider, the author can make this point and open up discussion more easily, without having to point to any one particular modern invention. This means the story and its message is just as relevant today as it was when it was written.

'The Murderer' complements the previous story by looking at inventions and technology from a slightly different angle. In this story, inventions are not used for evil, but for convenience. They are used to enrich people's lives, not to kill them. And yet, they can still be perceived as a bad thing. Brock is just an ordinary man trying to live a normal life, but finds that he is being driven slowly mad by the constant noise and communication in his world. Devices have made it possible to be constantly in touch with everyone else, and so, because it is possible, people do it. People call each other all the time about every tiny little thing, which is demonstrated at the beginning of the story by the psychiatrist's son calling to remind his father to give him his pocket money. The psychiatrist does not shout at him, but acts as if this is a perfectly normal reason to call him at work. Brock thinks that all this convenience is too convenient. He does not want to be disturbed every minute of every day, and he misses the sound of silence. In fact, silence has become a beautiful thing to him. To stop everyone from checking up on him and bothering him constantly, he resorts to smashing equipment, and is eventually arrested. This raises the question of whether an invention should necessarily be created just because it can, whether or not it could be used for evil. This, then, takes the message of the previous story a little further. Perhaps some inventions really are just bad for us.



This story was relevant when it was written as new conveniences such as the microwave were being introduced into homes. However, it is actually even more relevant today. Bradbury's vision of the future is surprisingly accurate. Today people keep in constant touch with mobile phones, smart phones, the internet, Bluetooth handsets and more, and people are able to keep others constantly updated through social networking sites. Our world is one of constant communication, so much so that to be cut off from the internet or to lose a phone signal can be an unnerving experience. Perhaps we should ask whether this continual chatter and updating is actually good for us. However, like the people in the story, most of us are used to this and are happy with it. Brock only has a problem because he is so out of touch with everyone else in his world. They think he is crazy for smashing equipment and trying to isolate himself. Perhaps it is Brock who is wrong, as he is simply unable to adapt to modern life. The psychiatrist certainly does not seem to mind the constant buzz of his world, going straight back to his phones and radio wrist watch without trepidation. This might have seemed like a nightmarish situation for readers in the author's time, but perhaps this is just too normal today. Once again the question is posed to the reader. Is Brock right and is there such a thing as too much convenience and too much communication or is Brock simply out of touch?



# 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind,' and 'I See You Never,' and 'Embroidery'

## 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind,' and 'I See You Never,' and 'Embroidery' Summary

In 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind,' the Mandarin (ruler) of a town whose wall is shaped like an orange is distressed to learn that the nearby town of Kwan-Si has shaped its walls like a pig. This is a terrible omen, as pigs eat oranges. Visitors will think that Kwan-Si is the better, dominant town, and so will go there instead. The Mandarin's daughter suggests rebuilding the city wall into the shape of a club to drive off the pig. They do so, but Kwan-Si reshapes their wall as a bonfire to burn the club. The Mandarin's daughter suggests shaping their walls as a lake to put out the fire. They do so, but Kwan-Si becomes a mouth to drink the lake. Their town then becomes a needle to sew shut the mouth, but Kwan-Si becomes a sword to break the needle. This goes on, with each town retaliating. The people in both towns begin to suffer and starve because they have no time to work or farm. All their time is spent rebuilding walls. Eventually, the two leaders agree to meet. The Mandarin's daughter presides over the meeting and explains to both towns' rulers that they will destroy themselves unless they come to an agreement. She suggests that one town be shaped like the wind and the other a kite. The wind keeps the kite aloft and the kite beautifies the wind. They work together, and without each other they are nothing. The rulers agree, and after this there is peace and happiness.

In 'I See You Never,' a Mexican illegal immigrant called Ramirez is arrested by the police. He says goodbye to his landlady, Mrs. O'Brian, before he is taken away to be deported. Mrs. O'Brian thinks about the time she visited Mexico, and realizes with sadness that she will never see Mr. Ramirez again.

In 'Embroidery' a group of women sit embroidering on a porch in the afternoon. They are waiting for something that is scheduled to happen at 5 o'clock. Just as they think it will not happen after all, there is a flash of light, and the world starts to unravel.

## 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind,' and 'I See You Never,' and 'Embroidery' Analysis

'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind' can be read on two levels. On one level it is an enchanting story about two towns that keep attempting to better the other. Each wants to be thought of as the dominant town, and so attract more visitors and wealth to it. They are both concerned about omens, and so the shape of their walls holds all manner of meanings. The problem starts when the town of Kwan-Si shapes its walls like a pig. Since the other town is shaped like an orange, and pigs eat oranges, this makes Kwan-



Si seem more prosperous and successful. When the other town reshapes their walls as a club to beat the pig, they now seem like the more dominant and successful ones. This begins a competition in which the towns are completely rebuilding their walls constantly, which leads to the people suffering and starving. The towns are destroying themselves in their need to be one better than the other. This has an important message; constantly competing with others is not healthy or sensible. Sometimes working together will bring the best results.

The story can also be read on a second level as an analogy for the arms race. Countries are always competing, even when they are pretending not to. Another country is always a threat, even when at peace, because they could decide to attack at any time. Therefore, a country needs to always be on its guard and to make sure it is protected. This is what causes the arms race. If one country has guns and all the others have only swords, then the countries with swords need to quickly get guns to feel safe. The country with guns will then invent planes, so the next country will invent bombs, and so on. Currently, countries are still in an arms race involving nuclear weapons. If one country has nuclear weapons, then it is in a position of dominance over the others, as the threat of the nuclear weapons alone is enough to give them power. The other countries then quickly struggle to get their own nuclear weapons. The first country responds by building more, so they could strike more cities with the bombs. The arms race then only continues. There can never be an end to this, as the aim of the race is always to be ahead. This is represented in this story with the different shaped walls. When one town's wall seems threatening, the other town responds by making theirs more threatening. This goes on and on without end. In this story, it is shown as a senseless and destructive path to go down. In the end, the only way to lasting peace and happiness is to work together. Having a better wall, or having more nuclear weapons, may make a town or country feel safer, but it is actually only harming them.

'I See You Never' is a very short story about a Mexican illegal immigrant saying goodbye to his landlady Mrs. O'Brian. Mr. Ramirez is sad to leave and tells her that he does not want to go. He wants to stay where he is happy and has found a home. He tells Mrs. O'Brian that he will never see her again. Mrs. O'Brian is saddened by this, reflecting on the simple ways people can touch each other's lives, and how quickly they can be gone from them. For ordinary people, things can so quickly be taken away, losing control of one's life and the things one is used to. This is also the case in the next story, 'Embroidery.' Here, the author's message appears to be not to take anything for granted. Things that seem to be basic comforts or parts of life to us, could easily be luxuries for another person. This point is emphasized by Mrs. O'Brian's children, who eat their dinner while the policemen are talking, and seem oblivious to their mother's sadness or Mr. Ramirez's pain.

In 'Embroidery,' some kind of scientific or military experiment is being conducted. It has happened before, with bad results, and is due to be tested again at 5 o'clock. The women sitting embroidering on the porch know this, but they can do nothing about it. Control has been taken away from them, and they could so easily lose everything about their lives. Ordinary lives and ordinary people may not seem important to those in charge, but they are important to these women, who are saddened and frightened by



everything they could lose. One woman unravels the stitching in her embroidery, making the man in the picture disappear. This is as easy as pulling on a thread. This foreshadows what happens at the end of the story. All the people, their house and their world, are literally unraveled and disappear, just like the embroidered man. The women's worst fears came true, and now their ordinary lives, which they were perfectly happy with, have been obliterated. The reader never learns what the experiment was for. They do not need to. By presenting the story from the women's point of view, who do not understand and are powerless to stop the experiment, the author shows that nothing could be worth this.



# 'The Big Black and White Game,' and 'The Great Wide World Over There'

## 'The Big Black and White Game,' and 'The Great Wide World Over There' Summary

In 'The Big Black and White Game' the people of a town turn up to watch a baseball game. One side is made up of black men and the other white men, with women and children watching from the stands. The children all cheer for Big Poe, the black man who runs the popcorn stall at a pavilion on the hotel grounds. The white mothers tell their children to hush and stop cheering for the black men. They discuss the black people and their Cakewalk Jamboree, which will be held this evening, with fascination. When the game starts, however, the white women become uneasy. The black men are fitter and better at the game, and the white men are losing.

When a white man called Jimmie Cosner comes to bat, he is so determined to win that he jumps feet first for the base and his cleats go into Big Poe's ankle, injuring him. The umpire wants to send Jimmie off the field, but Jimmie kicks up a fuss, insulting the black men. Big Poe persuades the umpire to let Jimmie stay. After the next man has batted and Jimmie is running for the next base, Big Poe deliberately throws the ball at the back of Jimmie's head. Jimmie is knocked unconscious. The women all scream and quickly take their children home. That night the Cakewalk Jamboree is held, but none of the white people attend as they had planned to.

In 'The Great Wide World Over There,' an elderly woman called Cora lives with her husband Tom in an isolated community somewhere in the Missouri mountains. Cora longs to see more of the world. She cannot read or write, and resents her neighbor Mrs. Brabbam for the letters she receives. When Cora's nephew Benjy decides to come stay with them for awhile, Cora is determined to get him to teach her how to read and write. When Benjy arrives he helps her communicate with the outside world by writing letters for her, sending them to addresses in magazines, mainly ones advertising free samples. Cora gets Tom to build her a mailbox, and anxiously waits for the replies. Benjy tells her that the mailman will come in a van, and suddenly Cora realizes that no mail van has ever come this way before. Cora looks in Mrs. Brabbam's mailbox. The letters inside are addressed to a different person and are years old. Mrs. Brabbam has been pretending. When Cora's own letters come she is elated, but Mrs. Brabbam looks sad and retreats into her house. Cora asks Benjy to write letters asking for free samples for Mrs. Brabbam's house too, so that she can also know the joy of receiving a letter. However, when it is time for Benjy to leave, Cora realizes that she never actually learned to read or write. Eventually the letters stop coming, and Cora is back in the same situation she was in before.



## 'The Big Black and White Game,' and 'The Great Wide World Over There' Analysis

'The Big Black and White Game' and 'The Big Wide World Over There' are both stories about ordinary people and ordinary lives, without a science fiction or fantasy element. In 'The Big Black and White Game' the author explores the large divide between black and white people that still existed at the time he was writing (this story was originally published in 1945). The Civil Rights Act, banning discrimination based on race, color, religion and national origin, did not come in until 1964. In the 40s, African-Americans (referred to as 'negroes' or 'colored people' at the time and in this story) were treated as inferior to white men. They were banned from interacting in certain places, sent to different schools, segregated in many public spaces, and lived in separate neighborhoods. They did not have the same civil rights as white people and were often barred from being allowed to vote. They could be refused jobs or houses at the whim of the employer or landlord.

This is all evident in the way the black people are treated in this story. The white women are shocked and dismayed by the idea that the black men might actually beat the white men in the baseball game. They would consider this shameful, as the white men are supposed to be superior. They tell their children off for cheering for Big Poe and the other black players, and take delight in mocking the black players whenever possible. The white men do not appear to be too pleased about losing either. Jimmie Cosner gets angry very quickly, as if he believes that it is his right to win and that the black men are somehow playing unfairly. He clearly does not consider their feelings at all, openly mocking and insulting them, and showing no remorse when he drives his cleats into Big Poe's ankle. Big Poe shows that he understands this situation all too well. He begins to miss the balls and lose on purpose so as to let the white men keep some of their pride. Perhaps he anticipates trouble and is trying to ease the situation. When Jimmie hurts him and the umpire wants to send him off, Big Poe argues for him to remain. Again, he seems to sense that a fight is waiting to happen and is trying to stop this from happening. However, this does not stop him from getting his revenge. He deliberately throws the ball at the back of Jimmie's head and knocks him down.

The white people react with extreme shock and fear. The message they are giving out is clear; it is unpleasant when a white man hurts a black man, but nothing to fuss over. When a black man hurts a white man, however, there is chaos. The women are terrified and immediately take their children home to safety. The narrator's mother says that the black people might have razors, as if she imagines that they are just waiting for any opportunity to attack and murder. This reveals the true feelings that lurk under the discrimination. The white women pretend to be civil to the black people at first, but underneath they hate them and are scared of them. They think they are little more than savages. However, Big Poe acted very calmly and graciously through most of the game. He showed that he understood the prejudice perfectly, but that he did not want a fight. In fact, he actively tried to prevent one. The person who acted badly was a white man, Jimmie, who shamelessly hurt and insulted Big Poe. Big Poe then took revenge, singling out the one person who deserved it and showing that the black people could





only be pushed so far. With this, he managed to ensure that only black people attended the Cakewalk Jamboree, ensuring further separation again. With this, the author not only highlights the hypocritical prejudices of the white people, but also points out that maybe the black people do not really want to spend time with the white people either. The white people insist on separation and ban the black people from certain places, but then expect to attend the Cakewalk Jamboree. The black people neatly ensure that this will not happen, keeping their own event for themselves.

The ball game itself is therefore both sad and ironic. It is supposed to be an event about cooperation and connection, joining the black and white people in a fun game. On the surface it looks like a mark of acceptance. However, in reality the teams are separated and the people are competing a little too hard. The atmosphere is tense and both sides seem to be itching for a fight. Whereas before the game the white women were intending to go to the Jamboree, and so were deciding to interact with the black people more, now they are too afraid to go. The dividing wall has built back up again in the course of one baseball game. The two sides looked like they might finally be beginning to accept each other, but now the separation is absolute once again. The narrator is sad and a little baffled by this. He and the other children like Big Poe, and they do not understand why they have to treat him as different. It is events like this one that teach children prejudice and hatred, as the two sides show how hard it is to accept each other. The author appears to be showing how separation between the two sides is inevitable. Even when an attempt is made to mix, it fails miserably, and actually causes more separation. Things might certainly have seemed this way at the time. It would still be a long time before the civil rights movement got any recognition. Even today, when all races are supposedly equal, racism and prejudice still exist. However, the author also appears to be pointing out that prejudice is taught to children by their parents. Children's natural instincts are to like who they like regardless of color or race. Perhaps this gives us hope. Ultimately, this question is left for the reader to decide; is racism inevitable and will it always exist? Are attempts to fix it doomed, or should we never give up on this goal?

In 'The Great Wide World Over There,' Cora lives a very isolated life. She is not unbearably lonely, as she is happy in her life with her husband Tom, but she is restless. She is fascinated by the idea of the wide world beyond her tiny community, and she longs to know what it is like. She dreams of things she has never seen, like beaches and the sea. She sees writing as the answer to her sadness. If she could write, she could communicate with the outside world and so bring it to her. She could feel connected, and it would seem as if the world opened up to her. Although we take reading and writing for granted today, perhaps a modern reader would feel similarly about the internet. When cut off from the internet, it is easy to feel isolated. When online, it feels as if a person is connected to the whole world and anything is possible. However, Cora has a problem. She cannot read or write. She lives a simple life in which reading and writing has never been necessary, and so she has never learned. She is from a generation in which going to school was not mandatory or inevitable. When her nephew comes to stay, therefore, she is excited. He opens up the world for her by writing letters from her, and when she receives replies it is like the world is answering her back. This story reminds us how something that may seem ordinary and mundane



to us is actually an amazing, incredible thing. To Cora, writing is like something out of science fiction; it changes lives and has changed her world. This is another story, like 'I See You Never,' that teaches the reader not to take the things in their life for granted.



# 'Powerhouse,' and 'En La Noche'

## 'Powerhouse,' and 'En La Noche' Summary

In 'Powerhouse,' a woman and her husband are riding through Arizona to visit the woman's mother, who is dying in hospital. The woman reflects on how she has never needed religion before, since her life has always been fairly easy and carefree. When it looks like a storm is coming, her husband suggests stopping in a powerhouse. There are no other people there, and as the storm worsens they decide to stay the night here. As she lies listening to the machines hum, the woman suddenly has a religious experience. She feels as if she has disconnected from her body and been sent down the powerlines, watching other people dying and babies being born. She realizes that all life is connected and that she is never alone. This makes her feel better about her mother. The next morning as they are setting off again, she suggests to her husband that they come back to visit the powerhouse again one Sunday. He agrees.

In 'En La Noche,' Mrs. Navarrez moans about her husband, who has been recruited into the army, and she keeps the whole tenement building up with her crying. After a couple of sleepless nights they decide they cannot go on. They have tried to make her stop and have shouted at her, but have never gotten a response beyond more wailing. Mr. Villanazul suggests that one of them should go to her and comfort her. Nobody wants to, so in the end Mr. Villanazul is forced to go himself. As he comforts her she soon quiets down, and the rest finally manage to get some sleep.

## 'Powerhouse,' and 'En La Noche' Analysis

In 'Powerhouse' the author explores ideas of faith and religion. The unnamed woman who is travelling to see her dying mother has never needed religion before, as she has always had a happy life and has never had to face difficult things before. Now she feels lost and overwhelmed by the revelation that someone she knows is actually going to die. When she spends the night at the powerhouse she has a religious experience and suddenly realizes that the reason she feels so scared is because she feels so alone. Without religion, she is forced to deal with these difficult times all by herself. In the powerhouse, however, she feels connected to every other living person. She sees people dying, but also new babies being born. She sees the whole of life from a new perspective, not as herself but as something removed and floating above. She sees that everything is in a perfect balance, and that there is a reason and an order to life. She sees that all life is one, and that she is a part of this, not separate from it. Her struggles are not her own but are the struggles of every other living person. Her sadness and fear is shared by everyone else, but so is joy and happiness and life. It is this connection and meaning, and this feeling of never being alone again, that she equates with religion. For her, faith is a simple matter of opening her eyes and seeing the connections of life all around her, rather than shutting herself off from it.



The symbolism of the powerhouse itself reflects this idea, which is why the author has used the powerhouse as an analogy for God and religion. The powerhouse connects so many different towns and areas, with powerlines that reach far away. The powerlines help the people to keep in touch with each other. Like God or religion, the power is everywhere at once, but also centrally located in the powerhouse. The powerhouse is like God because it provides the power for all the connections, just as God gives life and keeps the whole balance going. Finally, like the powerlines, religion connects people and brings them together. It helps them to cope with difficulties by showing them that they are never alone. This is why the woman in the story associates the powerhouse with her religious revelation and why she wants to come back. For her, the powerhouse is like a temple or church; it is where she feels the presence of God most strongly.

'En La Noche' complements and contrasts with this story because it explores the connections that ordinary people often ignore. The woman in 'Powerhouse' realized that all people are connected and all life is one, and this gave her comfort. In this story, isolation causes misery. Mrs. Navarrez is distraught because her husband has joined the army. She misses him, and she is worried about his safety. All she needs is a little comfort and human kindness, but none of the tenement residents are willing to give her this. They are too caught up in their own lives and their own personal concerns. They even mock her sadness and shout at her, reacting with anger. When Mr. Villanazul suggests actually talking to her and comforting her, this is something of a revelation. This had not even occurred to the others as being a potential solution. Even when it is suggested, they want nothing to do with it. They treat this simple human kindness as if it would be torturous and a terrible inconvenience. When Mr. Villanazul finally agrees to do it himself, it is treated as a great act of self-sacrifice, as if he is going to war. The author highlights the irony of people living so close together and yet being so unwilling to help one of their own. These people, like many other people in real life, ignore the connections of life because they are too concerned with themselves and their own immediate families.

