Dandelion Wine Study Guide

Dandelion Wine by Ray Bradbury

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Author Biography

Ray Bradbury was born to Leonard Spaulding and Esther Moberg Bradbury on August 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois. He spent his formative childhood years in Waukegan, the town that became the basis for "Green Town," and the setting for several of his stories and novels.

In 1926, the family moved to Tucson, Arizona, where Bradbury's younger sister was born. She died of pneumonia in 1927, and the family returned to Waukegan. The family again moved to Tucson in 1932, only to return in 1933; their last move, however, was to Los Angeles in 1934, where Bradbury has lived ever since.

Bradbury fell in love with Hollywood during his teenage years, and spent much of his time trying to get a glimpse of his favorite screen and radio stars at their studios. He handed George Burns a script for his show every week until finally Burns used a small bit to close his show.

After graduation from high school, Bradbury pursued his writing, selling newspapers on street corners to support himself through 1942. His first professional publication, "Pendulum," appeared in *Super Science Stories* in 1941, the same year that he attended renowned science fiction writer Robert Heinlein's writing classes. By 1945, Bradbury was writing full time and placing stories in both science fiction "pulp" magazines as well as such mainstream publications as *McCall's*. During the late 1940s, he also began earning the kind of critical acclaim that would continue throughout his career. His stories regularly appeared in *The Best American Short Stories*, and he won an O. Henry award in 1947.

In the 1950s, Bradbury became a major American writer. In addition to publishing collections of short stories including *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950 and *The Illustrated Man* in 1951, he also brought his novel *Fahrenheit 451* to print in 1953. During this time, Bradbury continued to work as a dramatic writer as well, composing radio adaptations of his stories, television dramas, and the screenplay for John Huston's *Moby Dick*. In 1957, Bradbury finally published a novel he had been working on for nearly a decade, *Dandelion Wine*, a book that was later adapted as a full-length musical drama. The book drew heavily on Bradbury's own childhood in Waukegan, Illinois.

Over the next four decades, Bradbury continued to work prolifically, producing many collections of stories, screenplays, teleplays, voiceover narrations for documentaries and movies, essays, nonfiction books, speeches, lyrics, and poems. For his effort, he won awards, including (among many others) the Aviation Space Writers Association Award (1968, 1979); the Lifetime Achievement Award from the World Fantasy Association (1977); the Jules Verne Award (1984); Body of Work Award from PEN (1985); National Book Foundation's 2000 Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters; and the National Medal of the Arts (2004). The Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America named him a Grand Master. Bradbury also has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Although Bradbury suffered a stroke in 1999, he continued to write and publish work, including *One More for the Road* (2002), a collection of short stories; several collections of poetry; and the 2003 novel, *Let's All Kill Constance*.

Plot Summary

Sections 1—10

Because *Dandelion Wine* is what is sometimes called a composite novel or short story cycle, the plot does not follow the kind of development one would expect from a novel although the same characters continue to interact throughout the book.

Nevertheless, it is possible to break the book up into sections for discussion. In this first section, Douglas Spaulding opens the book by standing in the cupola of his grandparent's home and willing Green Town to life: "He folded his arms and smiled a magician's smile. Yes, sir, he thought, everyone jumps, everyone runs when I yell. It'll be a fine season. He gave the town a last snap of his fingers. Doors slammed open; people stepped out. Summer 1928 began."

In the next chapter, Mr. Spaulding takes his sons Tom and Douglas to the forest to gather wild berries. While there, Doug knows that something big is about to happen. Suddenly, he is overwhelmed by the sense of being alive and of being part of all that is alive. Later that day, the boys help their grandfather make the first batch of dandelion wine for the summer, the first ritual of summer.

In the second ritual of the summer, Doug obtains his new tennis shoes, shoes that he is convinced will allow him to run faster and farther than any shoes he has ever had before. He then opens a tablet and writes in it with his Ticonderoga pencil the first entry of his diary of the summer. He tells Tom that he intends to divide the diary into two parts: Rites and Ceremonies, listing things that they do every summer; and Discoveries and Revelations, a place where he will record what he thinks about the rites and ceremonies. Doug's writing in the notebook becomes an important structural device for the novel.

Sections 11—19

The story then turns to Leo Auffman, who decides to invent a Happiness Machine. However, although the machine shows everyone wonderful things, it brings pain and sadness to anyone who tries it. It eventually goes up in flames; but Leo finally understands that his family is the real Happiness Machine.

Next, the children visit old Mrs. Bentley. They refuse to believe that she was ever young, even when she shows them items from her youth. Eventually the children persuade her that they are right and that she has always been old. Doug later writes about this, and he and Tom decide that old people never were children.

Charlie Woodman then tells the boys that he has found a Time Machine in the person of Colonel Freeleigh, an old man who tells the boys many, many stories about the past.

Doug, writing about this later, calls it "far traveling." Later, Doug returns to talk to Colonel Freeleigh and finds him dead.

Sections 20—30

Things begin changing for Doug and Green Town about section 20. Mr. Tridden, the trolley driver, tells everyone that the trolley is being decommissioned. He takes everyone for one last ride. In addition, Doug learns that his best friend, John Huff, is moving to Milwaukee. Doug wants Tom to promise never to leave. He is worried about God, and the future. Doug has learned the difference between playing dead and being dead, and it frightens him.

In section 28, Bill Forrester and Doug meet Miss Helen Loomis at the ice cream parlor. Bill Forrester accepts an invitation to go to the old woman's house for tea, and consequently begins spending everyday with her. It is clear that the two love each other very much; but for their ages, there would have been a romance. Helen dies later in August; however, there is an indication that perhaps during the next go around of life, the two might be in the right place at the right time and not miss each other.

Around this time, the Lonely One is reintroduced into the story. A frightening, mysterious figure who haunts the ravine, the Lonely One has been killing women all summer. In section 29, Lavinia Nebbs and her friends cut through the ravine on their way to the theater and stumble on the body of another woman. Doug is in the ravine with them, and is badly shaken. Lavinia insists on going to the theater anyway. Walking home alone through the ravine, she is frightened by footsteps behind her. She races to her home, locks the door behind her, and breathes a sigh of relief. It is then that she realizes that the Lonely One is in the house with her.

The next day the boys tell the story of Lavinia killing the man with her sewing scissors. They decide that this cannot really be the Lonely One. Doug remains shaken, and suddenly realizes that he, too, will die.

Sections 31—40

Doug and Tom next visit the arcade only to discover that the Tarot Witch, a wax figure who tells fortunes, is not working. Doug becomes convinced that she is being held captive and needs to be freed so that she can tell them the truth about the future. He steals her with the help of Tom and Father, but she does not reveal anything but a blank card. Shortly after this, the town is caught in an extreme heat wave, and Doug falls deathly ill. All are afraid that they will lose Doug.

Late one night, the junkman, Mr. Jonas, visits Doug while he is sleeping under the apple tree in the yard where his family has left him in the hope that it will cool him off. Mr. Jonas gives Doug magic cool air to breathe, and this cures him. The next day, rain falls on the town and Doug begins to write again.

In a final story, Aunt Rose visits Grandma and Grandfather's boarding house. She decides to set Grandma's kitchen straight, and in so doing, destroys Grandma's ability to cook. Doug sneaks into the kitchen late at night and undoes the damage. The boarders send Aunt Rose away.

In the final section, summer is over, and the porch furniture comes back into the house. Doug, standing in the cupola once more, commands the town to go to sleep.

Pages 1 - 11

Pages 1 - 11 Summary

Twelve year-old Douglas Spaulding is jubilant, as he awakes on the first day of summer in 1928. From his grandparents' three-story boarding house, where he spends one night a week, he watches the citizens of Green Town, Illinois stir to life at dusk as if timed to his imaginary orchestration. He knows this day will be special, when he passes through a spider web and breaks it with his face. Later, Father takes Douglas and his younger brother Tom to a forest to collect fox grapes and wild strawberries. While Father speaks in mysterious ways about the wonders of nature, Douglas feels as if something is approaching them. It's not a dangerous Thing, but certainly immense and strange. Contemplating such thoughts, Tom jumps on Douglas for a fight, which is when the Thing finally encroaches. It is Douglas' realization that he is truly, fantastically alive. He relishes in this new understanding, using all of his senses to appreciate his surroundings, from gently blowing winds to the grass under his back and the weight of the tin buckets loaded with fruit. It is a feeling that he wants to hold onto forever.

Pages 1 - 11 Analysis

The opening of the novel sets the overall tone of enchanting childhood summers. Douglas Spaulding is a spirited boy, who thrives on the freedom of the great outdoors, Green Town's mysteries, and little details most adults would neglect to notice. To Douglas, Green Town is a magical world with the security of predictable adult patterns and unknown adventures promised by a long summer of unbridled fun. When venturing through the woods with Tom and Father, Douglas doesn't understand Father's unique descriptions about the wonders of nature. For example, Father claims that a sandwich outdoors tastes different than indoors, with flavors of mint and pinesap that "does wonders for the appetite." To Douglas, the sandwich tastes the same as usual. The large, mysterious Thing he feels following them seems attracted to Tom. Tom is much like his father already, full of zest and curiosity. Once Douglas discovers that the Thing is his realization that he is truly alive, he believes that Father and Tom already knew this great secret and brought here this day to be let in on it.

Pages 12 - 25

Pages 12 - 25 Summary

Later that day, Douglas and Tom collect dandelions for their Grandfather in their first rite of summer. Grandfather pays his grandsons ten cents a bag to collect the flowers that he will press with fresh rainwater into dandelion wine. This distilled brew will serve the family well in winter when, with the fragrance of summer, it is dished out as medication for fevers and chills. With this first rite complete, Douglas joins his friends John Huff and Charlie Woodman at the ravine that divides Green Town in two. Douglas questions why his friends seem more alive than he, despite his new sense of being. The answer, he concludes, is in his old shoes. That night, after going to a movie with his family, Douglas tries to convince Father to buy him a pair of Litefoot sneakers. Father has many reasons why his old sneakers are still functional. Douglas knows that only new sneakers will let him jump over fences, trees, and houses, and with his new found knowledge, he needs them more than ever. Douglas loses the argument and must find another way to get his desired Litefoot sneakers.