However, there is another potential reading of 'En La Noche' that turns it into a humorous and slightly sarcastic story. Mr. Villanazul suggested that a single man would be better for the purpose of comforting Mrs. Navarrez, but unfortunately there are no single men in the tenement building. Mr. Villanazul is very reluctant to go himself, but his wife convinces him to take one for the team. This makes it sound like Mr. Villanazul is suggesting that one of them should seduce Mrs. Navarrez in order to get her to be quiet. Mr. Villanazul is chosen for this role, and the others speculate on what he must be doing behind the closed door. Whatever he does, it works, as Mrs. Navarrez stops crying. This suggests that Mrs. Navarrez is not so much distraught at the idea of her husband being in danger, as simply missing the presence of a man's attention in her life.



# 'Sun and Shadow,' and 'The Meadow'

## 'Sun and Shadow,' and 'The Meadow' Summary

In 'Sun and Shadow' a man called Ricardo is annoyed when he sees photographers and a model doing a fashion shoot in his street. He goes downstairs and argues with the photographer, who agrees to move on. However, Ricardo does not want him to shoot pictures anywhere in his small, poor town, as he feels it is insulting. He follows the photographer and continues to argue. When the photographer does not listen, he deliberately stands where the camera can see him and drops his trousers every time the photographer tries to take a picture. The photographer complains to a passing policeman, but the policeman refuses to arrest Ricardo. When the photographers and models finally give up and leave, the crowd cheers Ricardo.

In 'The Meadow,' a night watchman called Smith at a Hollywood set begins to rebuild the sets in the night that have been demolished during the day. The foreman of the wrecking crew sees him and attempts to argue, but Smith refuses to stop and wields a hammer at him. The foreman calls the producer and owner of the sets, Mr. Douglas, who arrives with the police. Smith climbs to the top of one of the buildings and asks Mr. Douglas to come up and talk to him. Mr. Douglas agrees. Smith tells him that the set is a wonderful place. It is made up of buildings from all over the world, all connected and leaning on each other. He can walk from New York to China in a few minutes, then go round the corner and sit in a Parisian cafe. He explains that this creates peace in the made-up world around him, as the different people cannot fight when they are so close to each other. Smith and Mr. Douglas then climb down and wander around the buildings. Smith manages to convince Mr. Douglas that the sets are special. Mr. Douglas decides to produce a film about Smith's idea, showing this magical world in which all the countries lean together and hold each other up. He instructs Smith to start building the sets back up and to save what he can, and then returns to his party.

## 'Sun and Shadow,' and 'The Meadow' Analysis

In 'Sun and Shadow,' Ricardo is annoyed with the photographer because of the implications behind using the town for the photo shoot. The photographer wants to use this setting because it is arty, with its peeling paint and cracked walls. It is not glamorous, instead showing what the real world is like. By juxtaposing the models in their expensive, special clothes, this creates interesting contrasts and makes the clothes seem more vibrant and youthful. At this time, fashion was changing and becoming more edgy. Fashion shoots were moving away from sets and glamorous buildings and parks, to 'real life' scenes of poor neighborhoods and urban landscapes. This has generally been seen as a good change, as a movement away from stuffy elitism in fashion, towards getting in touch with younger people and new ideas.



However, the author shows a very different side to this new craze in art and fashion. Ricardo does not like his poor neighborhood being used as a backdrop for a fashion shoot. He sees it as patronizing and disrespectful. They are people going about ordinary lives, not exhibits in a museum for wealthy, influential people to stare at and claim how 'arty' it all is. The cracks in the walls are not there because they look aesthetically appealing and 'gritty' but are instead the marks of real life and real human interactions. Of course, this is why the photographers like these areas, because they feel real and not fake. But this is also why Ricardo is offended. The fashion and the photographers are pretending to be in touch with 'real life' but in reality their lives are very different from Ricardo's. There is nothing meaningful in these fashion shoots for Ricardo or his neighbors, and so this simply feels patronizing and exploitative. Although the author makes his point here by using the example of a fashion shoot, this also applies to any form of art in which 'gritty reality' is portrayed as 'arty.' The privileged people who make this kind of art, and the even wealthier people who buy it, may think that it is meaningful and that they are connecting with important issues, but in reality they are using other people's lives for their own amusement and calling it art. It is as if they have put Ricardo and his town in a zoo and are then displaying this for the public to stare at and comment on. The author asks the reader to think about how the people who live in these places and lead these lives might really feel about this.

In 'The Meadow' the question of what is needed to make a peaceful world is explored through the idea of a Hollywood set. On this set, all the buildings are packed close together and some literally lean on each other. A building might be one thing at the front and a completely different thing at the back, like the French house that is the First National Bank of Illinois at the back, or the Buddhist temple that is a log cabin behind. The most striking example is the Catholic church, which is a Russian Orthodox church behind. Streets and buildings from different cities and different countries are right next to each other and all mingled together. The night watchman and the producer can wander around the whole world in a few minutes. The night watchman points out how magical this all is. The whole world, on this set, is forced to live close together, leaning on and relying on each other. Countries are joined and different people mingle easily. There can be no prejudice or fighting because there is no separation. Different cultures still exist, but they are all piled up together and reliant on each other. Instead of fighting, they are merged. The Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches are part of the same building, acknowledging that although they are different, they are more similar, as they are both parts of Christianity. The night watchman shows that this is the answer to a peaceful world. This is how to end war and hatred. If everyone lived and worked together, they would be forced to co-operate. With separation comes suspicion and hate. In other words, Smith, and by extension the author, is arguing in favor of multiculturalism. This was a particularly important message in the 40s when this story was written, as multiculturalism was still a fairly new idea and the world was only just coming out of the Second World War. Although the message may seem a little more obvious to modern readers, it is still relevant today.

This story also explores the idea of fantasy and its place in the world. Hollywood is usually portrayed as a very trivial and fake thing. The buildings are just sets and the people are just actors; nothing is real. However, that does not mean that it cannot be



meaningful. The same can be said for literature, and for Ray Bradbury's stories. They are made-up, and so they are fake, but they can still tell us about real life and can still impart important messages. Hollywood and literature can also produce amazing worlds that do not exist in real life. They can give us wish fulfillment, explore new possibilities, and teach us things. They can help people escape their troubles by enjoying a better world. This is one reason why films and stories are so important. Another is that they hold memories. They are a place where all cultures and all history is celebrated equally. Films and stories hold a sense of identity and so can tell us about who we really are. Smith obviously feels all this, which is why he cannot bear the thought of tearing the sets down. Destroying the sets can be seen as an analogy for giving up on the Hollywood dream, or giving up on stories. The author is saying that fiction has a greater value that goes beyond mere money-making.



# 'The Garbage Collector,' and 'The Great Fire,' and 'The Golden Apples of the Sun'

## 'The Garbage Collector,' and 'The Great Fire,' and 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' Summary

In 'The Garbage Collector,' a garbage collector comes home and tells his wife that he is going to quit his job. He explains that the government has fitted their vans with special radios so that in the event of nuclear war they can go round and collect all the bodies from the streets. The garbage collector cannot cope with this potential role. He decides that they should move their family out to the farm they inherited from his father, in order to be safe if the worst should happen.

In 'The Great Fire,' a girl called Marianne is staying with her uncle and aunt while her parents are away in Europe. Her uncle is exasperated because she is in love and so dances and sings about the house. He is looking forward to her marrying the boy and moving out, so he keeps away in order to give them their space. However, as the grandma later points out, Marianne has actually been seeing different boys each night, not the same one. She will not be getting married anytime soon.

In 'The Golden Apples of the Sun,' a captain and his crew fly to the Sun in order to bring a part of it back to Earth. The ship has a special cooling system so that it doesn't burn up, but as it gets closer to the Sun the ship is put under greater strain. One man dies because his suit malfunctions. Finally the captain manages to get a piece of the Sun onboard, and the ship heads back towards Earth. The captain reflects on where they will go next, concluding that the only option left is North.

## 'The Garbage Collector,' and 'The Great Fire,' and 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' Analysis

'The Garbage Collector' was written in 1953 in a time referred to as the 'Cold War.' The Cold War was a period of tension, both political and military, between major powers in the world. It lasted from the 40s to the 90s, but was particularly tense during certain periods such as the Cuban Missile Crisis (early 1960s) and the Korean War (1950-1953). The latter was very frightening for the people of the USA, as it was the first significant war of the Cold War period, and the possibility that nuclear weapons would be used was high. This story reflects the common fears of the time, that nuclear war was inevitable and that cities in the States would be targeted. In this story, the garbage collector has been told that if nuclear bombs should fall, he will be sent out to collect all the bodies. This disturbs him for two reasons. The first is that it suggests nuclear war is likely, as even the government are preparing for it. This is why he suggests moving to a farm in the country. The second disturbing thing is the way in which the dead people will





be treated. He is a garbage collector, so if he collects the bodies the implication is that they are garbage. He worries about how he will treat them, how to pile them in the truck, and what they might look like. He worries about handling bodies of women and children, and what to do with pets' bodies. In the end, the idea is too horrific for him.

Although the government would not have much choice in this matter, and garbage trucks are the most sensible solution, the implications are just too horrible for the main character. Everything about it seems so blasé and disrespectful, as if the main problem caused by death on such a scale would be the 'litter' it produces. This reflects the author's fears about the way ordinary people are thought of and treated during political conflicts such as the Cold War. While governments and the military worry about political problems and the power of their country, they forget the ordinary people and their lives. The normal people are frightened but powerless, and their everyday lives, although they may not seem important to governments, are very important to them. This story has a similar feel to 'Embroidery' in which the women were frightened but powerless to prevent the end of their world.

'The Great Fire' explores youthful passion and lust, representing it as fire and heat. The story constantly uses heat as a metaphor for Marianne's feelings, as she burns with them and makes the whole house hot. This emphasizes how her passion affects those around her. She is full of vigor and youthful exuberance, which exhausts the older people in the house. They mistake the fire for love, forgetting what it was like to be a changeable teenager. 'The Great Fire' is similar to other stories in this collection that use metaphor and imagery to represent various aspects of love. In 'The Fog Horn,' unrequited love, lost love and loneliness are captured in the mournful cry of the fog horn, as well as the miserable weather and isolation of the lighthouse. In 'The April Witch,' fresh young love is represented with images of spring and new life. In this story, it is not first love but first passion that is explored, which is much more fiery.

'The Golden Apples of the Sun' explores certain age-old myths with a new science fiction setting, commenting that the spirit of mankind has not changed and never will. The captain says his ship is called the *Copa de Oro* ('cup of gold') but that it is also called *Prometheus* and *Icarus*. *Prometheus* was a Titan from Greek mythology who stole fire from the gods and gave it to mankind. He was punished for his presumption and disrespect for the gods. *Icarus* was a boy from Greek mythology who flew on wings made from feathers and wax. However, he flew too close to the Sun and the wax melted. His wings came apart and he fell to his death. These names reflect the purpose of the ship and the captain's voyage. The captain wants to fly to the sun and bring part of it back to Earth. He is like *Icarus*, flying to the Sun, and like *Prometheus*, stealing a piece of fire from the gods themselves and bringing it back to Earth. Both of these mythical figures threw caution to the winds for the glory and the triumph of what they thought they could achieve. *Prometheus* succeeded in bettering people's lives, helping them to advance. Both figures were full of ambition and pride, but both were punished for having too much faith in themselves and not enough in the gods. The implication is that the captain and his crew will also fail or be punished.





However, this is not what happens. One man does die, but the rest succeed. The captain brings a piece of the Sun back with him. He is like Prometheus, stealing fire from the gods, but this time he has managed to get away with it. The author cleverly sets up the reader's expectations by using mythological examples, but then twists the message of the original myths. Whereas the ancient stories were meant to warn humans of the danger of excessive pride, this story champions mankind's prideful spirit. The author tells us that it is the nature of humans to push their boundaries, to defy danger and to take risks in order to advance. It is mankind's nature to challenge what he knows, and always to strive to be better. It is this nature that has driven fantastic inventions and discoveries. It is this nature that causes us to keep facing any problem with determination never to give up. This story tells us that we should actually celebrate characters like Prometheus and Icarus. The captain sums this up at the end of the story when he wonders where they will go now that they have reached the Sun and returned safely. They have successfully pushed one boundary, but they will not stop here. The captain says they will now go North, meaning that they will always keep moving on to new heights and new challenges.



# 'R is for Rocket' and 'The End of the Beginning'

## 'R is for Rocket' and 'The End of the Beginning' Summary

In 'R is for Rocket,' a boy called Chris, and his orphan friend Ralph, dream of going to space. They play with their friends near the site where rockets launch from, and they like to watch them every weekend. Chris begins to stop paying attention in school and his teacher asks what's wrong. Chris explains that he is dreaming of rockets. The teacher has an idea, and makes some calls. Later, Chris and Ralph discuss how much they want to be astronauts, but that they cannot apply, as people must wait to see if the board will select them instead.

Ralph stays at Chris' house that night. In the morning there is a note on the pillow saying that he went out to do an errand for Chris' mother. Chris is about to head off for school, but his mother makes him stay home. A little later a helicopter arrives and a man from the Astronaut Board says that Chris has been selected. He tells Chris that he is expected to keep this secret for now, and that he will have to leave home to attend the eight year long training school. Chris and his mother tell Ralph that Chris will be going away to school in Europe. Chris' mother offers to adopt Ralph and he agrees. However, Ralph suspects the truth and tells Chris that it is amazing and that he is happy for him. Chris spends his last Saturday as a normal boy and then goes off to astronaut training school.

In 'The End of the Beginning,' an old man and woman sit on their porch to watch a rocket launch. Their son is one of the astronauts inside. The old man reflects on how travelling to the stars will make mankind immortal.

## 'R is for Rocket' and 'The End of the Beginning' Analysis

In 'R is for Rocket,' the main character, Chris, and his best friend Ralph dream of becoming astronauts. They watch the rockets taking off near their home and fantasize about what it would be like to go to space. To them, space represents adventure, mystery, and something greater than themselves. It is the next big frontier that mankind is exploring, the latest challenge that they can contribute towards. They see it as glorious and wonderful, something to be proud of. Chris says that watching the rockets gives him a thrill, but also makes him feel somehow disappointed in himself, as he has never achieved anything worthwhile or meaningful when compared to this. When he and Ralph talk about the rockets, they realize that their lives could go two ways. They could be accepted by the Astronaut Board and their dreams will come true, or they will



live forever with a sense of underachievement, of losing out, and of never pushing beyond their own horizons. This is the spirit that drives the explorer, and Chris' mother knows that she could never persuade Chris not to follow this dream, even if she wanted to.

However, when Chris does get chosen, the moment is bittersweet. He will have to leave Ralph behind, and there is no guarantee that Ralph will ever be picked. Ralph may have to live with the double agony of his disappointment and the knowledge that his friend got to live all the dreams that he has longed for. Ralph is a good friend and does not try to make Chris feel bad, but it is clear that Chris regrets having to leave Ralph and his mother behind. Chris is suddenly asked to grow up very quickly. In an instant he goes from watching the rockets and his dreams of space, to actually being called to work for this goal. The time of dreaming is over and the time of acting and hard work has begun. On his last Saturday, Chris spends one last day playing all his old childhood games, and hanging around with his friends on a carefree afternoon. This is his last chance to be innocent and to enjoy having no responsibilities. As his mother tells him, when he returns he will be a man. In this way, becoming an astronaut is an analogy for growing up. It represents leaving behind childhood fantasies and actually working towards making an impression on the world.

'The End of the Beginning' complements the previous story nicely as it follows similar ideas but from a different perspective. This time it is an old couple who watch the launch of a rocket, and their son is on board. They are too old to ever dream of going into space. They have lived to see the Space Age arrive, but will not live long enough to see all its consequences. The old man reflects on this, and thinks about the implications of space flight. For him, he sees it as the first step in making mankind truly immortal. When mankind can spread itself among the stars, colonizing many planets, then they will be far-reaching enough that humanity will never be able to be destroyed. Life will spread across the whole universe, enriching it and giving it meaning. In this way, life will be infinite. Individual lives do not matter much in this scheme of things, and the old man does not seem to feel sad that he will not live to see other worlds colonized. Just knowing that this will happen gives him comfort, as he can now think of himself as part of an infinite race that will go on forever. Whereas for Chris space-flight meant personal joy, adventure, and achievement, for the old man in this story, it is much more important and meaningful for mankind as a whole. Both stories present very positive ideas of space exploration. These themes will be picked up on in many of the later stories in this collection.



# 'The Rocket,' and 'The Rocket Man'

## 'The Rocket,' and 'The Rocket Man' Summary

In 'The Rocket,' a man called Bodoni watches the rockets launching and flying overhead every night. One night his neighbor Bramante talks to him and observes that they will never be able to afford to go on a rocket, no matter how much they dream. Bodoni tells him that he has saved up enough money for one of his family to travel on a rocket just once. Bramante warns him that this is a bad idea, as the rest of the family will always resent the one chosen.

Bodoni tells his family the news and they instantly start struggling to decide who will go. Everyone wants to, but no-one wants to be the one who prevents the others from going. They decide by picking straws, but each time the one who picks the short straw declines to go, because he or she does not want to upset the others. In the end Bodoni realizes that Bramante was right, and that he will have to spend the money on new equipment for his scrap business instead.

The next day, a man offers to sell Bodoni a mock-up rocket ship made of aluminum. Bodoni tells him that his aluminum furnace is broken, so the scrap metal would be useless to him. However, he cannot bear to let the ship go, so he buys it anyway, spending all his remaining money on it. He then has an idea and begins working on it. He tells his wife that they will all be going on a rocket ship after all, but she does not believe he will be able to make it fly. She thinks it will crash, so she refuses to go. Bodoni takes the children on it and sets off, and they fly past stars and planets. When the children are asleep, he opens the door and steps out into his yard. The whole thing is actually a trick; he has rigged the rocket so that he can move fake scenery past it and fool the children into thinking they are really in space. He goes back inside and keeps up the pretence for six days, giving the children a trip to Mars and back. Afterwards, he is not sure whether all the children were really fooled or not, but they are grateful and claim that they will remember it forever. Later, Bodoni's wife asks if he will take her on the same 'trip' one day.

In 'The Rocket Man' a boy and his mother wait for their father/husband to come home. He is a rocket pilot and is always gone for months at a time, only visiting briefly before going away again. The boy's mother finds this hard to cope with and tries to make her husband stay with her, but he has the wandering lust. She explains to her son that she copes by thinking of her husband as dead, and pretending that it is only his ghost or memory that visits her occasionally. This time, the boy's father shows sadness about always leaving, and warns his son never to become a rocket pilot. He promises that this time is the last, and that next time he will stay with them for good. However, after he has gone a message arrives saying that he is dead. His ship fell into the Sun. After this, the boy and his mother sleep during the day and come out at night so that they never have to look at the Sun, which killed the man they love.



## 'The Rocket,' and 'The Rocket Man' Analysis

These two stories contrast heavily with the previous two. They provide a look at space-flight from a completely different perspective, showing that it is not always as glorious and liberating as it might seem. In 'The Rocket' one of the truths about space travel is explored in more detail, the fact that for a long time it would only be available for the rich. As commercial space-flight is currently in its early days, today's readers can see that the author's predictions are correct. Space-flight is massively expensive and only a possibility for the very rich. Perhaps one day it will become accessible to the average person, as air travel has, but this will not happen for a very long time. For Bodoni and his family, this is a massive disappointment. Like the rich they dream of travelling in space and seeing the stars and distant planets, but unlike the rich, this dream never has the hope of coming true. Whereas the atmosphere of the previous stories was hopeful and aspirational, dealing with the dream rather than the reality, this story points out the reality. The reality is that for normal people, ordinary lives will simply not be affected. Space-flight will be unobtainable, only making people feel desperate and disappointed. They will be able to see the miracle, but will be denied any access to it.

Thankfully, Bodoni manages to get around this problem for his children by fooling them into thinking they have experienced the magic of space, just this once. This one time is enough; it will stay with them for the rest of their lives, helping them to feel as though they have achieved something amazing. They are like the children in 'R is for Rocket' who are never picked to be astronauts and never live their dreams. Bodoni has ensured that they will not suffer because of this, and that they are not left out because of being too poor. He has done an amazing thing for them, but has also gained something from it himself. Despite knowing it is not real, it helps him to experience what space might be like. It triggers his imagination, which is the closest he will ever get to space. He has achieved space-flight in his own way, through his own hard work, and he can be proud of this. Even if he cannot live the dream, he can make the dream live. In a sense, this is what the author does each time he writes a story about space travel. He may not be able to enjoy space-flight, just as most of his readers never will either, but together they can enjoy space through the power of dreams and the imagination.

In 'The Rocket Man, another sad and depressing side of space-flight is shown. The father/husband in this story is actually getting to live his dream. He is the pilot of a rocket, and he obviously loves his job deeply. He could easily be the boy from 'R is for Rocket,' who was chosen to be an astronaut and saw all his dreams and desires coming true. However, sometimes the dream is better than the reality. The rocket man in this story can never let go of his joy at travelling through space. He cannot settle on Earth, even to make his family happy. He leaves behind a son who misses his father, and a woman who is suffering because she longs for her husband so much. He is letting them down, and he knows this. He feels constantly guilty for it, as the reader can see from his sad expressions and haunted words. When he speaks to his son about it, it is clear that he wishes he could stay with them, but that there is always something inside him pulling him back to space. He has wander-lust. He is never happy when he arrives somewhere, always wanting to be moving and travelling somewhere else. This makes his life



miserable, as when he is in space he wants to come home, but when he is home, he wants to go back to space. He is being pulled in different directions and risks being torn apart. This is a far cry from the hope, excitement and joy of stories such as 'R is for Rocket' and 'The End of the Beginning.' Stories like this remind the reader that even things that seem extraordinary and wonderful can have drawbacks, and can create small tragedies for ordinary people.

Even when the rocket man promises that the next time he will stay for good, he still has to go away 'one last time.' The reader wonders if next time will always be the last time, and so he will never actually stop. The reader never gets to find out if this is the case. The rocket man is killed on his very next mission after his ship falls into the Sun. The boy and his mother are distraught. Even though she tried to cope with her pain by imagining him already dead, this does not seem to ease any of the mother's suffering. Both now spend their days sleeping and their nights awake, turning their world upside down in order to avoid looking at the Sun. This emphasizes the fear, loss, pain and tragedy that space-flight might inflict on loved ones.



# 'A Sound of Thunder,' and 'The Long Rain'

## 'A Sound of Thunder,' and 'The Long Rain' Summary

In 'A Sound of Thunder,' a man called Eckels joins a special hunting trip that is going back in time to hunt dinosaurs. He is warned that it will be frightening and even deadly, but he agrees to the danger. He is also given a strict set of instructions. He must stay on the specially constructed path at all times and never shoot anything that has not been marked with paint. This is because if he kills or disrupts anything in the past, it might have dire consequences in the future. Eckels agrees to be careful.

They have not gone far along the path when they see the tyrannosaurus rex that they have come to kill. Eckels is surprised by its size and ferocity and he suddenly loses his nerve. He steps backwards and accidentally falls off the path. He trudges in the mud for a bit, then finds his way back to the time machine. Meanwhile, the others kill the dinosaur. When they get back to the craft they see Eckels with mud on his boots. Mr. Travis, the man in charge, is furious. He threatens to shoot Eckels or to leave him behind in the past, but in the end he only makes him go retrieve the bullets from the dead tyrannosaurus' corpse. They then travel back to the future. There they find that some things have changed, such as a bad man winning the election instead of the good man who was president before they left. That's when they realize that Eckels has a dead butterfly on the bottom of his boot. Mr. Travis aims his gun at Eckels and fires.

In 'The Long Rain,' a spaceship crash-lands on Venus and a group of the survivors sets out to find people. On Venus it rains constantly and fungus and vegetation grow very quickly. The men are anxious to find one of the Sun Domes which are specially heated buildings that will shelter them from the endless rain. However, when they come across the fallen spacecraft again, they realize that they have walked in a huge circle. Their compasses have been thrown off by the approach of an electrical storm. They lie down as the storm approaches, and the lightning strikes the ship near them. One man loses his nerve and tries to run away, but he is hit by the lightning and dies.

After this, the men set off again. Eventually they come to a Sun Dome, but find that it is deserted and half-destroyed. They realize that it must have been attacked by the native Venusians who live in the sea. They continue on to find the next Sun Dome. One man gives up, driven mad by the incessant rain. The Lieutenant shoots him, and they continue on. After awhile, the Lieutenant also gives up, claiming that men weren't made to handle this much rain. He shoots himself before he can be driven mad. The final man pushes on, and is beginning to despair when he comes across the second Sun Dome. Inside there are people to welcome him and it is warm with hot drinks. The man is relieved.





## 'A Sound of Thunder,' and 'The Long Rain' Analysis

'A Sound of Thunder' is a story about cause and effect and the consequences of our actions. It neatly explains the idea of the Butterfly Effect, though it was written before this name was actually attached to the theory. It is possible that this story is what actually influenced the name 'Butterfly Effect.' In the theory, a simple event such as a butterfly flapping its wings could set off a chain of events that eventually lead to something much bigger and seemingly completely unrelated, such as a tornado. Although it is a scientific theory and is not necessarily intended to have moral implications, when applied to human behavior it carries an important message. We should all be careful what we do, as our actions could have far-reaching consequences of which we might not even have imagined. The author deals with this issue in his story by relating the Butterfly Effect to time-travel. Eckels is told that he cannot stray off the path or shoot animals that have not been marked, as this would risk changing the future in some way. Eckels cannot imagine how such a small action of his could have any lasting effects. Mr. Travis explains that if Eckels even steps on one bug, this could disrupt the food chain, causing other animals to die. Evolution may be affected, which would change future generations of animals. In the end, this could alter the topography, flora and fauna, climate, politics, or anything else of the world as we know it. Unfortunately, Eckels does not listen hard enough. When he is frightened of the tyrannosaurus rex he falls off the path and kills a butterfly. Somehow this leads to a different president in the future, as well as potential other changes. Eckels demonstrates how even a small human action can have devastating consequences.

The idea of accidentally changing the future through changing one small thing in the past is an idea that is now very common in science fiction and time-travel stories. There is no way to know whether, if time-travel to the past were ever possible, this is actually what would happen. It is also possible that no action a person took in the past could ever change the future, as it would always have happened that way. Alternatively, perhaps human actions are simply not this important and the Butterfly Effect is a false theory. Perhaps stepping on a bug in the past would simply equate to a dead bug and nothing more. These possibilities are discussed in this story, which is one of the first of its kind to really explore this problem. Mr. Travis tells Eckels that the consequences of their time-travel are simply unknown, and because of this they are determined to take no chances, just in case.

The company that runs these hunting trips does seem to have gone to extraordinary lengths to prevent any real changes in the past. They watch the animals, find ones that would have died naturally, and then mark them with paint. Only these animals are allowed to be shot, and even then it must be done only minutes before the animal would have died anyway. The bullets are then found and removed. Every detail is planned as minutely as possible, and every trace of human contact with the past is removed. This seems like a lot of work and risk just to set up one very short hunting expedition. The reader has to question whether it is even worth it. If they are that concerned about human interference in the past, maybe they should simply not run these trips in the first place. Of course, the company never seems to have even considered this. The time-





travel hunting expeditions must be a great money-maker for them, so they go ahead with it. Here, the author is commenting on humans' tendency to meddle with things that should be left alone, or to throw caution to the winds when profit is involved. It is really greed that has caused this particular problem. When Eckels accidentally steps on the butterfly, Mr. Travis is furious and wants to punish him. It is obvious who he blames. Interestingly, he never even thinks of placing the blame at his own company's feet. He has already admitted the potential danger of the expedition, and the risk in taking untrained civilians to the past is enormous. He explained in detail how they could completely alter the world with one tiny mistake. In the face of this, it seems like an incredibly irresponsible attitude to even run these trips. The author is commenting on mankind's tendency to act without considering the consequences, as well as humans' extraordinary ability to go ahead with things anyway, even when the danger is clear.

'The Long Rain' is a very atmospheric story that plays with the reader's mind just as the officers' minds are affected by the constant rain. The author cleverly manages to make even the most mundane things seem very sinister and frightening. The constant rain pounds on the men's heads, slowly driving them mad. The atmosphere becomes more and more tense as the men begin to rave. When the men reach the Sun Dome, which has been attacked and is now abandoned, it is clear that they cannot go on much longer. The perpetual dusk, constant hard rain, and the thought of the native Venusians dragging off the settlers in the Sun Dome, have driven them into a frightened madness. They begin to tell themselves that all the Sun Domes are like this, and that there is no hope left. As one man falls, and then another, the reader begins to realize that none of these men are going to make it to safety, and that it will be their own minds that kill them. The slow build up of tension and fear begins to convince the reader that there is actually something for the men to fear, something that will hurt them before they can reach the Sun Dome. However, ironically, there is actually nothing for the men to fear. The native Venusians have been and gone long ago, and now there is only rain. Rain cannot kill them unless they let it, but they do.

Even at the end, when one man manages to find a Sun Dome and is greeted with warmth and light, the reader is left to wonder whether it is real. The description is suspiciously similar to the fantasies that the cold, wet men have on their walk. It also sounds a little unrealistic. Why would there be a steaming mug of hot chocolate waiting for him, with a bed nearby? How would the people inside know to have a mug of hot chocolate ready? Wouldn't the beds be in another room? On a world with hostile natives, wouldn't he have to go through some kind of entry hall and security checks first before entering the main room? This forces the reader to wonder whether the man has really reached safety, or whether he too has been driven mad and is now retreating into the comfort of his own mind while his body slowly drowns. This is a very uneasy ending to an increasingly uneasy story. The author shows the reader that humans are not as adaptable as they think, and that even seemingly ordinary things can be terrifying or unbearable when taken to the extreme. The author also shows the reader how easily a human mind can snap, and that we can never really trust what our own senses tell us.



# 'The Exiles,' and 'Here There be Tygers'

## 'The Exiles,' and 'Here There be Tygers' Summary

In 'The Exiles,' fantastical and horrific creatures and people from fiction are living on Mars with their creators. Among them are the witches from Macbeth, with Shakespeare, and Edgar Allen Poe, who seems to be more or less in charge. They are uneasy because there is a rocket approaching from Earth. Edgar Allen Poe wants to fight the humans arriving, as he sees them as a threat. They are men of science who want to extend human knowledge and enlightenment further, which will push Edgar Allen Poe and his friends further into space on more isolated planets. The witches attempt to curse the men on the rocket to prevent them from landing, but although it succeeds in killing one man, it does not stop the rocket.

Edgar Allen Poe goes to see Charles Dickens, who is having dinner with the Fezziwigs. Poe begs him to come help them against the arriving men, but Charles Dickens refuses. He does not want anything to do with Poe and the other demons, ghosts and horrors. He sees himself as different from them and thinks he must be on Mars by mistake. Poe goes back to the others, where they see a thin, faded version of Father Christmas. Suddenly, Poe's friend Bierce crumbles in the middle of speaking. They realize that his last book must have been burnt back on Earth, destroying him forever. Poe laments the fact that humans no longer believe in superstitious things, and that they burn any works of fiction containing them.

The men in the rocket land on Mars. The captain insists that their first task should be to burn the last remaining works of superstitious fiction. They do so, and hear strange wails on the air. Then one man points to the distance, where a vision of the city of Oz appears, broken and falling down. The captain tells him to report to the doctor. After this, there is nothing left at all.

In 'Here There be Tygers' a mining ship lands on a new planet. The men soon discover that the planet will provide whatever they ask for. They can fly if they want to, or drink wine from a lake. The men love it, but Chatterton is frightened. He tries to attack the planet with the ship's drill, then runs back to the ship where there is an atomic bomb stored. He never makes it out of the wood, and the men think he was eaten by a tiger. They conclude that the planet will only be nice to them if they are nice to it. The men want to stay, but the captain insists on travelling back to Earth to complete their contract with the company. As they leave, they see the surface of the planet suddenly come alive with natural disasters and wild animals. The message is clear; the planet is angry and will now never allow the men to come back. Only one man slipped out and stayed on the planet, and the others now speculate on what pleasures he might be enjoying.



## 'The Exiles,' and 'Here There be Tygers' Analysis

'The Exiles' is a story about mankind moving away from superstition towards knowledge and science. This is what comes with expansion, exploration and discovery, but it is not necessarily always a good thing, the author points out. In the story, Edgar Allen Poe, Shakespeare, Bierce, Charles Dickens and other writers live on Mars with their creations. The majority of them are creations or writers concerned with the supernatural, horror, and science fiction. These are the stories that mankind has decided are too weird, too vulgar, too nasty and too superstitious to allow people to read them anymore. Humans have simply moved past these silly stories. This is why these kinds of books are being burned. The writers have been pushed off Earth, so now they populate Mars and wait for a time when they might be allowed back down. The story can either be read straight, as a fun tale about writers and their creations literally living on Mars and fighting back against human expansion, or it can be read as an analogy for several different things.

In the first analogy, Edgar Allen Poe and his friends represent superstition. Mankind is always moving further from superstition towards knowledge and enlightenment. We can see this throughout history as humans told each other myths, then rejected them, then slowly discovered how the world works according to science. This is still happening today, as religion is declining in the face of science. Evolution has been a particularly strong argument used to try to denounce God and Creationism, but there are plenty of other examples of this happening. Edgar Allen Poe and his friends do not like this, as they are being pushed out of people's lives and rejected. They try to fight back, but they are simply not strong enough now that people no longer believe in them. Poe hopes for another Dark Age, as it is disasters and suffering that tend to push humanity towards superstition. By showing this argument from the side of Poe and his friends, the author is subtly coming down on the side of superstition. Science is wonderful and can achieve a lot of fantastic things, he shows, but it is not necessarily a good thing if it stamps out everything else. The story includes Charles Dickens in its list of authors living on Mars. Poe jokes that this is because Dickens included some ghosts in his stories, but in fact it seems more likely that Dickens is present because he wrote about Christianity and the spirits of Christmas. Poe explains that Christmas has also been banned on Earth as a silly superstition that has no place anymore. Father Christmas is also on Mars, and he has become thin and faded. The implication is that religion has also been cast aside as just another superstition. The author does not appear to like this, as Poe exclaims that Earth must be a depressing place without Christmas and faith. The demise of the people and creatures on Mars is shown as a tragic event. The author's message is clear; if humans allow science to push aside everything non-scientific, they will lose some of the important things that make them human.

In the second reading of this story, Poe and his friends represent science fiction, fantasy and horror, and the men arriving from Earth represent many people's reactions to them. Many people do not consider science fiction, fantasy and horror to be 'proper' literature. They think it is something that can be enjoyed as a child, but that these should be put aside as a person grows older in favor of more serious, more 'real' things. Many people



consider science fiction and fantasy fans to be childish and ridiculous. The author is commenting on this by showing Poe and his friends' desperate fight to hold on to their existence. People who dismiss science fiction and fantasy would like to see its end as a genre in publishing, but this would be a shame. The author tries to show that people need escapism and magic, and that these stories can actually tell us a great deal about ourselves and what it means to be human. The world would be a sadder and less interesting place without them, just as Mars is when the men have burned all the books.

Finally, this story can be read as a comment on censorship of fiction. Many famous and influential books have been banned and burned over the years by people who thought they were inappropriate to read. This is unacceptable, the author says. Through this story, he shows how burning books destroys the ideas within them, hurts their authors, and robs the world of wonderful stories that might make them think about their lives in a different way. The story tries to show that all books have worth, and that burning books is a terrible thing.

'Here There Be Tygers' is an amusing story about a planet that is conscious and alive, and determined to make its new residents stay. The planet seems to have been desperately lonely until now. It has the ability to create anything immediately, but without other sentient life to show off to, this is largely meaningless. Therefore, when the men arrive, the planet takes every opportunity to impress them. It puts up with Chatterton until he threatens to really harm the planet, at which point he is disposed of quickly and somewhat mysteriously. The men realize that the planet may be able to give them everything they really want, but it is also dangerous. They compare it to a woman. It wants to seduce them and make them love it, but it is quick to anger and will not put up with insults. When they leave, they see the planet's anger and resentment manifest as natural disasters and wild animals.

The planet that tries to waylay the heroes on their journey and make them forget home, is a theme from mythology translated into science fictional terms. It is similar to the story of the Lotus Eaters found in the *Odyssey*. The Island of the Lotus Eaters is a magical place where Odysseus' men become too comfortable and enjoy the drug-like effects of the Lotus Flower. This makes them forget their homes and their mission, and they long to stay there forever. In the myth, the people who eat the Lotus Flower are described like animals grazing, implying that they are hardly even human beings anymore. The men in this story risk being pulled into a similar fate. They want to stay on the perfect planet, being given everything they want. They will not have to worry about everyday things anymore, so will simply eat, sleep, live and enjoy themselves. In a sense, they will become like animals. However, as they fly away, rather than feeling elated that they have escaped, they regret having to leave. They cannot help but feel that the one man who did stay will have a better life than they will. This is a similar idea to that found in the story 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' in which the author again turns Greek myths on their head, withdrawing a different message at the end. This story also suggests that space may be such a strange and unknown place that the magical things we imagine in myths could actually exist.



# 'The Strawberry Window,' and 'The Dragon'

## 'The Strawberry Window,' and 'The Dragon' Summary

In 'The Strawberry Window,' a man called Bob and his family have moved to Mars. Bob's wife is unhappy and wants to return to Earth. Bob has noticed her increasing sadness and has spent all their savings in an attempt to fix this. He takes his family to the rocket depot and explains to them on the way why they need to stay on Mars. He says that mankind will always be vulnerable on one planet. The Sun will explode one day and destroy Earth, so it is vital that mankind moves on and colonizes new planets. The more places they go, the less chance a freak accident or tragic event could wipe out the whole race. He explains that he misses Earth too, but that it is their duty to remain here.

After picking up their arrival at the depot, they travel back to their hut. Nearby, they plan where they will build their new house. Bob unpacks the things he had ordered to be sent from Earth. There are the porch steps and some furniture from the old house, and the door with the strawberry window that they loved. He promises to keep bringing familiar things to remind them of home, so they can rebuild on Mars and start again.