The next day, Douglas goes to the shoe store with his loose change. He is a dollar short for the purchase. He convinces the storeowner, Mr. Sanderson, to try on a pair of the same shoes and feel their magic. Douglas offers to run errands for Mr. Sanderson to make up the missing dollar. Feeling an old boyhood yearning, Mr. Sanderson agrees and gives Douglas his desired sneakers.

Pages 12 - 25 Analysis

Douglas is thrilled, as he picks dandelions and scoops fresh rainwater out of a barrel, familiar labors undertaken with new zest while perceiving every detail. However, when he joins his friends in the ravine that afternoon, his sense of being becomes lackluster, as he can't keep up with them on the trails. He knows that to keep his sense of aliveness, he must get new sneakers. Compared to his old 'dead' ones, they represent what he feels inside - a rebirth, endless possibilities, and no place too high to jump. By getting the shoe storeowner to literally step into the same style of shoe and revisit his own boyhood memories, Douglas is able to accomplish his goal.

Pages 26 - 36

Pages 26 - 36 Summary

Tom's habit of keeping statistics gives Douglas an idea. He decides to keep track of this special summer in two parts. One part will include rituals like making dandelion wine or picking fox grapes, and the other part will be for new experiences. He titles the two parts Rites and Ceremonies and New Discoveries and Revelations. On the third day of summer he performs a rite by helping Grandfather remount the porch swing. It is a night like many summer nights of the past, with men and boys gathered on the porches, women working and chatting in the kitchens and familiar neighborhood sounds. Later, Douglas and Tom join Grandfather for a nightly stroll. In front of the cigar shop they meet up with Leo Auffmann, an avid inventor, town jeweler and movie projectionist. Leo complains that man and machine are not meant to be together, because machines end up being used for destructive purposes. Douglas suggests that he build a Happiness Machine.

Pages 26 - 36 Analysis

By dividing his summer, Douglas comes up with a new revelation - adults and children are completely different species. At the same time, he finds contentment in the adults' presence and chatter on Grandfather's porch. Although he doesn't listen to the banter, he considers the comfortably predictable adult behavior a worthwhile ritual. After Grandfather, Douglas, and Tom meet Leo Auffmann on their night stroll, the novel momentarily shifts to Leo's point of view. Leo is having difficulty resolving the dynamics between man and machine. After Douglas gives Leo the idea of inventing a Happiness Machine, Leo imagines how such a contraption could ease the human experience.

Pages 37 - 47

Pages 37 - 47 Summary

On the way home from the night stroll, Douglas joins his friends to explore the ravine while Grandfather takes Tom home. Later, Tom sits by the front door screen as Mother irons clothes behind him. Father is at a lodge meeting until late. Hot from ironing, Mother sends Tom to get a pint of ice cream at Mrs. Singer's store, the last shop still open at 9:00pm. Once Tom returns, he and Mother share some ice cream. Mother starts to worry, because Douglas has not returned home from the ravine. She goes out on the porch and calls his name, time and again, but there is no answer. Tom grows anxious as well. They walk to the ravine to search for him. Mother mentions that the Lonely One is around again. Tom thinks about the death he has experienced in his life - the death of his great grandfather and his baby sister, and the specter of death, the Lonely One, who has killed three women in as many years. As they near the ravine, Tom is gripped by fear. He now sees Mother's vulnerability where before he only saw strength. Mother calls out for Douglas in the eerie silence. Only after some time does Douglas finally respond. With his safe return, the fear dissipates. Back home, Tom is relieved to smell his brother's sweat beside him in bed though knows that he and his mother will never forget the fear they just experienced. He tells Douglas that the ravine at night does not belong in Leo Auffmann's Happiness Machine.

Late that night, Leo sits on the porch with his wife, Lena. He thinks of all the elements of happiness to include in his contraption. Lena is obviously displeased with the idea and says it is not something they need. Leo explains that sometimes one must build things for others.

Pages 37 - 47 Analysis

This section focuses on themes of fear and death, including Tom's fears about his brother's absence, the Lonely One, and the dark, scary ravine compound into a sense of utter dread. He feels helpless and comes to realize that strong protectors, like his mother, are also vulnerable. He imagines the Lonely One attacking her and realizes that all of the securities that adults have put into place, such as law enforcement, couldn't help at that very moment. From Leo's point of view, the Happiness Machine will be the very thing that will quell the demons of human existence.

Pages 48 - 63

Pages 48 - 63 Summary

Grandfather relishes the first time he wakes to the sound of a lawn mower, as it represents the onset of the season. However, he discovers that one of his lodgers, a young newspaper reporter named Bill Forrester, plans to replace his old grass with a type that does not need mowing. Grandfather has a fit, because he can't imagine a summer without the sights, sounds, and smells of this ritual. He argues his case with Bill, explaining that doing things to save time detracts from the small things that make life pleasurable. Bill relents and agrees to throw the new grass pads in the ravine.

Meanwhile, Leo and Lena Auffmann argue about the Happiness Machine. Lena tells Leo that instead of trying to figure out what life is about, to accept it without question or it will lead to demise. Leo is not swayed and spends the next ten days, drained and half starved, working on his Happiness Machine in the garage. He finally enters his kitchen and announces that the project has been completed. Lena is furious at the emotional turmoil the machine has cost her family. To the point of exhaustion, Leo faints. When he wakes, Lena is still angry, as she thinks the machine will not provide happiness in any true sense. Later, Leo discovers that his son Saul has tried the machine. Saul is very upset, which results in Lena packing up her possessions to leave Leo. Before she leaves, she decides to try the Happiness Machine to find out why it made Saul so upset. The family gathers in the garage and watches as Lena climbs inside the large orange box. She experiences visions of Europe, the smell of perfume, and the sound of beautiful music. Nonetheless, like Saul, she is reduced to tears. She explains that her sadness comes from visions she knows she will never actually experience and that the box is merely a tempting escape from reality.

Leo tries the Happiness Machine himself, but it suddenly catches on fire. He manages to get out with the help of his children. Lena makes sure it is burning well before sending Saul to get the fire department. The whole town comes to watch, including Grandfather, Douglas and Tom. Leo deduces he has been a fool and shows the Spauldings what happiness is really about. They look through his living room window to witness the warmth of his family in their evening routine, playing games and preparing dinner.

Pages 48 - 63 Analysis

Themes of man and nature are explored in this section. Grandfather hates the new grass Bill Forrester plans to lay on his lawn, even though it will save time. To Grandfather, the act of mowing grass is an important ritual that holds a deep meaning. His joy is in relishing the sensations of the labor, not the end result. Leo tampers with the natural order of his life and family, when he creates the Happiness Machine. Instead

of bringing happiness, it results in conflict and sadness. He comes to an understanding that he already organically has what he was trying to achieve mechanically.

Pages 64 - 79

Pages 64 - 79 Summary

Douglas and Tom take part in another summer ritual. They help Mother, Grandmother, and Great Grandmother beat the rugs clean. Tom's imagination is apparent, as he describes the past and future stories he claims to see in the rug patterns. Toward the middle of summer, Helen Bentley, an elderly widow, purchases ice cream for a group of children. The children, Tom, Alice, and Jane, join Mrs. Bentley on her porch to enjoy their cold sweets. They are intrigued by her age but don't believe that she was ever a young girl or that she has a first name. She explains that old people have first names, even if they are rarely used, and that she was indeed once young and pretty. The children still don't believe her. Mrs. Bentley is upset, feeling her childhood has been stolen away.

Later, Mrs. Bentley waits on the porch for the children. When they finally run by she calls them to her porch. She shows them items from her childhood, including a hairpiece, a ring, jackstones, and a postal picture of herself when she was seven. Alice and Jane don't believe the photo is actually her but of some other little girl. Mrs. Bentley is exasperated, as she can't really prove she was young. Her husband is dead, and as she is relatively new to the town, no one remembers her, except as an old lady. The girls run away with her possessions, claiming she stole them. That evening, Mrs. Bentley imagines what her deceased husband would say. She recalls a conversation in which he told her items from the past were like magic tricks and should be discarded. He believed in the present and possessions from the past could not change the present so what was the point of keeping them? Mrs. Bentley resolves to just be herself in the present, not someone from the past. When Jane and Alice show up the next morning, she gives them more possessions. In exchange the girls help her build a large bonfire to burn the rest of her keepsakes. From that day forward, Mrs. Bentley, Tom and the girls become friends. Mrs. Bentley admits that she has never been anything but is 72 years old and has no first name. Later, as Tom and Douglas sum up major events of their summer thus far, Tom has a new addition. He says that old people were never children.

Pages 64 - 79 Analysis

To Douglas and Tom, the threads, textures, and stains on the rugs represent their life experiences in Green Town. For example, a catsup stain is the Happiness Machine burning up and a black spot is the ravine at night. This is very different from the three adult women, who simply see the stains, worn threads, and foot treads for what they physically are. The divide between young and old is also apparent between the children and Helen Bentley. The children can't conceive that an old person might have once been young and the elderly widow feels cheated because of this. However, Helen comes to the conclusion that like the children, her life is in the present and as a result, they are able to become friends.

Pages 80 - 96

Pages 80 - 96 Summary

Charlie Woodman and John Huff take Douglas to see a Time Machine. The machine, it turns out, is elderly Colonel Freeleigh. Through his stories, he takes the boys back in time from watching buffalo thunder across the plains to civil war battles. That night Douglas scribbles the encounter in his tablet. He tells Tom that he plans to visit Colonel Freeleigh as often as he can take to be able to see things he would never otherwise experience. He wants to be able to share similar 'far-traveling' experiences to children, when he is old.