In 'The Dragon,' two knights sit on a moor, fearing the return of a fearsome dragon. As they are talking, the 'dragon' arrives and the knights charge at it. They are knocked aside and run over. The 'dragon' is actually a train. The train drivers exclaim over the two knights they just hit, but they do not stop. One of them says he stopped once, but never found anything. Besides, the moor gives him the creeps. The train continues on into the night.

## 'The Strawberry Window,' and 'The Dragon' Analysis

'The Strawberry Window' picks up on a theme explored in some of the earlier stories, particularly 'The End of the Beginning.' This theme is that mankind needs to explore space and colonize other worlds in order to become truly immortal. If humans are all on one planet, the chances of a disaster wiping them out are much greater. One day in the future the Sun will explode, so mankind will have to have moved on by then. The more spread out humans are, the safer they will be from potential extinction. Bob compares this to sowing seeds in crop fields. When he was a boy he helped his father plant the crops, and they would always scatter the seeds as far as they could, in many different fields. If one field suffered a drought or a frost, or got flooded or trampled, the others were still there. In the same way, the immortality of mankind rests on always pushing further forward and seeding new worlds.



The story also revisits some of the potential downsides of space travel that were seen in other stories. In 'The Wilderness' the women were terrified by the idea of moving to another world. They were daunted at having to leave Earth and everything familiar behind. In 'The Rocket Man' it was the spaceman's family that suffered for his glorious explorations of space. The author explores this idea further here. Bob's family are unhappy on Mars, particularly his wife, who misses Earth and her old home. For them, space travel and colonization are not so glorious and wonderful after all. However, Bob persuades them that it is actually very important for them to stay, and that this goes beyond mere individuals' happiness. It is vital for them as a race. Bob manages to convince them to stay, but he also manages to help make their new life easier and happier by bringing things to them that are familiar to them. This means that they do not have to start entirely afresh. This is similar to the solution in 'The Wilderness' in which Janice's fiancé managed to bring her to Mars by building an exact replica of their old house there. In this story, then, the author resolves the conflicting themes of some of the earlier stories. He acknowledges that there may be downsides to space travel and exploration, but that in the end the benefits far outweigh the risks and the hardships. Travelling to new planets is vitally important for the whole human race, not just on an individual level. People will need to embrace the idea of starting something new, but that does not mean they cannot bring something of Earth with them. Mankind may colonize other planets, but we will still always be human, connected by a common origin.

'The Dragon' is an amusing twist-ending story which attempts to fool the reader into thinking that it is about two knights facing a real dragon. In actual fact, the 'dragon' is a train, and the knights mistake it for a monster because they have no idea what a train is. The knights themselves seem to be ghosts, wandering for eternity on the moor and completely unaware that they are dead. This is why the train driver never finds anything when he stops the train to see what he has hit, and why the moor gives him the creeps. The story turns the reader's expectations on their head. The supernatural monster turns out to be a perfectly ordinary and mundane thing, a train, and it is the knights themselves who are actually the supernatural monsters. This shows that the concept of 'monster' is actually a matter of perception, and that sometimes first impressions are wrong.





# 'Frost and Fire,' and 'Uncle Einar'

## 'Frost and Fire,' and 'Uncle Einar' Summary

In 'Frost and Fire,' a boy called Sim is born in some caves. He watches his parents dying before his eyes, and is aware that he is growing unnaturally fast. He soon comes to learn that his people are the descendents of those who crash landed on this planet a long time ago. They were affected by the sun's radiation and now live for only eight days, growing up, maturing and growing old all within this short time. They have racial memory and a form of telepathy, so they are born with knowledge of their past. They cannot venture outside their caves except at dawn and sunset, as the sun's heat would kill them and the night-time cold would freeze them to death. Most of them spend their short lives constantly eating and talking. They do not sleep.

Sim quickly begins to grow up, sees the world outside the caves, makes an enemy of a boy called Chion who steals his berries, and falls in love with a blue-haired girl called Lyte. Sim is determined to fix his people's short lives and get away from the planet somehow. He knows there is an abandoned space ship nearby, but that it is too close to reach in the safe hour at dawn and sunset. Some members of their community are scientists who dedicate their short lives to working out how to get to the ship, and Sim decides to join them. However, one day Chion appears and insists that Sim join the other grown boys in waging war on another community in the nearby cliffs. He says that those cliffs are more protected from the radiation, so if they can take them over they will live another three days. Sim realizes that those cliffs are closer to the spaceship, so he agrees. Lyte insists on coming with him.

They attack the cliff community but are defeated. As the sun comes up, Chion and the others run home, but first Chion injures Sim's ankle so he cannot run. Instead, Sim decides to stay and fight. He calls out a challenge and a big man called Nhoj agrees to it. They fight, and eventually Sim wins. He recovers inside the caves with Lyte. That night he decides to run for the spaceship, hoping he can make it from this closer starting point. Lyte once again insists on coming with him. They run as fast as they can and then jump into a fast moving river to take them the rest of the way. They just manage to reach the ship before the night's cold can kill them.

Inside, the ship protects them from the sun's radiation and their aging slows down to normal. They spend several days recovering, then Sim decides he needs to return to get more men to come fix the ship. He directs the ship's laser towards his home and sets off while it is still night-time, running alongside the laser to keep himself from freezing. When he reaches the caves he finds his sister has become an old woman and Chion an old man. Chion tries to fight him but dies. Sim persuades two hundred people to come with him, and they use the river to reach the ship once again. With the extra help, Sim manages to fix the ship and fly into space, leaving behind the planet and their short lives forever.



In 'Uncle Einar' a winged man called Einar crashes into a high-tension tower while he is flying one night. He is lying injured in a wood when a woman finds him and cares for him. He tries to fly again but crashes into a tree, and realizes that his night perception abilities have been lost. He marries the woman and begins a family. He is happy, but he longs to be able to fly again. However, he does not dare fly during the day in case people see him and try to capture him for a zoo or for experiments. Then one day his children talk to him about flying kites, and he realizes that he can pretend to be their kite by attaching it to his belt, and giving the string to his children to hold. Now he can fly during the day and everyone will think it is just a kite in the sky above.

## 'Frost and Fire,' and 'Uncle Einar' Analysis

In 'Frost and Fire,' Sim and his people only live for eight days. They still experience every part of living and growing up, just in a shorter space of time and much faster. This allows the author to examine the human condition by looking at all the vital parts of a person's life that remain. By doing so, he asks what it means to be human. Sim and his people spend most of their time eating and existing, reproducing and bringing up children, then dying. These are the basic animal functions needed to survive. However, although they only live eight days, they have not become like animals yet. They spend a great amount of time talking, an important social aspect of being human. They still honor family ties, and they can still hope and dream. There are bad things too; most of them act selfishly to hold on to what little time they have, and there is even war. These are inevitable aspects of being human, the author seems to be pointing out. No matter how long we live and how difficult our lives are, these will always be part of who we are. Another interesting observation is that the humans in this story are very adaptable to incredible circumstances. The planet is not only extremely hostile, it also speeds up metabolism and other bodily functions, making animals live faster and age quicker. Yet humans have adapted to this unusual situation and have found a way to continue to exist. This is a very different view of humanity's ability to adapt, survive and still maintain hope, than was presented in 'The Long Rain.'

'Frost and Fire' also explores the idea of time. For Sim and his people, eight days is unbearably short, just as it would seem to us. This is because we are used to living around 90 years, and so comparatively eight days is nothing. However, if Sim's people did not have racial memory, they would have forgotten their pasts by now, and eight days would seem perfectly normal. This would just be their allotted lifespan, and they would become used to living accordingly. This is even suggested at in the story, when it is mentioned that the racial memory is actually cruel, as it keeps the people from ever truly adapting and accepting their new situation. This shows that time is a matter of perspective. To a race that lives for 90 years, 90 years seems normal and eight days is tragically short. To a tree or other very long-lived creature, 90 years could seem like a tragically short lifespan.

In 'Uncle Einar' a magical being is brought into a mundane situation, and has to learn to cope with a normal life. He loves his family, but he misses the freedom of flying. He is like the father in 'The Rocket Man' who hates to leave his family but also feels the pull of





space. Uncle Einar loves his family and his life deeply, but he feels the pull of what he was always meant to do. This makes him sad and irritable. Unlike in 'The Rocket Man,' Uncle Einar manages to find a solution that pleases everyone. He can fly once again if he pretends to be one of his children's kites. This brings him and his children joy, and he can still enjoy his family life as well as his freedom in the sky above. Einar's flying represents the freedom to dream and to be oneself, and the existence of a little magic in a person's life. This story shows that these things are very important to a person. They need to hold on to it, even when they are older and have family responsibilities. However, they should not ignore or forget their family in the process. If a man can find a way to include his family in his dreams, just as Uncle Einar managed to do, then this will lead to happiness.



# 'The Time Machine,' and 'The Sound of Summer Running'

## 'The Time Machine,' and 'The Sound of Summer Running' Summary

In 'The Time Machine,' a boy called Charlie tells his friends that an old man who lives nearby, Colonel Freeleigh, has a time machine. It will go back in time, but not to the future. He takes his friends there, and begins to ask the old man questions. The Colonel tells them all about things from his past, such as the civil war and Pawnee Bill, the wild-west showman. The boys are enthralled, and afterwards they agree that the Colonel really is a time machine. The Colonel is pleased with this nickname and tells them to come back for more stories any time.

In 'The Sound of Summer Running' a boy called Douglas desperately wants new tennis shoes so that he can enjoy the new summer. He goes to the shoe shop and tells the owner, Mr. Sanderson, that he will run errands for him in exchange for the shoes. He explains to Mr. Sanderson why sneakers are so magical for little boys. Mr. Sanderson is enchanted by Douglas' enthusiasm and agrees to let him have the shoes.

## 'The Time Machine,' and 'The Sound of Summer Running' Analysis

In 'The Time Machine,' the title of the story and Charlie's claim that he has discovered a time machine set up the reader's expectations. The reader is expecting another story along the lines of the 'The Sound of Thunder' with a literal time machine and an adventure involving time travel. However, this is not what this story is about. The 'time machine' is revealed to actually be an old man called Colonel Freeleigh who can tell so many stories about his past that he can take the children back to amazing historical events. He has lived a very interesting life, including fighting in wars and hunting buffalo with Pawnee Bill. He also has a very effective way of telling stories that conjures up the scenes beautifully and makes the children feel as if they are really living it. 'The Time Machine' is therefore a story about stories, celebrating the power of storytelling in bringing things to life, as well as the power of the imagination in visualizing it. The storytelling is so good in this case that the boys feel as though they are actually using a time machine.

This is also a story about older members of the community, who have lived fascinating lives and who have a lot to tell people who will listen. This story reminds the readers that there is magic in real life too, not just in stories, and that sometimes it might be as close as your grandparents' house, or the old person living next door. The reader is reminded that old people were once young, and that they have experienced so much.



By connecting with the older generations, young people can not only learn a lot, but also find so much to enjoy and be entranced by.

'The Sound of Summer Running' is a story about youth. In it, a boy called Douglas longs for new tennis shoes so that he can enjoy the summer. He explains that his old tennis shoes have become destroyed and worn out by the dreams and adventures of the summer before. They remind him that the amazing things he thought possible did not always come true. New tennis shoes, however, are full of possibilities. When wearing them, anything can happen. The tennis shoes therefore represent the new year, as well as the energy, playfulness and earnestness of childhood. They represent possibility. While the year is still fresh and young, it feels like anything can be accomplished. This story celebrates this youthful enthusiasm, reminding readers how it felt to be a child. Through Douglas' explanation, Mr. Sanderson is able to regain some of his lost youth too, so much so that he is moved to let Douglas have the shoes after all.



# Characters

## McDunn appears in The Fog Horn

McDunn is the lighthouse keeper in the story 'The Fog Horn.' He has been here a very long time and has become used to the constant loneliness and isolation of the job. He is a little bitter and seems to have either loved and lost someone in the past, or has loved someone but was not loved back. He relates to the monster's loneliness and despair, and he feels sorry for it. When the lighthouse is knocked down he specifies for it to be rebuilt with reinforced concrete, but he does not tell anyone else about the monster. This is perhaps because he does not want others to search for the creature and harm or disturb it, or perhaps it is because he wants it to be his special secret.

## Cecy appears in The April Witch

Cecy is a young adolescent witch in the story 'The April Witch.' She is on the cusp of growing up and longs to know what it is like to be in love. She has the power to move her consciousness into other living things, so she decides to explore love through the body and eyes of another young girl. She enters the mind of Ann Leary and begins to control her, forcing her to go to a dance with a boy called Tom. She does not care whether Ann wants to go to the party with Tom or not, as she is very focused on her own desires and needs. She is willful and full of passion and determination, as well as the energy of youth. She attempts to interact pleasantly with Tom, but is frustrated when Ann resists her at every step of the way.

Cecy quickly finds herself falling in love with Tom, perhaps because she is fascinated by these interactions that she has never experienced before. She comes across as very young and naive. She is desperate for Tom to know her as she really is, so she takes the risk of telling him how to find her. However, she does not tell him the whole truth, sensibly not wanting to scare him away or to get her and her family into trouble. By telling Tom how to find her, however, she is risking giving up everything that makes her who she is. She clearly loves her magical powers and is grateful for them, but she is willing to give them up to be with Tom. The reader never finds out what comes of this, so it is never clear whether Cecy really is in love, or whether she is being a little foolish. Cecy represents the eager earnestness of youth, when a person is passionate but naive. Cecy could very well come to regret her decisions in later life, when she is older and wiser, but this story does not deal with that. Cecy's story is about youth and hope.

## Janice appears in The Wilderness

Janice is a young woman in 'The Wilderness' whose fiancé has moved to Mars to start a new life there. Janice has the decision of moving to Mars to be with him, or of staying on Earth. At first she appears to have chosen to stay, but in this story she changes her mind. She is terrified at the prospect of moving and starting afresh, and of how strange



and different Mars will be. She does not like the idea of difficulty and of struggling to make a new home. She is also frightened of space-flight itself, of the vast emptiness outside the ship. However, her mind has been changed by her fiancé's gift. He has built a house for her on Mars that is an exact replica of her house on Earth. He is luring her there with something familiar that will convince her that Mars does not have to be completely new and strange. Janice appreciates this enormously, and it helps her to think of everything that she will gain if she goes to Mars. Mars is where he fiancé is, and he has built her a home. Mars is her future and Earth is her past. When she realizes this, she decides that she must pluck up the courage to go.

Janice comes across as quite an emotional and sensitive girl. She is easily frightened by the idea of anything different, is moved to tears when she explores her old town one last time, and is overwhelmed when she speaks to her fiancé on the phone. She thinks of all the people of the past who have, like her, moved to be with their men in new frontier towns. She compares her own fears and feelings with theirs. Janice can come across as quite an irritating character for modern readers, as she represents an older and antiquated idea of a helpless, emotional woman who can only follow her man.

## **Leonora appears in The Wilderness**

In 'The Wilderness' a young woman called Leonora is also moving to Mars with Janice. She appears to be Janice's sister. She remains much calmer and more composed than Janice, despite the fact that Janice is deciding her future on a whim and that Janice seems to be quite changeable. Leonora helps to keep Janice focused on what matters, and joins her in exploring their town one last time before leaving. She is also frightened by the idea of space travel, but seems less daunted by the idea of life on Mars than Janice is. Leonora recognizes how clever Janice's fiancé has been for building her a house that is a replica of her house on Earth.

## **William Acton appears in The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl**

William Acton is the murderer in the story 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl.' He kills Huxley after finding out that the other man is running away with his wife. This murder is committed in rage on the spur of the moment, and not planned, meaning that Acton has not prepared himself for keeping his identity a secret. He suddenly thinks about fingerprints and realizes that if he does not wipe them away he will incriminate himself. He begins trying to retrace his steps and wipe everything he thinks he may have touched. This soon becomes an obsession, and he begins to clean less and less likely objects. Soon he is wiping things that it would be impossible for him to have got his fingerprints on. He is driving himself mad with his guilt and paranoia. He sees fingerprints everywhere, and imagines that they are multiplying behind his back as he tries to get rid of them. The fingerprints appear to have become manifestations of his guilt, as they simply will not go away. Trying to cover them up only makes the matter worse, just as trying to cover up his crime makes him feel more guilty for it. In the end,



Acton is driven completely insane and seems to forget his true purpose in polishing objects. He goes over the entire house, cleaning everything, even in the attic. When the police arrive, he is still there, but all he now seems to care about is the cleaning, as if he can somehow clean away the crime itself.

## **Donald Huxley appears in The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl**

Donald Huxley is the murder victim in 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl.' He is killed by Acton when Acton finds out that Huxley is intending to run away with his wife. Huxley is obviously quite a rich and arrogant man, and it is apparent that he does not care about Acton's feelings at all. He boasts about how he is taking Acton's wife away from him.

## **Emperor Yuan appears in The Flying Machine**

Emperor Yuan is the emperor of China in 'The Flying Machine.' He lives in a palace near the Great Wall of China. When a servant tells him that a man is flying, he calmly comes out to look. He is amazed, but keeps a neutral expression and commands respect at all times. He is obviously a man used to ruling a country and having to maintain an air of quiet, dignified control at all times.

When he sees the flying machine he commands the inventor to come down and talks to him about his invention. When he is satisfied that no-one else knows about it, he orders the inventor killed. Again, he remains completely calm, and comes across as extremely cold and uncaring. The man pleads with him, and Yuan explains that it is not the invention or the inventor that he fears, but what other people will do with the flying machine if word should get out. The inventor is amazed when he hears this, as it never occurred to him that anyone could use his invention for evil. He seems a little more accepting of his death now, as if he trusts so completely in the reasoning of his emperor.

When the execution has been carried out, the reader finally sees a little emotion from Yuan. He seems sad and regretful that he has had to make this decision, but he does not show any remorse. He simply expresses unhappiness that he is the one who was forced to order the execution. He does not question whether he has done the right thing, telling himself that one man's life is worth nothing when compared with his whole country and every person in it. Yuan seems to feel the weight of the great responsibility of being ruler, but he accepts it without complaint. He looks at his model garden, which for him represents his kingdom. In it he sees great beauty, and he knows that sometimes he has to destroy one beautiful thing to keep the beauty of the whole intact. He must think about the good of all, and calculate in terms of millions, rather than place too much importance on individuals.

Yuan can come across as an evil man for having so little regard for a human life, or as a tragic man for having to make this decision despite wanting to be a kind ruler. He is



certainly a pragmatic man, thinking in terms of consequences rather than getting carried away by the beauty of something. By choosing to kill the inventor and suppress the invention, he shows that he places less value on freedom and expression than on safety. He sees his reasoning as supreme and regards himself as the man with the responsibility of controlling everything around him. On the other hand, he has obviously chosen to kill as few people as possible. A more cautious emperor may have executed the servant too, as well as the farmer who potentially witnessed the man flying. Yuan avoids this. He also shows a little distaste at what he is forced to do. Yuan is therefore quite an ambiguous character. He is neither entirely evil nor good, and it is up to the reader to decide whether he is right or wrong.

## **The Mandarin appears in The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind**

In 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind' the Mandarins are the rulers of the towns. The Mandarin of the first town comes across as a slightly useless and over-emotional man who is not very good in a crisis.