Elderly sisters Miss Fern and Miss Roberta hide in their attic, distressed. When they bought the Green Machine, an electric two-seater on wheels, it seemed like a good idea. They could silently roll around town at 15mph and would often let boys like Douglas hitch a ride. However, today, a terrible accident has happened. While on a leisurely ride Mr. Quartermain had appeared out of nowhere. Not only did the Green Machine run over him, but the sisters left his lifeless body on the ground in a panic. Hours later they decide to return downstairs and act normal as their younger brother Frank is due to come home. They agree to never ride the Green Machine again and disconnect the battery. When Frank arrives, he tells the sisters that Douglas had seen what had happened and not to worry as everything was alright. He asks the sisters what this means, but they quickly brush off the remark.

Pages 80 - 96 Analysis

This section also addresses themes of aging. In the boys' eyes, Colonel Freeleigh is a living time machine, because he can carry them into past adventures through his real life stories. Although not a mechanical contraption, he is a real machine in their minds and hearts. Colonel Freeleigh is close to death and the memories are all he has to stir any sense of life. The children help evoke the memories with their spirited enthusiasm. The Green Machine offers Miss Fern and Miss Roberta ease and convenience. The day they run a man over, they view the machine a something rather sinister and doubt their ability to control it because of their age.

Pages 97 - 112

Pages 97 - 112 Summary

Mr. Tridden, conductor of Green Town's orange trolley, offers the children a free ride. This will be the trolley's last ride as the next day it will be replaced by a bus. Mr. Tridden will be retiring like the trolley he's run for so many years. Douglas is upset. The Green Machine no longer runs, his sneakers are starting to wear, and now the trolley with its unique sounds and smells will be replaced by a modern vehicle with no bells, brass handles, or fold out steps. Mr. Tridden has a surprise. He jumps the trolley off the tracks and takes the children to a lake. He brings out picnic baskets, and they sit near a deteriorating bandstand to eat. He tells them stories about the old days, when the trolley rode to the bandstand for summer picnics. After the leisurely picnic is over and the children return to town, Tom and Douglas feel discouraged as they get off the trolley and see it disappear around a corner. Douglas knows that the tracks will inevitably get covered over by tar one day and no one will ever know a trolley existed in Green Town.

Douglas goes hiking with his lifelong friend John Huff. To Douglas, John is the only god in Green Town. He is able to find trails, leap heights, hit baseballs, and swim better than any other boy. Douglas is shocked when John announces he is moving to Milwaukee that night, because his father has a new job there. Douglas and John have a profound conversation about memories and how quickly those are drowned out by other events. John wants Douglas to remember him and tests him on the color of his eyes. Douglas thinks they're brown and is amazed to discover they are actually green. They play the rest of the afternoon though time passes too quickly. Douglas convinces John to ditch the other boys so they can spend some time alone in a haystack doing nothing, which should make time pass slower. Although Douglas sets his watch back to try to avoid the inevitable, he knows it will happen anyway. The rest of the day is spent with the whole gang. At seven o'clock, John announces he can only play one more game of hide-and-seek and statues. Once they freeze after the count, Douglas approaches John and gets every detail of his physical being. Likewise, John does the same with Douglas in the game. However, this time, John takes off and doesn't return. Douglas' emotions turn to rage, not understanding the tumultuous emotions of change. Later Douglas asks his brother never to leave his side, even if it means his younger brother has to hang out with his gang. Douglas even suggests they own a gold mine together, when they're old in their forties and sporting beards. Tom reassures Douglas that he will always be there.

Pages 97 - 112 Analysis

Change is difficult and often incomprehensible for children. When the trolley conductor takes the children on a last ride before modern buses take over, Douglas can't imagine a life without the magic smells, feels, and sounds of the trolley. Similarly, when his lifelong friend John Huff announces he is moving away that night, it shatters Douglas' foundation. Even with his newfound feelings of aliveness, he realizes he can't control

destiny and change, and it makes him mad. No matter how hard he tries to cling to a moment, like the feel of brass in his hands in the trolley or noticing the color of his best friend's eyes for the first time, those memories eventually fade. His only comfort is in the reassurance Tom offers that they will always be together, no matter what happens.

Pages 113 - 128

Pages 113 - 128 Summary

Elmira Brown has cut her finger just before her husband, postman Sam Brown, enters the kitchen. It is not an unusual event, as she is extremely accident-prone. Sam has some shocking news. Clara Goodwater, president of the Honeysuckle Ladies Lodge, has ordered books on witchcraft. Elmira marches down the street, grabbing Tom on the way, and confronts Clara. Elmira has always coveted the position of lodge president and blames Clara's witchcraft for her failed attempts at running. She also blames Clara for all the accidents and dropped items she has experienced over the years. Clara toys with Elmira but pushed to a point of irritation, she pretends she is a witch and will cast terrible spells.

The next day is election day at the lodge. Elmira has prepared a special brew to thwart any spells Clara might cast. She forces Tom to go with her, as he represents innocence, and she also carries her Bible. Once the election starts, Clara makes a speech, but the concoction she brewed is making her dizzy and nauseous. Again, not a single person votes for Elmira. Defeated and sick, she and Tom make haste to the ladies' room, but she makes a wrong turn and careens down a flight of forty steps, vomiting all the way. The lodge members are in shock, especially Clara, who feels responsible for the accident. She rushes to Elmira's side and promises she will only use her witchcraft for good if Elmira lives and that she will be voted in as president. Amazingly, Elmira has not broken a single bone, despite all her bruises. Tom fills Douglas in on the events. Douglas is awestruck that magic and witchcraft are taking place in Green Town

Pages 113 - 128 Analysis

Elmira Brown and Clara Goodwater have been enemies for years. Elmira desperately wants to be president of the Honeysuckle Ladies Lodge, but Clara is voted into that position every single year. Instead of realizing any faults of her own, such as a wicked, gossipy tongue, she blames Clara's practice of witchcraft on all of her problems. In her eyes, they represent good and evil and the only way she will ever win the lodge election is to thwart Clara's evil. Her efforts in this regard nearly end in disaster. However, her fall down a flight of stairs proves fateful. Clara's guilt and Elmira's accident result in a resolve between them and Clara, at last, becomes president of the lodge.

Pages 129 - 139

Pages 129 - 139 Summary

Seriously ill, Colonel Freeleigh makes a call to Mexico City. His friend Jorge puts the telephone by an open window. Colonel Freeleigh thrills over the sounds of the city and imagines walking through it like he did as a young man. However, the nurse interrupts and takes the phone away. She tells him it will be gone for good tomorrow as it is making him too excited. The Colonel is devastated. The nurse puts him to bed and hides his wheelchair to prevent him from making another call. Once she is gone, the Colonel staggers to the phone and collapses to the floor with it. He convinces Jorge to hold the receiver out the window one more time. Later, Douglas and his friends enter the house. They creep into the room and see the Colonel on the floor. Douglas takes the phone from the old man's fingers and listens. The only sound he hears is the closing of a window. The next day Douglas and Tom play on a canon in front of the courthouse. Douglas expresses that with Colonel Freeleigh's death, so died the buffalo and Lincoln and General Lee and all the people and creatures the Colonel used to speak about.

Douglas helps grandfather store the dated dandelion bottles from June and July. The bottles remind him of the different days of summer, such as when John Huff moved away or Colonel Freeleigh died. He wonders if memories can travel like sound. He becomes despondent pondering the loss of friends and the death of machines in Green Town. Grandfather will have nothing to do with the doom and gloom talk and sends Douglas to run around the house, do push ups, and climb trees.

Pages 129 - 139 Analysis

Like many other parts of the novel, there are themes of death, change, and transition. Colonel Freeleigh knows he is close to death, when he makes the calls to Mexico City. After being wheelchair ridden for ten years, he is desperate to hear sounds of a moving metropolis to feel more alive. The sounds also take him back to young adulthood, when he literally walked through the Mexican streets. His memory and imagination help him see, taste, and feel the sounds he hears over the phone. The Colonel's stories were also worlds outside of Green Town which Douglas could vividly imagine. Douglas interprets the Colonel's death as the death of a glorious history from someone, who actually lived it. The passage of time and changes of life are also evident, when Douglas helps Grandfather store the dandelion wine. While the color of the wine looks the same in every bottle, each day was uniquely eventful for Douglas, both good and bad.

Pages 140 - 154

Pages 140 - 154 Summary

Douglas joins Bill Forrester for an ice cream at the drugstore. When Bill orders an old-fashioned lime-vanilla ice, it catches the attention of 95-year-old Helen Loomis. She invites Bill and Douglas to sit with her. Bill tells her he was once in love with her. Helen invites him over for tea the next day to continue the conversation. Over the course of weeks, they have tea in her garden every afternoon. Helen shares stories from her worldly travels so that Bill can experience all the places he dreams of going to one day. They develop an intense kinship. When questioned, Bill finally tells Helen of the time he fell in love with her. He found a photo of when she was twenty in a paper and used to carry it around in his pocket, at first thinking she was still a young woman. She tells Bill that he reminds her of a man she loved long ago. One day, toward the end of August, Helen tells Bill that she will be dead soon. He will know this is the case, when he receives a blue envelope with a letter from her inside. She tells him that he should not live to be old or the imbalance of men and women connecting at the wrong age and time will continue. A few days later, he receives the letter. He walks with Douglas to the ice cream store and opens it. All he can repeat is "a dish of lime-vanilla ice."