## **The Mandarin's Daughter appears in The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind**

In 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind' the Mandarin of the first town is advised by his daughter. She is much wiser and more capable than him, and she proves that she can be quick thinking. She is also very humble, as she is content to let her father take all the credit for her decisions. At the end of the story, it is she who saves the towns by suggesting compromise.

## **Mr. Ramirez appears in I See You Never**

In 'I See You Never' Mr. Ramirez is an illegal Mexican immigrant in the USA. When he is taken by the police to be deported, he says one last goodbye to his landlady. She remarks that he has always been a good tenant, and he seems extremely upset to leave her. He tells her that he does not want to go as he now thinks of the USA as his home.

## **Mrs. O'Brian appears in I See You Never**

Mrs. O'Brian is the landlady in 'I See You Never.' When Mr. Ramirez says goodbye to her she reacts with shock and sadness, as she did not know he was in the country illegally. She realizes that she will miss him, and thinks about the time she visited Mexico, reflecting on how different it is from the USA. She knows there is nothing she can do to help Mr. Ramirez, and she feels very helpless when she realizes that she will never see him again.





## **The Embroiderers appears in Embroidery**

In 'Embroidery' a group of women sit embroidering as they wait for a mysterious experiment to take place. They are worried that the experiment will destroy their world, and they mourn all the little things in life that they will never be able to do anymore. They represent the ordinary people who are affected by big government and military decisions. They are frightened, but they have no say in what is happening and are powerless to stop it.

## **Big Poe appears in The Big Black and White Game**

In the story 'The Big Black and White Game,' Big Poe is an African American who sells popcorn on the grounds of a hotel, near the lake. The local children like to buy popcorn off him and are fond of him. The white men and women of the community, however, disapprove of the black people, thinking them inferior. At the baseball game, Big Poe plays well and is beating the white men. When he sees the negative reactions of the white women watching from the stands, he realizes that this could lead to violence so he begins to lose on purpose. However, when a white man called Jimmie Cosner knocks into him on purpose and injures his foot, then proceeds to insult all the black men, Big Poe is angry. He takes revenge. He deliberately throws the ball at the back of Jimmie's head, knocking him out. He then limps away quickly before the rest of the white men can turn on him.

## **Jimmie Cosner appears in The Big Black and White Game**

In 'The Big Black and White Game' Jimmie Cosner is a white man playing in the baseball game. He resents the fact that the black men are winning, insults them, and boasts that he will beat them. He does not like his pride being wounded, and he injures Big Poe's foot in his desperate attempt to win. He is not at all apologetic for this. Big Poe takes revenge by throwing the ball at the back of Jimmie's head.

## **The White Women at the Ball Game appears in The Big Black and White Game**

In 'The Big Black and White Game' the white women at the baseball game watch from separate bleachers from the black women. They cheer on their men, and gossip about the strange customs of the black people. When they see that the white men are losing, they immediately become very disparaging of the black men, and show embarrassment that their own men are not winning. They clearly think they are superior to the black people and they discourage their children from cheering for Big Poe and the others. When Big Poe throws the ball at Jimmie's head, the women react with extreme fear, even exclaiming that the black people might have razors. They quickly hurry their



children home. The white women's racism appears to be built on a superior attitude as well as fear of the black people, who they think are little more than savages. This was a common attitude at the time in which this story was written, in 1945.

## **Cora appears in The Great Wide World Over There**

Cora is an old woman living in a very small, isolated community in the mountains, in the story 'The Great Wide World Over There.' She has never learned to read or write, and so sending letters is impossible for her. She thinks of letters and writing as an almost magical thing that would allow her to connect with the outside world and so feel less isolated. When her nephew comes to stay she plans to get him to teach her to read and write. However, she becomes too caught up in the excitement of having him write letters for her. She doesn't care what the letters are about, just as long as she is sending and receiving them. They find addresses in a magazine and write to them, usually requesting free samples or information. When the replies come Cora is delighted. They make her feel special, connected and important. She makes a great show of receiving them so that Mrs. Brabbam, her neighbor, will see that she is now connected and intellectual.

Later, Cora realizes that she was being a little vain and self-important. She feels sorry for Mrs. Brabbam, who has been faking receiving letters to try to give her life meaning. Cora asks her nephew to write letters for Mrs. Brabbam too, wanting to bring this gift to someone else. Cora shows here that she can be kind and thoughtful to a woman who is not exactly her friend. Cora thinks of Mrs. Brabbam even when she realizes her own tragedy, that she never did learn to read and write while her nephew was here. Her nephew leaves, and once again Cora is unable to write or read letters. Slowly, the letters stop coming, and Cora is left in the same position as when she started, only a little worse this time because she knows exactly what she is missing.

## **Benjy appears in The Great Wide World Over There**

Benjy is Cora's nephew in 'The Great Wide World Over There.' He comes to visit her and she is excited to see him. He has had an education and so he knows how to read and write. Cora immediately puts him to use sending letters and reading the replies to her. She is having so much fun she forgets to ask him to teach her to read and write too. Benjy seems to have endless patience for his aunt and treats her very kindly. He understands her need to feel connected through letters and never tries to belittle her for being so awed by such a normal thing. However, Benjy has a life of his own to lead, and he cannot stay with them long. At the end of the story he leaves.



## **Mrs. Brabbam appears in The Great Wide World Over There**

Mrs. Brabbam, like Cora, seems to feel isolated in their small community. She elevates herself and makes herself seem important by pretending to receive letters. In reality, she is actually putting old letters that were never even addressed to her into her mailbox, and taking the same ones out each morning. She enjoys showing off to Cora in this way, and making Cora feel small in comparison. When Cora realizes what she has done she enjoys getting her own back by making a big deal out of receiving her own letters. When Mrs. Brabbam sees the mail van arrive, which has never been this way before, she knows that her pretence has been found out. She never comes out of the house in the mornings again and avoids Cora. Cora realizes that she has hurt Mrs. Brabbam by taking away the one thing that gave her a sense of pride. She understands that although Mrs. Brabbam may have been trying to make Cora feel small, this was actually because Mrs. Brabbam is just as lonely as Cora, and feels just as insignificant in the world. By the end of the story, Cora knows that they are both in the same boat.

## **Berty's Wife appears in Powerhouse**

In 'Powerhouse' a woman travels with her husband Berty to visit her dying mother. Berty's wife is a sensible and practical woman who has no time for or interest in religion. She has never had to deal with anything particularly hard in her life before, as she has a loving and healthy family, and a happy life. This is the first time she has had to deal with the fact that people she loves will die. She is overcome by it and unsure how to cope. She is used to being strong and does not like to show how weak and vulnerable she is at the moment, but her husband understands. She sees Benjy's own quiet, confident faith and wishes she could understand religion in the same way. She thinks that it would comfort her, but she is not sure how to approach it. While they stay in the powerhouse overnight, she has a religious experience. She feels as though she has left her body and travelled down the powerlines to see different people and families, some people dying and others being born. From this she sees that all life is connected and in balance. This helps her to feel less alone. She is connected to everyone else, and her problems and fears are the same as countless others'. She realizes that this revelation is a form of faith, and that she has now found religion. It comforts her, and helps her to feel more calm and accepting.

## **Mr. Villanazul appears in En La Noche**

In 'En La Noche' Mr. Villanazul is the man who suggests talking to Mrs. Navarrez and comforting her, in order to get her to be quiet. He may also be suggesting that one of them try to seduce her to take her mind off her absent husband. When the others all refuse to do this, it is left up to Mr. Villanazul. The others all praise him as a hero and a martyr for sacrificing himself to help them all sleep.



## **Mrs. Navarrez appears in En La Noche**

Mrs. Navarrez is a woman living in an apartment building in the story 'En La Noche.' She wails and cries constantly because her husband has left to join the army. The other people in the building have no sympathy for her and are annoyed that she is keeping them awake with her constant grief. In the end, Mr. Villanazul comes to comfort her and perhaps flirt with her a little, and this finally gets her to stop crying. She goes to sleep that night thinking what a nice man Mr. Villanazul is, never suspecting that he had ulterior motives in spending time with her.

## **Smith appears in The Meadow**

Smith is the night watchman of some Hollywood sets in 'The Meadow.' Each night he attempts to rebuild what the wrecking crew tore down the previous day. When he is spotted doing this, the producer, Mr. Douglas, is fetched. Smith explains to Mr. Douglas why the sets are so important to him. For Smith, the sets represent a peaceful and ideal world. The buildings of different countries and cultures lean on each other and are built so closely together that there is no room for prejudice, suspicion and hatred. Everyone is connected and in such close proximity that they are forced to get along. Smith imagines that people live here, and that destroying the sets will destroy these people's world. Smith is obviously a very fanciful and dreamy man, but he is also very passionate about what he believes in. He argues that he is not insane, as insanity is relative anyway and depends on a person's perspective. He sees an important message in the sets and is anxious to get others to hear it. Mr. Douglas recognizes his potential and asks him to help write a new movie based on his idea.

## **Kelly appears in The Meadow**

Kelly is the foreman of the wrecking crew that destroys the Hollywood sets during the day in 'The Meadow.' When he sees Smith rebuilding the sets one night, he is furious and demands to know what Smith is doing. Smith tries to explain, but Kelly is a very practical man who does not understand or care what Smith is trying to say. When Smith begins waving around a hammer, Kelly is concerned that Smith might be dangerous. He goes to get Mr. Douglas, the producer, and leaves the problem to him.

## **Mr. Douglas appears in The Meadow**

Mr. Douglas is the producer who owns the Hollywood sets in 'The Meadow.' At first he comes across as a practical man who thinks in terms of profit rather than art or meaning. However, as Smith shows him around the sets, Mr. Douglas sees Smith's point. He is not as fanciful as Smith, but he has enough imagination to see how the sets could hold an important message. He decides to make a film about it, partly for profit, but also partly to spread this important message. He comes across as just as passionate and thoughtful a man as Smith, but focusing it in a different way. He is



friendly and willing to give Smith the benefit of the doubt when he first speaks to him, and later to give him a chance. However, he is also a business man. He tells Smith that once the film has been made the sets will have to be torn down, as he needs to think about the profits of his company. When he has finished discussing things with Smith, he returns to his party, going back to his big business world and leaving Smith in the Hollywood world of dreams.

## **The Garbage Collector appears in The Garbage Collector**

The garbage collector is the main character of the story 'The Garbage Collector.' He is content and happy with his job, as it is simple and enjoyable. However, when he is informed by the government that he will have to collect the dead bodies in the event of nuclear war, he is suddenly unhappy. He decides to quit his job. This is because the garbage collector cannot cope with the idea of treating human beings like garbage. He stresses about how he would carry out the task, wondering how he would be able to remain practical in the face of so much loss and devastation. In the end, he realizes that the idea is just too horrible for him. He cannot continue with his carefree job every day knowing that it could turn into this horror. He is also worried that if the government is planning for nuclear war, it seems likely that it will happen. He thinks his family would be safer and happier moving away from the city to a farm in the countryside.

## **Marianne appears in The Great Fire**

In 'The Great Fire' Marianne is a young woman who is beginning to explore relationships. She is full of passion and lust, which her uncle mistakes for love. She is young, energetic and full of youthful exuberance, which is a little too much for the older people in the household. Her energy and passion are perceived by them as scorching heat; they want things to be calmer and cooler. Marianne is also quite a wily girl. She knows her uncle would disapprove of her seeing a different boy each night, so she makes up a name and characteristics and pretends that she is seeing this one boy each time she goes out. She is having so much fun that she rarely hears when people speak to her and barely interacts with the household. She spends a lot of time daydreaming, singing and dancing around the house.

## **Marianne's Uncle appears in The Great Fire**

In 'The Great Fire' Marianne's uncle is referred to simply as 'father.' He is far too old for Marianne's youthful passion and disapproves of it, finding it exhausting and annoying. He cannot wait for the day she marries and moves out, so that he can have peace and quiet in the house again. When she goes out each night he encourages her, as he assumes she is seeing the same man and that she will soon marry him. He is shocked when he learns that Marianne is actually seeing a different boy each time, but he does



not criticize or lecture her. He feels a little bewildered and overwhelmed by the whole thing and simply leaves Marianne to her passions without interfering.

## **The Captain of the 'Copa de Oro' appears in The Golden Apples of the Sun**

The captain in 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' is a determined man who is intent on his mission, to fly to the Sun and bring back part of it to Earth. He sees himself as an adventurer and a hero, like Prometheus who stole the fire from the gods in Greek mythology. He sees his mission as important, not because it is really needed, but because it represents humanity's constant quest to push its boundaries and face new challenges. He is determined not to be beaten or to give up, even when things look sketchy. He is brave and keeps a level head in danger. He succeeds in his mission, and immediately begins planning the next challenge. He seems to symbolize adventure and the human spirit. He stands for humanity's ingenuity, constant advancement, and determination against all the odds.

## **Chris appears in R is for Rocket**

Chris is a boy in 'R is For Rocket' who longs to be an astronaut. He watches the rockets taking off and imagines what being in one would be like. He dreams about space. His schoolwork begins to suffer a little as he becomes more obsessed with the idea of a future in space, and more agitated by the fact that this could so easily not come true. His teacher understands this and thinks that Chris would be great for the astronaut program. He makes some calls and arranges it. When Chris finds out that he will be an astronaut after all he is delighted and amazed, but also sad that his friend Ralph will be left behind. He spends one last day playing as a child, understanding that he will now have to grow up and start pursuing his dream, taking responsibility for his own future. This is the time to put childhood and his care-free days behind him. Chris is living the dream that the author and many others of his generation will have had when they saw the world move into the Space Age.

## **Ralph appears in R is for Rocket**

Ralph is Chris' best friend in 'R is for Rocket.' Unlike the other boys, he is just as passionate about space and rockets as Chris is, and he understands his great longing. This is why Chris and Ralph are so close. Ralph is an orphan who has been brought up in a government orphanage. Because of this, he is less likely to be chosen for astronaut training. Chris mentions his name, and the government man promises to do what he can, but the reader never finds out whether Ralph was ever chosen or not. When Chris leaves to go to training school, Ralph moves in with Chris' mother and is adopted by her. Hopefully now Ralph will have a better life, and will be able to help Chris' mother deal with the long absence of her son.





## **The Rocket-Watching Old Man and His Wife appears in The Beginning of the End**

In 'The Beginning of the End' an old man and his wife sit on their front porch to watch a rocket taking off. Their son is onboard. They are very proud of his accomplishment and also a little fearful for his safety. The old man speculates about what space exploration means for humanity, concluding that it will mean mankind has finally found immortality.

## **Fiorello Bodoni appears in The Rocket**

Bodoni is a man who dreams of space flight and rockets in 'The Rocket.' He watches the rockets flying overhead but he knows he is too poor to ever go on one. However, he has saved up enough money for one member of his family to go. Deciding who will have this experience, however, proves impossible. Bodoni loves his family too much to deny any of them the dream. He quickly realizes that choosing one person will tear his family apart, but that denying everyone will lead to them all having a sense of loss for the rest of their lives. Instead, he comes up with a plan to help his family feel as though they have done something amazing. He buys an aluminum mock-up of a rocket and starts working on it. He takes his children onboard, pretending that he has made the rocket flyable. What he has actually done is make fake space-scenery that will move past the windows, to fool his children into thinking they are actually in space. This works, and his family is granted a magical experience that they will remember forever. Bodoni knows he will never experience the reality, but comes to accept that his imagination is good enough, and that he can still have his dreams.

## **Bramante appears in The Rocket**

In 'The Rocket' it is Bodoni's neighbor, Bramante, who first points out that if one person is chosen to ride the rocket, it will tear Bodoni's family apart. Bramante also watches the rockets at night and dreams about them, but he is more bitter than Bodoni about the fact that they are too poor to ever ride in one. He tells Bodoni that rockets are for the rich, as are dreams. Bodoni proves that the poor might not be able to have rockets, but they can still live their dreams.

## **Doug's Father, The Rocket Man appears in The Rocket Man**

In 'The Rocket Man' Doug's father is a rocket pilot. He loves his job and enjoys exploring space, but he also loves his family and hates leaving them. He is torn between these two different lives. When he is in space he wants to return home and when he is home he just wants to go back to space. He is a roving man, always wanting to be travelling somewhere but always restless when he arrives there. He recognizes that this makes him and his family unhappy and he wishes that he could change, but he





cannot. He advises Doug to never become a rocket pilot or he will have the same problem. This time, Doug's father decides that this will be his last trip into space and that next time he will stay with them for good. The reader never finds out whether he would truly keep this promise, as he is killed on his next trip.

## **Doug's Mother appears in The Rocket Man**

Doug's mother, in 'The Rocket Man,' is very unhappy with the situation she lives in. Her husband is gone for months at a time and only comes home briefly between trips. She feels abandoned and alone, and she is terrified for her husband's safety. In order to cope with this, she has convinced herself that her husband is actually dead and that it is only his ghost or his memory that returns to her. This way, if the worst happens, she will be better able to face it. This does not stop her from trying to get him to remain by cooking nice meals, going on trips and involving him in family life. She sometimes allows her resolve to slide, and she stops thinking of him as dead. This is joyful, but also heartbreaking, as she knows he will only leave again. When he does leave, she feels as though he loves his job more than he loves her, which is incredibly hurtful. All of Doug's mother's precautions, in the end, cannot help her when they do receive the terrible news that her husband has died. She is grief stricken, and she can no longer look at the sun, which is what killed him. She will only come out at night and she sleeps through the day, her whole life turned upside down because of her personal tragedy. Doug's mother represents the fact that although space travel is an amazing and wonderful thing for humanity, it is not necessarily always as good on an individual and personal level.

## **Eckels appears in A Sound of Thunder**

In 'A Sound of Thunder' Eckels is the man who has paid for a hunting trip back in time, to kill dinosaurs. He listens to the lecture about altering the past, but when he actually sees the tyrannosaurus rex he is so terrified he falls off the path and squashes a butterfly. He does not mean to be this reckless, and his accident was caused by fear rather than disrespect for Travis and his rules. However, it does cause the future to change dramatically for the worse, which angers Travis. Eckels is punished for his transgression by being made to retrieve the bullets from the dinosaur corpse, which only further traumatizes the man. At the end of the story it is strongly implied that Travis shoots Eckels.

## **Mr. Travis appears in A Sound of Thunder**

Mr. Travis is the leader of the expedition to the past to hunt dinosaurs in 'A Sound of Thunder.' He lectures the hunters about not stepping off the path or changing the past, and is very serious about the possible consequences of their actions. However, he does not seem to stop and assess his own actions. If the time-travel has the potential to be so dangerous, and if they still do not really understand it, perhaps they should simply not be doing it. It is Travis' company who is running the expedition, and he is in charge,



so he must take ultimate responsibility for what happens. He does not, preferring to blame Eckels instead and unleashing all his anger on him. Travis threatens to leave Eckels in the past and then to shoot him. At the end of the story, it is implied that Travis kills Eckels.