Pages 140 - 154 Analysis

This section explores how like minds can connect regardless of age. Had Bill and Helen been born at different times so they were the same age, they would have undoubtedly fallen in love. Regardless, a strong kinship builds between them because of this rare connection. Their relationship, old and young, parallels the relationships between the children and Mrs. Bentley or the boys and Colonel Freeleigh

Pages 155 - 179

Pages 155 - 179 Summary

Douglas, Tom and Charlie discuss Bill and Helen. Douglas wonders what ever happened to happy endings. Tom, the optimist, each day has a happy ending, when he goes to bed. Douglas is more skeptical. The three boys enter the ice house to suck on cold icicles. Charlie says this is where the Lonely One grew up, which made him so cold. Tom screams as Charlie slips an ice chip down his back to scare him. The next night, the Lonely One makes his mark on Green Town. Thirty-three-year-old spinster, Lavinia Nebbs, and her friend Francine have to cut through the ravine on the way to the movie theater. There they discover the body of the Lonely One's last victim. The police arrive and the ladies continue, encountering Douglas on the way. He seems distracted, but they scare him into running home. Francine is crying and terrified, but Lavinia is determined that they should proceed with the evening as planned. They meet their friend Helen and stop by the drugstore for some candy. The man at the counter feels terrible, because a stranger had asked about Lavinia earlier that day, and he's worried it could be the Lonely One. Lavinia's friends get scared for her, but she brushes it off.

During the movie, Helen makes a big scene thinking the Lonely One is behind them, but it turns out to be the theater manager's brother from out of town. Lavinia walks her friends home then heads through the ravine alone. She is scared but a little excited that some form of adventure has crossed her path. The sense of adventure soon turns to utter dread, as she hears footsteps behind her. She methodically counts down the steps left to make it home. As total fear seizes her, she runs as fast as she can, until she is inside her house and the door is securely locked. Then, from behind, she hears the sound of a man clearing his throat.

The next day Douglas, Tom, and Charlie are complaining. Lavinia Nebbs has ruined the end of summer by killing the Lonely One with a handy pair of sewing scissors. Tom rescues the day. They all agree over what the Lonely One looked like - tall and pale with dark hair. Tom points out that the chubby, red-faced man pulled out on the stretcher could not possibly be him. Charlie agrees and is exhilarated that the Lonely One is still alive. Douglas is a little disturbed, as he saw the Lonely One's victim in the ravine and passed by Lavinia's porch, when the would-be murderer was inside.

Pages 155 - 179 Analysis

The Lonely One is a feared legend in Green Town. His physical acts prove that he is real, but in the children's minds, he was raised in the icehouse, thus grew up cold and devoid of emotion like a strange mythological beast. Stories about his massacres also make life exciting in a small town. This section shows the disconnection between a child's imagination and adult reality. The only child disturbed by the events is Douglas, who saw the brutal results of the Lonely One's murder first hand. With Douglas' sense

of aliveness, so has come a sense of death, both physical death of people young and old, and the death of childhood traditions such as the trolley or Green Machine. It is all part of his coming of age in the difficult transition between the world of childhood and adulthood.

Pages 180 - 187

Pages 180 - 187 Summary

Great-grandma, an active, spry woman in her nineties, knows it is time to die. She has worked her whole life keeping family and home in order, but now they need to tend to her. Children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren surround her bed. She summons Tom first and offers parting words in a way he can understand. She explains that, when you see a movie in which the same cowboys are shooting the same Indians, it's time to head home, with no regrets or looking back up the aisle. In other words, she is leaving life still entertained. Next she speaks with Douglas. He is worried about who will fix the roof shingles next spring, a chore she has always done. Great grandma tells him to ask around, and whichever face lights up the most is the one that should do the task. Sensing Douglas is upset that she will be gone forever, she holds up a mirror so he can compare their familial similarities. She explains that she will be there wherever he goes, because no person really dies who has a family. In fact, she will be around a thousand years from now with a whole township of generations.

Despite her words, Douglas has somber reflections on his summer experiences. He writes them in his tablet by the glow of fireflies in a mason jar as Tom sleepily watches. His final conclusion that is that you can't depend on machines or people because they all fall apart, leave, die, or are murdered. He writes "Then... I, DOUGLAS SPAULDING, SOME DAY...MUST..." The fireflies lose their light before he can complete his sentence. He opens the window and releases them, making him feel as empty as the Mason jar that housed them.

Pages 180 - 187 Analysis

Death, change, and transition are again explored. Great grandma's last words to Douglas were an attempt to bridge their generation gap with the understanding that even after death there is life. Still, it hits Douglas harder than all the changes and deaths of machinery and humanity he has already experienced this summer. It brings him to the realization that one day he too will die. This is a powerful recognition, considering he only discovered he was truly alive at the beginning of summer. However, as summer will end, so will his life one day.

Pages 188 - 204

Pages 188 - 204 Summary

Desperate to reconcile his feelings between life and death, Douglas seeks wisdom from a wax tarot card witch at the arcade. This wax figure has been around forever, at least since Grandfather was a boy. At a recent matinee with his brother and friends, he felt the death of a screen cowboy as if he had really died. He has even formed the last words of his journal entry in his mind - I, DOUGLAS SPAULDING, SOME DAY MUST DIE. Tom and the other boys were oblivious to his plight after the matinee. This wax tarot reader, he hopes, will shed new light on the situation. Part of her attraction is her predictability, like the rest of the arcade, mechanical operations that have been there forever.