## **The Lieutenant appears in The Long Rain**

In 'The Long Rain' the lieutenant and his men are trying to reach one of the warm Sun Domes on Venus. Slowly, the constant rain begins to drive them mad. The lieutenant tries to keep up morale by talking about the comforts they can expect at the Sun Dome. This backfires when they reach the Sun Dome and find it destroyed. The prospect of walking on through the rain to the next one, which might also be abandoned and ruined, is too much for some of them. When one man simply stops and leans his head up, mouth open towards the rain, the lieutenant recognizes that he has gone completely insane and will now just stand here drowning to death. The lieutenant shoots the man to kill him quickly rather than let him suffer like that. They then continue on. In the end there are only two men left, and the lieutenant gives up. He says that he knows he will go insane too, and that he cannot continue on. He will kill himself now before he loses it completely. He is thoughtful enough despite his despair to try to encourage the last man on, and to wait until he has gone out of sight before he shoots himself.

## **The Last Survivor on Venus appears in The Long Rain**

In 'The Long Rain' the last survivor manages to get through the constant rain and the disappointment of the abandoned Sun Dome. He pushes ahead even after the lieutenant dies. He begins to worry that the next Sun Dome will be ruined too, or that he will never reach it. He feels himself beginning to give up and to mad. Finally, he reaches the second Sun Dome and goes inside, where warmth, light, hot chocolate and cozy beds are waiting for him. What he sees seems a little unlikely, and is suspiciously similar to the fantasies of the tired, wet men. This suggests that the last survivor might not have found the second Sun Dome after all, but instead gone mad out in the rain like the rest of the men.

## **Edgar Allen Poe appears in The Exiles**

Edgar Allen Poe is a character in 'The Exiles.' He is an author living on Mars with his literary creations and fellow writers of the supernatural. He is very bitter at having been forced off Earth and angry that people are burning his books. He thinks humans need superstition in their lives and that it is a bad thing that science and advancement are obliterating it. He sees that the people of Earth have even rejected religion and thinks that Earth must be a very depressing place to live because of this. He is proud of his writing and angry that the people of Earth think it is somehow damaging or too silly to be read. He does not want to simply move on to another planet when the Earth men come to Mars, and is determined to fight instead. He seems to be in charge of the resistance.



However, he is not physically present, only an idea, and he is destroyed when the captain and his men burn his last book.

Edgar Allen Poe was a real Victorian author who wrote very famous horror and science fiction stories, and tales of the supernatural.

## **Bierce appears in The Exiles**

Bierce is one of the authors living with his creations and fellow authors on Mars in the story 'The Exiles.' He, like Poe, is determined to fight, but he is destroyed before the spaceship even arrives, when his last book is burned on Earth. Bierce was also a real Victorian writer who told short stories with a dark or supernatural theme.

## **Charles Dickens appears in The Exiles**

Charles Dickens is one of the authors living with his creations on Mars in 'The Exiles.' He has sectioned himself off from the other writers, thinking their stories too horrific and disturbing and not seeing why he is connected to them. He is eating dinner with the Fezziwigs, characters from 'A Christmas Carol,' when Poe tries to recruit him to fight the arriving people from Earth. Dickens refuses to fight. He seems a sad, bitter man who does not care if he is destroyed or not. He does not believe in waging war against the people of Earth just because they have decided to reject their stories. In fact, he seems to partly agree with the Earth people, finding Poe and the other authors distasteful. This is because Dickens wrote more about the real world, about human suffering, about Victorian society and Christian morals. However, some of his stories involve ghosts, which is why Poe thinks he is on Mars with them. In actual fact, it seems that Dickens is on Mars because his works contain Christian ideas as well as the ghosts. Religion has also been rejected in favor of science, and has been condemned as just another superstition. This is why Christmas has been banned and Father Christmas is also wasting away on Mars. If Dickens understood what was really at stake, perhaps he would agree to fight after all.

Charles Dickens was a real Victorian author who wrote 'A Christmas Carol' along with other very famous works.

## **The Book-Burning Ship's Captain appears in The Exiles**

In 'The Exiles,' the captain of the approaching spaceship is on his way to Mars when strange things begin to happen on his ship. Men are dying strangely, or being overcome with fear and superstition. The captain, when he first became aware of strange dreams, brought onboard some old books about the supernatural. When they land on Mars he symbolically burns the books in order to show his men that superstition has no place in their lives, and that there is nothing to fear on Mars. He is scornful of superstition and



places all his trust in science. By burning the books, he defeats Poe and the other authors, finally destroying them.

## **Chatterton appears in Here There be Tygers**

In 'Here There be Tygers' Chatterton is the head of the mining expedition. He is the company's man on the ship, who is there to ensure that planets are drained of all their useful resources and those resources brought back to Earth. He has no respect at all for other worlds and only sees profit in them. He seems to enjoy destroying them, seeing them as hostile creatures that need to be fought and subdued. When they get to the sentient planet, he is eager to get started, but they soon become aware of the planet's strange gifts. While the other men are delighted, Chatterton is suspicious and frightened. He uses the drill on the planet in a conscious effort to hurt it, but the planet simply sinks the drill in a tar pit. Chatterton then decides to destroy the planet and runs back towards the ship and the bomb that they have onboard. The planet kills him before he can reach the ship. It is strongly implied that he is eaten by a tiger.

## **Captain Forester appears in Here There be Tygers**

Captain Forester is the captain of the mining ship in 'Here There be Tygers.' He is more respectful of planets than Chatterton and appreciates their beauty. If it were up to him, they would not strip them of their resources and ruin them in the process. The captain is as delighted as his men to find that the new planet is sentient. He tries to persuade Chatterton to be reasonable. When Chatterton has been killed, the captain insists the rest of the men go back to Earth. The ship and its equipment have been paid for by the company and he would feel very dishonest if they just stayed on the planet and never returned it. However, he is wistful and regretful about having to leave, as he would have enjoyed staying forever on the planet in a peaceful and easy existence.

## **Bob appears in The Strawberry Window**

In 'The Strawberry Window' Bob is a man who has moved to Mars with his family. They are some of the early settlers, and life is not entirely comfortable or familiar yet. Bob's wife is homesick and wants to leave, but Bob is determined to stay, despite also missing Earth. He explains to his family that it is important for humanity to expand and colonize other worlds, so that in the event of a disaster there would always be humans who would survive. He knows that if the early pioneers give up and go home, then other worlds will never be settled. He therefore thinks it is up to them to stick it out and to make it into a new home that they can love. He is very persuasive, and manages to convince his family. However, he does still care about their happiness and goes to great lengths to make them feel more at home. He brings familiar objects from Earth so that they can rebuild a life on Mars that is familiar to them.



## The Two Knights appears in The Dragon

In 'The Dragon' the two knights on the moor discuss the existence of the dragon with fear. When it returns, they charge at it, but are knocked aside and run over. This is because the dragon is really a train and the knights are actually ghosts who do not realize they are dead.

## Sim appears in Frost and Fire

In 'Frost and Fire' Sim is a boy born into a hostile world. Sim's people crash-landed on this planet long ago and were altered by the radiation of the sun, which made them age quicker. Now every human lifespan is only eight days. Sim is aware that he can think and reason straight after being born, but he somehow knows that this is unusual. This is because all his people have racial memory that allows them to remember things that happened to previous generations. Sim grows up very quickly, walking outside in a day and learning about the world. He soon makes an enemy when another child steals his berries. He sees a girl called Lyte and instantly falls in love with her. In three days he is almost grown.

Sim is not willing to sit back and accept his fate. He is horrified at the idea of having only eight days to live, so he is determined to find a solution. He knows one of the old spaceships lies not far away, but it is too far to run during the hour at sunset and sunrise when it is safe to be outside. He seeks out the scientists in his community, who have been ostracized by the others, and pledges his life to trying to help them come up with a solution. He is willing to put aside his own needs and desires in order to help future generations, showing he is very unselfish and heroic.

When Sim hears that some other boys are going to attack a nearby community, because their cliffs are further from the sun and so the people there live eleven days instead of eight, Sim agrees to go to war with them. Sim is not naturally violent and hates the idea of it, but he knows this could be his only chance to reach the ship. If he sets off from the other cliffs, which are slightly closer to the ship, he might have a chance of reaching it. He therefore has a strong interest in helping to capture the cliffs. He goes with the boys and with Lyte, the girl he loves. He tries to fight but his heart is not in it until he sees Lyte hurt. He is wounded and his people are beaten. When they run home, Sim realizes he will not be able to make it on his injured foot. He comes up with a quick plan and tries to shame the cliff dwellers into sending someone to fight him one on one. One man agrees. Eventually, through sheer willpower, Sim wins and secures a place for himself in the cliffs. The next night he sets off for the ship with Lyte. Despite the fact that he could live another three days in these cliffs, he never loses sight of his goal and the need to help all his people.

Sim and Lyte run for the ship but it is obvious they will not make it. When Lyte slows down, Sim stays with her despite the fact that this means he will die. He will not abandon her. He is quick-thinking and remains calm, and when he sees a river he tells Lyte to jump in. The river quickly carries them to the ship, just in time. Inside the ship



Sim and Lyte's aging instantly slows down as they are shut off from the radiation of the sun. They could live full lives inside this ship, but Sim will not even consider letting his people down. He runs back to the caves alongside the ship's laser beam, which provides enough heat for him to run in the night. This is extremely dangerous, but Sim is willing to risk himself for something he sees as more important. He persuades his people to come with him, and together they all let the river carry them to the ship. Together they fix the ship and leave the planet for good. Sim has therefore become the hero and savior of his people.

## **Dark appears in Frost and Fire**

Dark is Sim's sister in 'Frost and Fire.' She looks after him when he is very little, after his parents have died. When he returns after several days on the ship, he is the same age but she is an old woman.

## **Lyte appears in Frost and Fire**

Lyte is a blue-haired girl in 'Frost and Fire' who Sim falls in love with. Sim's enemy, Chion, is a rival for Lyte's affections, but she is only ever interested in Sim. When Sim goes to war she insists on coming with him, and when he runs for the ship she goes too. She is determined to stay with Sim no matter what, and she will not let him down. Like Sim, she is very brave. On the ship she gives in to a moment of selfishness and tries to persuade him not to go back for the others, but she quickly sees his point of view and feels sorry for thinking only of herself.

## **Chion appears in Frost and Fire**

Chion is Sim's enemy in 'Frost and Fire.' He steals berries from Sim when they are children and wants Lyte for himself. He is resentful and jealous of Sim. He insists that Sim come to war with them, and he deliberately injures Sim so that he cannot run back with them. Later, when Sim returns after several days on the ship, Chion is an old man. He tries to persuade the others to kill Sim, but Dark intervenes. Chion dies right in front of Sim's eyes.

## **Uncle Einar appears in Uncle Einar**

Uncle Einar is a winged man who lives in Europe. He flies to America for a family reunion but is stranded there when he hits a tower and injures his wings. He falls in love with the woman who finds him and nurses him back to health, and stays with her. They marry and start a family. Einar loves to fly, but he is afraid that other people would harm him if they saw his wings. He does not dare fly during the day, and cannot fly at night because his night senses were lost in his first injury. He loves his family, but he misses the freedom of flying. This makes him grumpy. However, his children give him the idea he needs to fly without being seen. He attaches one of their kites to his back and with it



he is able to fly without looking suspicious. This makes him happy and very proud of his children.

## **Colonel Freeleigh appears in The Time Machine**

Colonel Freeleigh is an old man in 'The Time Machine' who tells stories to three children called Charlie, Douglas and John. Charlie calls the Colonel a time machine because through his stories he transports the children back in time in their imagination. He has many interesting stories to tell them about his past, and the children are amazed at how much he knows. The Colonel is pleased to be called a time machine, and tells the children to come back any time they want to hear another story.

## **Douglas appears in The Sound of Summer Running**

Douglas is a young boy in 'The Sound of Summer Running' who desperately wants new tennis shoes for the summer. He explains to Mr. Sanderson, the shoe-shop owner, why new tennis shoes are so magical and so full of possibilities. He promises to run errands for Mr. Sanderson if he lets him have the shoes. Mr. Sanderson is enchanted by Douglas' enthusiasm, so he agrees.

## **Mr. Sanderson appears in The Sound of Summer Running**

Mr. Sanderson is the shoe-shop owner in 'The Sound of Summer Running.' He agrees to let Douglas have a new pair of tennis shoes when Douglas promises to run errands for him. Mr. Sanderson is delighted by Douglas' enthusiasm for the shoes and for life, and for a while Douglas helps remind him of his own youth.





## Objects/Places

### The Lighthouse appears in The Fog Horn

In 'The Fog Horn' the narrator and McDunn are working and living in a lighthouse, and this is where the story is set. The lighthouse is very isolated from the rest of civilization, and so it can be read as a symbol of loneliness.

### The Fog Horn appears in The Fog Horn

In 'The Fog Horn,' the lighthouse's fog horn attracts a giant sea-monster. The sound of the fog horn is exactly like the creature's cry, and so it mistakenly thinks the lighthouse is another of its species. McDunn makes up a story about the fog horn having been created to resemble a cry of loneliness and pain. The fog horn is a symbol of loneliness, despair and loss.

### The Sea Monster appears in The Fog Horn

In 'The Fog Horn' a sea monster is attracted to the lighthouse by the sound of the fog horn, which sounds exactly like its own cry. The two men do not know exactly what the sea monster is, but they theorize that it might be a remnant of primeval times, living and sleeping at the bottom of the ocean for thousands of years. McDunn thinks it is the last of its kind left. The monster has a very long neck with a small head on top, and the rest remains below the water. The long, thin neck slightly resembles the lighthouse itself, which is another reason the creature mistakes the lighthouse for one of its own kind.

### Mars appears in The Wilderness, The Strawberry Window and The Exiles

Mars is an important location in these stories, and it seems to represent everything about how mysterious, exciting and frightening space is. In 'The Wilderness' Janice and Leonora are planning to relocate to Mars to live with Janice's fiancé. They are terrified by the prospect of leaving Earth, as to them Mars is completely unfamiliar and strange. Similarly, in 'The Strawberry Window,' Bob's wife hates living on Mars because it is too different from Earth. She wants to go home. In both stories, the women are persuaded to give Mars a chance when familiar objects are brought from Earth. In 'The Strawberry Window' Bob explains that living on Mars is important because it represents the first step in colonizing the galaxy, which will help to ensure humanity's survival. Mars is therefore more important than individual people, in that it is the next stage in exploring and advancing. It is the next frontier, just as the Wild West was the next frontier a long time ago. This comparison is made overtly in 'The Wilderness' when Janice thinks about all the pioneers who have colonized new places in the past.



Mars also appears in 'The Exiles.' This is where Edgar Allen Poe and all the other authors and their creations are living. This is, once again, because Mars represents the next step for humanity. In this story it is a place for the authors to take refuge. Mars is still mysterious and could hold hidden dangers, so superstitions can survive here. When men come to Mars on a rocket, however, the authors will be forced to move on further into space. The implication is that as more of space is discovered and colonized, less of it will be scary or mysterious. Mankind is bringing enlightenment with them as they advance to new frontiers.

Mars is mentioned in other stories about space travel, particularly in 'The Rocket,' in which Bodoni and his family wish they could afford to travel in a rocket to see Mars. Mars is important in all these stories because it is mysterious and exciting. It represents the next step in human advancement, and it represents human endeavor and success.

## **Fingerprints appears in The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl**

In 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl,' William Acton murders Huxley in his house. He then worries about the fingerprints he may have left around the house. He begins to try to wipe every surface he might have touched, but is quickly driven mad. As he becomes more frantic, he sees fingerprints everywhere, even in impossible places. The imaginary fingerprints seem to represent his guilt, only multiplying as he attempts to get rid of them.

## **The Wax Fruit in the Bottom of the Bowl appears in The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl**

In 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl' Acton tries to wipe every surface he may have touched, in order to get rid of incriminating fingerprints. As he begins to go mad with the stress and guilt, he sees fingerprints everywhere. When he wipes the wax fruit right at the bottom of the bowl, which he could not have possibly put fingerprints on, it is obvious that he has lost it completely. The fruit at the bottom of the bowl represents his insanity and obsession, which is why this is also the title of the story.

## **The Great Wall of China appears in The Flying Machine**

In 'The Flying Machine' Emperor Yuan is frightened by the prospect of a flying machine because his enemies could use it to fly armies over the Great Wall of China. The Great Wall of China is a real wall, built across the border of China a long time ago in the reins of various different emperors, to protect China from its enemies.



## **The Flying Machine appears in The Flying Machine**

The Flying Machine in 'The Flying Machine' is a contraption that allows one man to soar in the air. It appears to be a form of hang-glider. Emperor Yuan does not object to the machine itself, which is beautiful, but to what other men might do with it. The Flying Machine represents the idea that inventions themselves are not necessarily evil, but can still be put to evil uses.

## **The Town Walls appears in The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind**

In 'The Golden Kite, the Silver Wind,' the Mandarin (ruler) of a town with a round wall is dismayed to learn that the nearby town has shaped their new wall like a pig. In the story, the two towns are continually changing their walls so that theirs is more dominant than the other. For example, one town shapes theirs as a club, so the other builds theirs like flames to burn the club. The first town then responds by building theirs like a lake, to put out the flames. The competition goes on and on until both towns are almost ruined by the constant wall-building. In the end, they reach an agreement to build the walls as a kite and the wind, which means that both towns will complement and aid each other rather than trying to dominate the other. This can be read as a metaphor for the arms race, in which the walls represent military strength and power.

## **Embroidery appears in Embroidery**

In 'Embroidery' a group of women sit embroidering as they wait for the experiment that might end their world. Embroidery is a decorative craft in which patterns and pictures are created by sewing them on to materials with thread or yarn. In the story, one woman sews a man in her picture and then unpicks the thread to remove him. This foreshadows what happens at the end of the story, when their whole world is unraveled like the thread in the embroidered picture.

## **The Mailbox appears in The Great Wide World Over There**

In 'The Great Wide World Over There' Cora begs her husband Tom to build her a mailbox. She wants to receive letters and knows that she will need a mailbox to do so, but she also wants the prestige that the mailbox will bring. Mrs. Brabbam has a mailbox, which always makes Cora feel jealous, so she thinks that when she has a mailbox of her own she will also feel important and special. The mailbox stands for the pride and social elevation that Cora wants to get out of her letters.



## **Letters appears in The Great Wide World Over There**

In 'The Great Wide World Over There' Cora makes her nephew Benjy write letters for her to various adverts and addresses found in a magazine. Most of these request information or free samples, meaning that Cora will get letters in return. For Cora, the letters are more important than what is actually written in them. They represent the existence of a great, wide world beyond her small, isolated community. By receiving the letters, Cora feels connected with that world and is delighted. When she sees that Mrs. Brabbam has been faking getting letters, she realizes that Mrs. Brabbam is lonely and that letters represent communication and connection to her too. They make her feel special, just as they do for Cora. When Benjy leaves, however, Cora cannot write any more letters, and soon letters stop coming for her too.

## **The Powerhouse appears in Powerhouse**

In 'Powerhouse' a woman is travelling on horseback with her husband to see her dying mother. When a storm hits them, they take shelter for the night in a powerhouse. Here the woman has a religious experience. She feels as though she has separated from her body and is moving along the powerlines to see different people, some dying, some being born. She realizes that all life is connected and balanced, just as all life is connected by the powerlines. This helps her to feel less alone and to believe in some kind of higher power. The powerhouse represents religion, in that it connects people and makes their lives richer, and it represents God, in that it powers all the connections of the world and gives them life and meaning. When they leave in the morning, the woman expresses her wish to come back to the powerhouse again one Sunday. For her, the powerhouse has become a place of worship.

## **Faith appears in Powerhouse, The Golden Apples of the Sun, and Exiles**

'Powerhouse' explores the idea of faith, concluding that it is an opening of one's eyes to realize that no-one is alone in the world. All life is connected and everything is balanced. This makes the woman feel much better and eases her fear and grief about her mother's death. In 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' faith is what keeps mankind reaching for new heights and pushing towards ever greater goals. This is faith in humanity's ability to achieve anything, rather than any specific faith in God. In 'The Exiles' the author explores the idea that faith clashes with science, and that in a world that embraces science completely there would be no room for religion. This is viewed sadly in the story as a great loss for mankind.



## **Hollywood Sets appears in The Meadow**

In 'The Meadow' the night watchman rebuilds the sets that have been knocked down by the wrecking crew during the day. When he is spotted doing this, he explains to the producer that the sets are more than mere sets. They represent the world, but a world that is connected at every level, with buildings from every country and culture leaning on each other. For the night watchman, this holds a profound message about peace and tolerance. The Hollywood world is perfect and peaceful because everyone is forced to get along. The real world needs to be more like this, according to him. In other words, the Hollywood sets represent multiculturalism. The night watchman hopes that a world in which all cultures are mixed together and countries are not so separated will be one without prejudice, suspicion and hatred. The producer sees his point and agrees to make one last film with all the sets, showcasing the night watchman's idea.

## **Garbage Truck appears in The Garbage Collector**

In 'The Garbage Collector' a garbage collector is told that in the event of nuclear war his garbage truck will have to be used to collect the dead bodies. The garbage collector is horrified by this because his truck is made to collect garbage. If he has to pick up the bodies in it, it implies that the bodies are also considered garbage. This implies a lack of concern from the government for the ordinary people of its country. The deaths of millions would be treated as a practical problem rather than a tragedy.

## **The Sun appears in The Golden Apples of the Sun, and The Rocket Man**

In 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' the Sun represents a new challenge. It is fierce, hot and fiery, and very dangerous. It is compared to a lion that humanity wants to get as close as possible to, to steal a prize from its maw. By flying to the Sun and taking part of it back to Earth, the captain and his crew are defying the power of nature and proving mankind's own power and ingenuity. In 'The Rocket Man' the Sun is more sinister. It is the thing that takes the rocket man's life, leaving his family grief-stricken. They are no longer able to look at the Sun or go out during the day. In both stories the Sun is a contradictory object. It is the life-giving force that we cannot exist without, but also a dangerous and menacing thing, a potential challenge and a potential killer. In 'The Strawberry Window' Bob reminds his family that one day the Sun will explode and destroy all life on Earth. In these ways, the Sun represents space itself; it is beautiful and exciting, but also very dangerous and mysterious.



## **The Cup/The Ship appears in The Golden Apples of the Sun**

In 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' the captain's ship has been designed so that it can withstand the incredible temperatures near the sun, so that it can take a piece back to earth. There is a vessel on board (the cup) that comes out of the ship, takes a part of the Sun and encloses it inside, and then retracts into the ship again. This mimics ideas from mythology about stealing fire from the gods. In both, a physical thing and its container represent the new challenge that humanity faces, and its ingenuity in solving the problem.

## **Rockets appears in The Golden Apples of the Sun, R is for Rocket, The End of th**

Rockets are very important in these stories. 'Rocket' is the name given to a craft that is powered by a rocket engine. In these stories, rockets are all space-travelling vehicles. In most of the stories the rocket is an object of fascination, wonder, and aspiration. Rockets represent human ingenuity and advancement, and a great hope for the future of mankind. Rockets also represent dreams and their ability to come true. In 'R is for Rocket' the main character, Chris, dreams of being an astronaut and likes to watch the rockets launch. For him, rockets mean excitement, exploration and success. A similar feeling is given by 'The End of the Beginning' in which rockets represent great hope for the future. In 'The Rocket' the rocket represents wonder, excitement and exploration, but it is inaccessible to Bodoni and his family. Only the very rich can really enjoy rockets. However, this does not stop Bodoni from purchasing one and using it to dream. In 'The Rocket Man' rockets are slightly more sinister. They are objects of fascination and excitement, but are also extremely dangerous. They pull the rocket man away from his family, and eventually lead to his death.

## **Space Exploration and Colonization appears in The Wilderness, The Golden Apples of the Sun, R is for Rocke**

In 1957 Russia sent the first satellite into space, and in 1961 the first human went to space. In 1969 the USA sent the first human to walk on the moon. This marked the beginning of the Space Age. The stories in this collection, many written before the dawn of the Space Age, reflect the dreams of people at the time, and anticipation of the coming changes. For the author, space exploration represents hope, advancement, wonder and opportunity. In 'The Golden Apples of the Sun,' 'R is for Rocket,' 'The End of the Beginning,' 'The Rocket' and 'The Strawberry Window,' space exploration is portrayed as something to aspire to, something amazing and wonderful. These stories celebrate the success and ingenuity of mankind, as well as our ability to reach for our dreams. Space exploration is also shown as being the only way to ensure mankind has



a future, by spreading out among the stars. This will make humanity immortal. 'The Rocket Man' differs from these in showing a slightly more sinister view of space travel, exploring its dangers as well as its downsides for the families left behind.

## **The Time Machine appears in A Sound of Thunder**

In 'A Sound of Thunder' a time machine is used to travel back in time to hunt dinosaurs. The machine itself is not given much attention in the story, as the author is more interested in the effects of time travel than the mechanics of how it would be achieved. In the story, it is ironic that such an incredible and world-changing invention is being used for such a trivial and questionable pursuit. The author seems to be commenting that human nature never changes and inventions will always be put to the most profitable use, and that companies will put earning before safety. In 'The Time Machine' the author plays on the reader's expectations by introducing a time machine and then revealing that it is actually just an old man. Through his stories about the past he is able to bring the past alive for the young boys. This reminds the reader that there is magic in the real world too if they look for it.

## **The Butterfly Effect appears in A Sound of Thunder**

In 'A Sound of Thunder' Mr. Travis warns Eckels not to step off the path or shoot any other animals in the past. He explains that if Eckels is not careful, he could change the past and then set off a chain of events that will lead to significant changes in the future. This idea that one tiny event could set off a series of events that result in a much bigger and seemingly unrelated catastrophe is known as the 'Butterfly Effect.' This theory may have taken its name from this story, as Eckels changes the future for the worse by accidentally stepping on a butterfly.

## **Venus appears in The Long Rain**

'The Long Rain' is set on the planet Venus. It is shown as being a planet where it is constantly dusk and it never stops raining. Plants and mosses grow extremely quickly in these conditions. There are hostile native creatures, but other than this and the madness of the constant rain, the planet does not seem to be particularly dangerous.

## **Sun Dome appears in The Long Rain**

In 'The Long Rain' there are buildings on Venus called Sun Domes. These are buildings that are sheltered from the constant rain and kept warm by an artificial sun inside. The men talk about what they will find there, and hope for snug beds and steaming mugs of hot chocolate. They find one Sun Dome, but it has been attacked and destroyed by the native Venusians. At the end of the story the last survivor finds another Sun Dome, where he enjoys warmth and hot chocolate. However, it is unclear whether the man has really reached this safety, or whether he is just imagining it.





## **The Living Planet appears in Here There be Tygers**

In 'Here There be Tygers' the mining expedition lands on a new planet and soon discovers that it is 'alive.' It appears to be sentient and telepathic, and can understand their wishes. It will give them whatever they desire, as long as this does not harm the planet itself. It reacts to Chatterton's hatred with a warning, then protects itself by killing Chatterton. It also reacts angrily when the men leave, making it very clear with natural disasters and wild animals that they will never be welcome there again. The men compare the planet to a woman because of its beauty as well as its mood swings.

## **The 'Dragon' appears in The Dragon**

In 'The Dragon' two knights face a fearsome dragon, only to be knocked aside and run over. The 'dragon' is actually revealed to be a train running through the moorland, and the knights are actually ghosts who do not realize they are dead.

## **The Planet too Close to the Sun appears in Frost and Fire**

In 'Frost and Fire' Sim and his people live on a planet that is very close to the sun. The days are lethally hot and the nights are lethally cold. The people are forced to shelter in caves to survive and can only emerge for one hour at sunset and dawn. The radiation from the sun has also sped up metabolism and the aging process, meaning that the people are born, grow up, mature, live, age and die, all in only eight days.

## **Tennis Shoes appears in The Sound of Summer Running**

In 'The Sound of Summer Running' a boy called Douglas longs for new tennis shoes. For him, new tennis shoes are like the new summer; they represent youth, hope and possibilities. Douglas manages to persuade Mr. Sanderson, the shoe-shop owner, to let him have the sneakers in return for running errands for him.



# Themes

## Science and Invention

Science and invention is a very important theme in this short story collection. A lot of the author's stories are science fiction, and many explore the positive and negative effects of science on humans. This is explored on both a small personal scale, and on the much larger scale of what scientific advancement means for mankind.

The most obvious form of scientific advancement seen in the stories is space flight. The author experienced the shift into the Space Age, when in 1957 Russia sent the first satellite into space, in 1961 the first human, and in 1969 the USA sent the first human to walk on the moon. These advancements must have seemed incredible to the author, and it is obvious that they affected him profoundly. In many of his stories he explores the wonder and awe attached to rockets and space travel, as well as ideas about how space flight could affect mankind and the world for the better. When Neil Armstrong first stepped on the moon he declared that it was 'one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.' The author expresses similar sentiments in these stories, years before Neil Armstrong actually made this famous speech. Ray Bradbury expresses a sense of deep longing for the Space Age in these stories, as well as great faith that humanity would one day break this final barrier. He was correct, and he did live to see the Space Age arrive, as he writes in his foreword to 'R is for Rocket.'

It is this sense of wonder and excitement that comes out most vividly in his stories about rockets and space. In 'R is for Rocket,' 'The Rocket' and 'The End of the Beginning,' the author shows space travel as something to aspire to. It is semi-magical, amazing and awe-inspiring. In 'R is for Rocket' and 'The Rocket' space travel is the stuff of people's dreams, and these dreams are finally coming true. 'The End of the Beginning' and 'The Strawberry Window' emphasize what a wonderful thing space travel is for humanity as a whole. It means that mankind will spread out and colonize other worlds, and so will find a form of immortality in space. If a disaster wipes out Earth, humanity will not be destroyed, as it will have seeded so many other worlds. Space travel is therefore not just incredible, exciting and dream-fulfilling, it is also incredibly important. These stories are all very positive about space flight and how mankind will be bettered by it.

The author does also explore a more sinister side to space travel, in the individual tragedies and fears it can create. In 'The Rocket Man' Doug's father leaves his family lonely and sad when he departs on his rocket, and he feels torn by his great adventure in space and his family waiting at home for him. In the end, he is killed on his rocket and his family's life is turned upside down forever. This points out the dangers of space flight, and how it might adversely affect individuals left behind. In 'The Rocket' space travel is realistically shown to be very expensive. Only the rich can afford it, and for everyone else there are only broken dreams. In 'The Wilderness' and 'The Strawberry Window' the women are unhappy about moving to Mars and are homesick for Earth. However, all these individual worries and tragedies pale in comparison to the benefits of



space travel for mankind. As Bob in 'The Strawberry Window' points out, they owe it to humanity to make their life on Mars work, as colonization of other planets is so important. In both 'The Strawberry Window' and 'The Wilderness' the shock of moving to a new planet is easily overcome by bringing familiar things to make building a new life there more comfortable. In both, success and happiness just require a new way of thinking about their life and their new home.

While Ray Bradbury paints space travel in a very positive light, he is less sure about other forms of invention and advancement. In 'The Flying Machine' Emperor Yuan kills the inventor of a flying machine, because he does not want other people to become aware of it. He is not afraid of the invention itself, or of the man who designed it, but of what another person might do with it. The flying machine could be used by an enemy to fly over the Great Wall of China, starting war and causing mass suffering and death. In other words, inventions themselves are not evil, but the uses people put them to can be. This story asks the reader what the right approach to such potential devastating inventions should be. The Emperor kills the inventor, but this seems a little extreme and is no guarantee that the invention will not be designed by someone else later. The invention itself could be banned, but this will not stop enemy nations from building it. The Emperor could let the invention be created and simply allow things to happen as they will, but this could risk war and devastation. These are the problems that arise from any new invention and these questions are still relevant today. Nuclear power can be used to create nuclear weapons, electricity can be used to enhance lives or to kill, and so on. This shows the very sinister side of invention and science, and forces the reader to question whether invention is always a good thing.

Another story takes this idea a little further. In 'Embroidery' a science experiment literally unravels and destroys the world. The experiment itself is never explained, but the reader must question what scientific discovery could ever justify the risk of causing such a disastrous event. The story is seen from the point of view of ordinary women at their embroidery, emphasizing the fact that it is normal people who suffer when science and invention go wrong, and that they are powerless to stop it. This idea is touched on again in 'The Garbage Collector' in which a garbage collector faces the horrific possibility of having to collect all the dead bodies following nuclear war. He is appalled, but powerless to prevent it. Again, this reminds the reader of the terrible uses to which inventions can be put. In 'A Sound of Thunder,' disastrous results are once again achieved through misuse of science. A time machine is invented, but without proper regulations it seems to have been put to commercial use. A man steps on a butterfly and changes the future for the worse. The man in charge of the expedition admits that he has no idea what could happen as a result of changing the past, and yet they have gone ahead with this misguided hunting trip anyway. The author's message is clear. When people do not consider the consequences of their actions, science can go badly wrong.

'The Murderer' and 'The Exiles' look at science and invention from a slightly different perspective. In 'The Murderer' invention for invention's sake is shown as being a nuisance. Science has been used to make everyday tasks more convenient, but this has been taken to the extreme. The main character cannot stand the constant noise



and communication, and eventually begins to destroy gadgets in a mad fit of rage. This story quite accurately predicts some of the inventions that we treat as commonplace today, such as the internet, smart phones, and social media. With this story the author questions whether such advances are really beneficial to humans at all, or if they are a step too far. It would seem that the author only considers inventions that promote human advancement, such as space travel, to be worthy, and disapproves of those that are only used for convenience or trivial things. Perhaps the author's ideal compromise is represented by the perfect planet in 'Here There be Tygers,' in which the world is beautiful, free from inventions of 'convenience,' free from war and prejudice, and still very natural and unspoilt. Space travel is used to reach this planet, but once here, science and invention are not needed.

In 'The Exiles' science itself is attacked, as it is shown as being an all-consuming thing that is naturally antagonistic to superstition. This is generally a good thing, as superstition keeps mankind in the Dark Ages, but at the same time a little superstition and fantasy are a good thing. They allow mankind to dream. In the story, science has wiped away all fantastical stories, all tales of the supernatural, and even religion. Edgar Allen Poe remarks that the world must be a very dull place without Christmas. Conversely, in 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' the author seems to be giving the opposite message, that mankind's constant advancement is a wonderful thing because it pushes away superstition and keeps mankind reaching for new challenges. The message seems to be that human ingenuity and determination are a wonderful thing, but that science should not completely take over from dreaming and a sense of wonder.

## War

The author had very recently lived through the Second World War when writing most of these stories. He also lived in the USA during the Cold War, a time in which the country was constantly terrified of nuclear attack. As such, war, its causes, and its effect on normal people, is a theme found in many of these stories.

In 'Frost and Fire' the people in the story grow up, mature, live their lives and die, all in the space of eight days. Their lives are quick, but contain all the essential elements that make a person human. The people eat, socialize, love, reproduce, hope, and tell each other stories. Some turn to science to solve their problems, and others turn to war. Despite only having a lifespan of eight days, people still fight each other. In other words, war seems to be an inevitable part of being human.

In other stories, the author asks what it is that causes war. The answer seems to consist of three main things; hatred and suspicion of others, the need to be superior to or more powerful than others, and certain inventions that make war possible. The first and second of these reasons is explored in 'The Big Black and White Game,' which deals with prejudice and suspicion. In this story, the white people disapprove of the black people and think they are superior to them. They cannot stand the idea that the black men could beat the white men at baseball. When the white men feel as though they are being embarrassed by this, one of them reacts badly, hurting Big Poe, a black man, in



his desperate attempt to win. Big Poe retaliates by knocking out the white man with a ball. This creates pandemonium as the friendly ball game suddenly becomes something darker and more violent. The white women reveal their thinly veiled suspicion and fear when they scream and take their children home. One of them even suggests that the black people have razors. The attempt to mix and socialize in friendship has failed, and now the two groups are separated again. This story shows that prejudice and suspicion will lead to violence, even in the most innocent or peaceful situation. It also demonstrates how differences and separation lead to negative feelings, as well as how difficult it is to heal breaches such as these. Finally, it demonstrates that prejudice and hatred are passed down from one generation to another as children are taught suspicion and fear. It is attitudes like this that lead to war. In this story, as in 'Frost and Fire', violence seems inevitable.

In 'The Meadow' this problem is dealt with further and some suggestions offered as to how to solve it. Smith tells Mr. Douglas that the Hollywood sets represent an ideal world. All the different buildings of different countries and cultures are packed in close together, literally leaning on each other. The people of this world would be so close to each other that it would be impossible to fight. Suspicion and hatred would fade away as everyone saw how everyone else lived, and everyone was a part of everyone else's life. In this world, people would see similarities and connections instead of differences, such as the Catholic Church set which becomes an Eastern Orthodox set behind, connecting the two churches rather than pitting them against each other. This story seems to be arguing for multiculturalism and claiming that this might be the answer to preventing war.

The third reason for war, that certain inventions make it possible, is explored in 'The Flying Machine' in which Emperor Yuan kills the inventor of a flying machine. He explains that the invention could be put to evil use by his enemies, who might use it to fly soldiers over the Great Wall of China and start a war. For him, preventing this invention from being made at all costs is the answer to preventing conflict. In 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind,' the role of military strength in creating war and suffering is explored with an analogy. In the story, both cities want to outdo the other city by building a better and more dominant wall. When one is shaped like an orange, the other shapes theirs as a pig that will eat the orange. The first then becomes a club to beat the pig, and the other responds with a fire to burn the club. This continues until both cities are ruined and starving as all the citizens spend all their time rebuilding walls. This can be seen as an analogy for the arms race. If one country feels weaker and inferior to another, they will try to raise their military strength in order to be more dominant. The other country may then raise their own military strength, and this will keep going. If one country has guns, another will want better guns, and the first will then want even better guns. This continues with bombs, then nuclear weapons, and so on. This is one of the main reasons that new inventions in warfare are constantly being made. As shown in the story, this can only lead to ruin and unhappiness, as no country will ever be the superior one for long. It is a never-ending and deadly game. In the story, a solution is reached by each city building their walls in a way that complements the other. One is a kite, held aloft by the wind, and the other the wind, beautified by the kite. In other words,



the cities gain happiness by working together instead of trying to compete. This is an idealistic solution to the problem of the arms race, but perhaps not a very realistic one.

Finally, the author explores the effect of war on normal people. In 'The Garbage Collector' the garbage collector cannot cope with the idea of having to pick up dead bodies in his truck following a nuclear strike. He is horrified by the idea of treating human beings like garbage, and he worries about how he would handle them respectfully, and where they would go. He is also terrified by the prospect of the nuclear war itself, deciding instead to quit his job and move to a farm in the country where he hopes his family will be safe. His horror at the suggestion of picking up bodies in his van emphasizes governments' reactions to their people's suffering. To the government, politics and global conflicts are more important than ordinary lives, but to the ordinary people living them, they are not. To the government, dead people might be a practical problem to deal with, like garbage, but the garbage collector cannot bear to think of them in this way. With this story, the author neatly sums up the horrors and inhumanity of war, as well as its ultimate pointlessness for the normal people who are the ones that always suffer in the end.

## Faith

Faith is a recurring theme in the stories in this collection. The author explores where faith comes from, what it is, and the different kinds of faith that people can have. He also looks at the inevitable conflict between faith and science.

The most overt exploration of faith and religion comes in the story 'Powerhouse' in which a woman has a religious experience in a powerhouse. She is travelling to visit her dying mother, and she reflects on the fact that she has never needed religion until now. This suggests that faith is something that helps people through difficult times. It is seen here as something comforting and calming, something that the woman desperately wants but does not know how to find. She asks why she has not caught religion from her husband, and he answers that it is not a catching thing. In other words, faith is something that must be discovered by each individual for themselves, and it might mean something a little different for each person. In the powerhouse, the woman does finally get to experience what faith means to her. She feels as though she has left her body and travelled along the powerlines, visiting other people and seeing those dying as well as new life being born. She realizes that all life is connected and in a constant balance, and that when seen from above this is beautiful. As an individual she felt scared and alone, but as a member of humanity as a whole she will never be alone, and her problems are shared by all. This helps her to feel calmer and more accepting of her situation. For her, faith is simply a matter of opening her eyes and seeing the connections in the world rather than shutting everyone else out. These revelations make her happier, and she decides that she will come back to the powerhouse later as a place of worship.

Although the woman never mentions God, the powerhouse can be seen as a metaphor for religion and for God. It is a central place from which all the connections are powered.





This is where life is created and passed through the world, and it is the one unifying thing that connects all people together. It enriches lives and makes people feel better. This is where the balance is maintained and controlled. Like God, it is the source of power, and it is the place where the woman finally finds her faith.

If faith is a connection between people, then denying this connection and shutting others out should cause great unhappiness. This idea is explored a little in 'En La Noche' in which the inhabitants of a tenement block are so reluctant to give comfort to one of their own neighbors who is suffering. Instead they complain about their own problems and refuse to help. When Mr. Villanazul points out that the solution might be simply to listen to the woman and give her some human kindness, the others are surprised at the revelation, but they still do not want to help. In the end, Mr. Villanazul is forced to go, and the woman soon calms down. In this story, human connection and care for a neighbor is shown to be a simple solution to making everyone happier, and yet this is treated as a great sacrifice. The author is pointing out how easy it is to be kind to each other, but how few people in life actually are.

In 'The Strawberry Window,' 'The End of the Beginning' and 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' a different kind of faith is shown. This is the idea that through colonization and space travel, humans will finally gain a form of immortality. This is not immortality through religion but through ensuring that the human race never dies out. Once again, it is centrally important to this idea to think of all human life as connected and as one. By advancing mankind as a whole, human life will become immortal. This is shown as a wonderful thing. These stories focus less on God and personal faith, and more on a sense of the lasting power of humanity. The faith expressed in these stories is for humanity itself, for its ingenuity and its survival against all odds. This is shown most clearly in the story 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' in which the captain is compared to Prometheus, a figure from mythology who stole fire from the gods for mankind. Prometheus was punished for his hubris in defying the gods. In this story, the captain is not punished and he is gloriously successful. Rather than condemned for pride, this Prometheus figure is praised for his defiance. The story celebrates the human spirit and its determination to always overcome each new challenge. Mankind always wants answers, and will always strive towards the divine. In this story, the author says that this is what makes mankind so amazing.

In 'The Exiles' the author explores the conflict of science and superstition. Science is always pushing aside superstition, just as in 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' the captain defied superstition and vindicated Prometheus. In 'The Exiles' mankind has embraced science completely and has achieved wonderful things. Now humans are on their way to Mars. However, waiting on Mars are all the cast aside stories and superstitions, and even religion, which has been rejected as just another superstition. The Earth men remorselessly set about destroying these last remnants too. The author is critical of science here, showing that when it conflicts too strongly with faith and fantasy, it is not necessarily a good thing. Humanity needs dreams and wonder, and it needs faith and religion. As Edgar Allen Poe points out, a world without Christmas must be very depressing. This story clearly shows that science can go too far. Advancement is a



great thing, but mankind must always hold on to its faith and its dreams, as this is part of what makes us human.



# Style

## Point of View

Most of the stories in this collection are told from third person perspective, from the point of view of one main character. Occasionally stories have a more omniscient narrator, with the author as voice-of-god rather than telling the story from any particular character's point of view. This allows the narrator to focus on the feelings of characters where appropriate, particularly in stories about human emotions and suffering, like 'The Fog Horn,' 'The April Witch' and 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl.' It also allows him to draw back when appropriate, to look at the story from a more distant perspective, which encourages the reader to address the story with their own views and questions. This is particularly effective in stories like 'The Flying Machine' and 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind' in which ethical dilemmas are raised.

There are only two stories told from first person perspective, 'The Big Black and White Game' and 'The Rocket Man.' Both are from the point of view of a young boy who is looking at the world through the eyes of youthful innocence. In 'The Big Black and White Game,' seeing things from a child's point of view demonstrates how meaningless and destructive the racism and prejudice in the community can be. The little boy likes Big Poe and does not understand why the black people are being treated differently. Racism is something that people are taught, and this story shows how such negative feelings can be passed down from parents to children. The narrator does not understand all this, but already his mother is showing him that the black men are something to be afraid of. In 'The Rocket Man,' the little boy's point of view helps the reader to see how much being a rocket pilot has destroyed a man's family. The boy witnesses both parents' pain but is powerless to do anything about it. The choice of narrator makes the story even more poignant and sad.

## Setting

Most of the stories are set either in the author's present day (our past) or in the semi-near future. The author imagines that space travel will come soon and that new advancements and technology will have been invented by this point, making colonization of new worlds possible. He seems to be imagining this in the near future, but he never attaches any dates to his stories. This allows the reader to put their own interpretation on events, and so imagine the events as taking place just a little ahead of whatever time the stories are being read in. Stories set in this near future in which space travel and colonization of other worlds is possible, are 'The Wilderness,' 'Embroidery,' 'R is for Rocket,' 'The End of the Beginning,' 'The Rocket,' 'The Rocket Man,' 'The Long Rain,' 'The Exiles,' and 'The Strawberry Window.' 'The Golden Apples of the Sun,' 'Here There be Tygers,' 'A Sound of Thunder,' and 'Frost and Fire' seem to be set further in the future with even more advanced technology.



Of these stories, 'The Wilderness,' 'The Strawberry Window,' and 'The Exiles' are set on Mars. This is portrayed as a very different world, dry and barren, but habitable. In 'The Wilderness' and 'The Strawberry Window' it is a pioneer world on which people have just begun to start building homes and new communities. It is shown as being the staging ground for humanity's colonization of other worlds. As such, it is something of a testing ground too, which is why Bob in 'The Strawberry Window' thinks it is so important that their colony succeeds. In 'The Exiles,' men have only just travelled to Mars, and in the process have pushed aside superstition forever. Mars is a symbol of mystery and adventure in these stories. It is both frightening and exciting. It is seen, particularly in 'The Wilderness,' as the next frontier for humans to conquer.

Other futuristic stories are set in space or on other worlds, such as 'The Long Rain' which is set on Venus. Venus is shown as a dreary planet where it is constantly dusk and never stops raining. The only really dangerous thing on the planet seems to be the native creatures, who do not directly threaten the men in the story. Instead the men are driven mad by the incessant rain. The author manages to make a very mundane thing seem incredibly threatening and sinister. In 'Frost and Fire' a similar effects is achieved with sunshine. The planet is so close to the sun that going outside would burn the people to death. Night time is so cold that it would freeze a person to death. The only hospitable periods are one hour at dawn and dusk. The sun's radiation also causes the aging process to speed up, dramatically reducing people's lives to only eight days. In this story, it is the sun, something that normally gives life, light and warmth to the world, that has become menacing. These settings demonstrate that space is a very mysterious place that might have very unexpected dangers. The living planet in 'Here There be Tygers' can literally grant any wish instantly, even allowing the men to fly, and wine to come out of the rivers. This takes the idea of the mystery of space to the extreme, pointing out that anything is possible in the vastness of the universe.

Most of the other stories in the collection are set in the USA during the time in which the author was writing, from the early 40s to the mid 50s. This was a period that had just come out of the Second World War and was in the middle of a Cold War. People had already been affected by the previous war, and now were terrified that nuclear war could begin at any moment. At the same time, this was a period of advancement and hope for a better future. If the world could manage to avoid nuclear war, then there were promising events on the horizon. USA and Russia began a 'Space Race' to be the first to send a man into space, and then the first to send a man to the moon. For people like the author, who dreamed of spaceships and far off worlds, this seemed like dreams were beginning to come true. At this time, some things were very different from today. Women were still treated as inferior despite campaigning for equality. Their role was still considered to be in the home and men were still the primary breadwinners. Racism was very common and African Americans were considered to be inferior to white men. They were discriminated against and had much less rights.

All of these aspects of society come through in the stories in this book. In 'The Big Black and White Game' the author explores racism and how it manifests in a quiet, ordinary community. In 'The Wilderness' and 'Embroidery' the women's role is clearly in the home, and women are shown following their men rather than pioneering themselves.



Women are conspicuously absent from any of the spaceships or space-themed stories. They do not have important jobs or dream of being astronauts. In 'The Murderer' women are portrayed as having a domestic role while their husbands go to work. Stories such as 'R is for Rocket' and 'The End of the Beginning' show the author's dreams of the arrival of the Space Age, which must have been common dreams at the time. The story 'The Garbage Collector' taps into people's anxieties about nuclear war, exploring how this might affect ordinary people and how governments have a tendency to think of normal people as expendable. Most of the stories set in the author's present take place in small towns in the Midwest, which reflect the author's own experience of growing up in the USA.

Finally, there are some historical and fantastical settings. 'The April Witch' could be set in our world or a fantasy one, but it is one in which magic exists. Both 'The Flying Machine' and 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind' seem to be set in China, though the latter has more of a mythical atmosphere. 'A Sound of Thunder' begins in the present but travels to the past where the characters hunt dinosaurs.

## Language and Meaning

The author tends to use quite simple language, enhancing the atmosphere with physical descriptions of the setting intended to appeal to all the senses. In 'The Fog Horn,' for example, the loneliness and isolated feel are communicated through the sound of the mournful fog horn, the feel of the cold, wet weather, the smell and sound of the sea, and the bleak visuals. In 'The April Witch,' Cecy's budding feelings are complemented by descriptions of the springtime surroundings bursting into life.

The author is skilled at using language to manipulate the reader's emotions, sometimes unexpectedly. In 'The Long Rain' the most mundane things such as rain and dusk are made to seem very sinister by the language used to describe them. The author draws the reader's attention to the rain over and over again, putting emphasis on how it never stops, and how it bangs incessantly on the men's heads. By the end of the story the reader is very tense and anxious for the remaining man to reach safety. At this point the reader has also been pummeled over and over by the descriptions of the constant rain, and when the Sun Dome is described it feels like a relief. In 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl' the author again uses repetition to great effect. By repeating the descriptions of certain actions over and over, the author shows how agitated and paranoid Acton has become. The pacing of the story becomes more frantic and the sentences speed up. The fingerprints are compared to spider webs and are mentioned several times, helping the reader to get inside Acton's head and understand that he is slowly being driven mad.

Some stories have a much more wistful and nostalgic atmosphere, and these tend to be the stories about rockets and space, or those in which the author is tapping into his own youth. In 'R is for Rocket' Chris' longing to be an astronaut is described in detail, and the reader really gets a sense of how important this is for him. In 'The Sound of Summer Running' Douglas' passion for the tennis shoes reflects his passion for life, his youthful enthusiasm, and the possibilities that open again with each new summer. These stories



are much slower paced than others, lingering in the past and drawing out each memory to fully appreciate it. They give the impression of long, lazy summer days and a carefree childhood. These stories are best described as 'dreamy.' In strong contrast to these is 'Frost and Fire,' which has a very fast pace and rushes the reader through its eight days like lightning. This emphasizes the fast, frenzied lives of the inhabitants of that planet, and how time is running out for Sim. This heightens the tension and the urgency of the story.

The author likes to use metaphor and analogy in his stories to open up larger questions and issues for the reader. In this way, 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind' can be read as an analogy for the arms race, and 'The Flying Machine' forces the reader to think about whether inventions can be evil. Both this story and 'A Sound of Thunder' caution the reader to always consider the consequences of their actions. 'Powerhouse' explores issues of religion and faith, and 'The Golden Apples of the Sun' celebrates mankind's ingenuity. 'The Exiles' can be read on several levels, as an analogy for the conflict of science and superstition, as a defense of supernatural and science fiction stories in general, or as a criticism of censorship and book burning.

## Structure

Most of Ray Bradbury's stories in this collection are extremely short. Even the longer stories, such as 'Frost and Fire' are still very short when compared to the short stories of many other writers. Ray Bradbury prefers to paint a scene with minimal words and to linger on human emotion rather than on elaborate plots or explanations of technology. Most of the stories do not have a traditional resolution, leaving the reader to imagine what happens next or to infer it from what happens in the story. This is particularly effective when the author is opening up questions for the reader, as it lets them decide what they think about the story for themselves.

The stories have been arranged in this collection in an order that allows them to be compared and contrasted, and in ways that complement each other. 'The Fog Horn,' which deals with loneliness, isolation and lost love, and is set in November, is followed by 'The April Witch,' a story about first love, youth and springtime. These provide a nice contrast. 'The Flying Machine,' 'The Murderer' and 'The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind' are all concerned with inventions and enhancements hindering human life rather than helping it. 'The Great Wide World Over There,' 'Powerhouse' and 'En La Noche' are all concerned with human connection and feeling part of something greater, and the loneliness and desperation that can come when a person feels separated and alone. In the second half of the book, similar stories about space, hope for the future, and the consequences of space travel are all grouped together. Towards the end of the collection the stories grow more wistful and more grounded in real life, showing the reader that there is magic in the ordinary world too, and so ending the book on a hopeful, slightly nostalgic note.



## Quotes

""That's life for you," said McDunn. "Someone always waiting for someone who never comes home. Always someone loving some thing more than that thing loves them. And after a while you want to destroy whatever that thing is, so it can't hurt you no more.""  
The Fog Horn, p10

"For the first time they knew their town was beautiful, and the lonely lights and the ancient bricks beautiful, and they both felt their eyes grow large with the beauty of this feast they were giving themselves." The Wilderness, p30

" "But there are times," said the Emperor, more sadly still, "when one must lose a little beauty if one is to keep what little beauty one already has." - Emperor Yuan. The Flying Machine, p51

"Some other man, who, seeing you, will build a thing of bright papers and bamboo like this. But the other man will have an evil face and an evil heart, and the beauty will be gone. It is this man I fear." - Emperor Yuan. The Flying Machine, p51

"What is the life of one man against those of a million others? I must take solace from that thought." - Emperor Yuan. The Flying Machine, p51

"The wind will beautify the kite and carry it to wondrous heights. And the kite will break the sameness of the wind's existence and give it purpose and meaning. One without the other is nothing. Together, all will be beauty and co-operation and a long and enduring life." - The Mandarin's Daughter. The Golden Kite, The Silver Wind, p66

""I believe," said the first lady, "that our souls are in our hands. For we do everything to the world with our hands. Sometimes I think we don't use our hands half enough; it's certain we don't use our heads."" Embroidery, p73

""Everything but religion," she said. "I never caught that from you." "It's not a catching thing," he said. "Someday you just relax. And there it is."" Powerhouse, p107-8

"All rooms were dark until light came. And here she was, in all of them at once. And she was not alone. Her grief was but one part of a vast grief, her fear only one of countless others." Powerhouse, p109

"Loneliness was a shutting of the eyes. Faith was a simple opening." Powerhouse, p110

"We are not a studio! We are people and must be given attention as people." - Ricardo. Sun and Shadow, p119

"That's what they all say. They got wives and kids. And they go on, pulling apart, tearing down, killing. They had orders! Somebody told them. They had to do it!" - Smith talking to Kelly. The Meadow, p128



"Yes, Mr. Douglas, insanity is relative. It depends on who has who locked in what cage."  
- Smith. The Meadow, p131

"There is no reason, really, except the pride and vanity of little insect men hoping to sting the lion and escape the maw. My God, we'll say, we did it!" - The Captain. The Golden Apples of the Sun, p158

"It's the rich who have dreams and rockets!" - Bramante. The Rocket, p189

"Every time I'm out there I think, 'If I ever get back to Earth I'll stay there; I'll never go out again.' But I go out, and I guess I'll always go out." - Doug's father. The Rocket Man, p206

"Step on a mouse and you leave your print, like a Grand Canyon, across Eternity. Queen Elizabeth might never be born, Washington might not cross the Delaware, there might never be a United States at all. So be careful." - Mr. Travis. A Sound of Thunder, p215

"Did we have a fair trial before a company of literary critics? No! Our books were plucked up by neat, sterile, surgeon's pliers, and flung into vats, to boil, to be killed of all their mortuary germs." - Edgar Allen Poe. The Exiles, p245

"About their necks, on gold chains, scalpels. Upon their heads, a diadem of microscopes. In their holy fingers, steaming incense urns which in reality are only germicidal ovens for steaming out superstition. The names of Poe, Bierce, Hawthorne, Blackwood - blasphemy to their clean lips." - Edgar Allen Poe. The Exiles, p246

"But if there's any way to get hold of that immortality men are always talking about, this is the way - spread out - seed the universe. Then you got a harvest against crop failures anywhere down the line." - Bob. The Strawberry Window, p274

"War's never a winning thing, Charlie. You just lose all the time, and the one who loses last asks for terms." - Colonel Freeleigh. The Time Machine, p339





## Topics for Discussion

Discuss the theme of science and invention in these stories. Are inventions always positive things? Is Science always good? Which advancements are seen as being beneficial for humanity and which are not? Why do you think this is?

Why does the author choose to set three of his stories on Mars? What does Mars represent and how is it different from other settings in the collection?

How does the author explore the Space Age, space travel and everything that it implies? What atmosphere and feelings does he create? What does space flight mean for mankind? What do you think the author's opinion of space travel is?

Discuss the theme of faith in these stories. What is faith and who has it? What different kinds of faith are there? What are the obstacles to faith? Is faith a good thing?

How does the author explore issues of racism, prejudice and hatred in these stories? Does he suggest any methods for combating this?

Discuss the author's exploration of the theme of war in these stories. What does the author have to say about the causes of war and how it can be prevented? How does war affect ordinary people?

How does the author portray youth and childhood in these stories? How is being young different from being an adult? What challenges does growing up provide?

How does the author use metaphor and analogy effectively in these stories? What messages is he trying to convey?

What is your favorite story in the collection and why?

Do you think any of these stories are outdated or no longer relevant to our society? In what ways do they fail for a modern audience? How has the time in which the author lived affected his writing? Do these stories still have anything to offer a modern reader?