At first the witch doesn't work and the arcade manager, Mr. Black, thumps the machine and puts an 'out of order' sign on it. Determined, Douglas throws in another penny and the wax figure comes to life. The first card she delivers is like the last one Douglas received, a poem about reasons to avoid death and a prediction for a long and lively life. The second card for Tom is invisible. Douglas and Tom go to the library and light a match to try to see if a hidden message is written in lemon juice. Sure enough, Douglas sees the French word 'secours,' meaning help, before the card burns to ashes. Douglas believes that the real Mme. Tarot is entombed in the wax figurine, probably as a source of punishment. He is determined to rescue her with Tom's help. The trouble is Mr. Black, an obvious villain given his name, black clothing, and bad attitude.

The boys make a plan. Douglas goes to the library while Tom returns to the arcade to watch fifteen rounds of Keystone Cops in the hopes that Mr. Black will make his way to the 'speak-easy' by then. When Douglas returns to the arcade, Mr. Black is gone as Tom predicted. Douglas believes that Mr. Black is abetting in keeping Mme. Tarot captive, which seems proved, when Mr. Black smashes the glass around her after his coin produces no prediction. Douglas is determined to kidnap the wax figure and rescue the life inside of it. Mr. Black tries to intervene but passes out as the boys make off with the figure and her cards. On the way through the ravine, Tom questions Douglas' motives. Douglas explains that he had just discovered he was alive when death loomed in many directions. He hopes that Mme. Tarot will tell him that he'll live forever.

Unfortunately, Mr. Black catches up with the boys and hurls the wax figurine down the ravine. He leaves in a drunken stupor. Crying, Douglas asks Tom to go home and get Father. Fortunately, Father is an adult, who remembers the stuff of childhood and helps revive the wax figure in the garage. He tells his sons he'll help clean and rebuild her, for which Douglas is very grateful. Tom is curious about the witch's insides and wants to cut her open. Douglas tells him that in a few years, once he has figured out the spells to help Mme. Tarot escape, they can do that. He lifts the figurine's arm, asking Tom if he would like his future read. A blank card slips from her sleeve. Douglas makes his own

interpretation of what it says. Essentially, it promises that Douglas and Tom will get all their wishes and live forever.

Pages 188 - 204 Analysis

This section addresses how children feel about and cope with death. As alive as Douglas now feels, death has visited in many forms over the summer, from loved ones to mechanical contraptions. Death has been around in previous years, but this is the first time Douglas has really been affected by it. It makes him question is own future and vulnerabilities to a point of despair. He feels especially alone, when his friends and Tom don't comprehend his dilemma. In addition, Douglas doesn't grasp how these feelings have been heightened by the death of his Great-grandma, a person he believed would live forever. Stealing the wax tarot car reader is symbolic of Douglas' attempt to find immortality. If he can save Mme. Tarot, he might be able to save himself, and his brother, from impending death.

Pages 205 - 222

Pages 205 - 222 Summary

Tom gathers statistics from the cicadas to determine the weather. While Douglas reads the thermometer in the house at 87 degrees, the cicadas tell Tom that it is in fact 92 degrees. The scalding sun makes Douglas think Tom is right.

Mr. Jonas, a one-time businessman, who traded a conventional suit job for a junkyard wagon and horse named Ned, comes to town. Children and adults quickly line the streets, when they hear him approach. He takes no money and only barters in goods. If a child truly falls in love with a toy, they must replace it with an old one of theirs that another child might enjoy. The cicadas are making the loudest noise as it is one of the hottest days of summer. Tom discovers that Douglas is extremely ill. The doctor comes to check on him but can offer little help. Mother, Father and Tom cut ice chips to help cool Douglas' feverish body. In this state, Douglas has dreams of Greentown. He sees John Huff on a train, Leo Auffman running through town with his Happiness Machine, the sisters riding their Green Machine, and Mr. Tridden on his trolley. They fade out of sight together. He also hears his Great-grandma pounding nails on the roof. Tom is terrified that Douglas will die and seeks comfort from Mr. Jonas. Mr. Jonas tries to see Douglas, but Mother tells him the doctor said he should have no visitors.

That night, Douglas is put on a cot outside. Mr. Jonas appears and talks to Douglas about how some people feel things more than others, including sadness. He gives Douglas two bottles of arctic air. The next morning Tom announces to his parents that Douglas is going to get well. The fever has subsided. Douglas recovers in bed as the summer rains begin to fall.

Pages 205 - 222 Analysis

It is as if by acknowledging he will some day die that Douglas suddenly gets close to death. The fever is like a culmination of all his emotions after the death of a friendship, a loved one, and acquaintances. Mr. Jonas is able to reach through to Douglas as a kindred soul, who feels emotions more than others. He also understands how to communicate with children in a way that matters. His bottles of arctic air were not medicinal in nature, but certainly in spirit.

Pages 223 - 239

Pages 223 - 239 Summary

Douglas wants to think of a way to pay Mr. Jonas back. He decides the best thing to do is to pass on something meaningful to others. Aunt Rose comes to visit Grandfather and Grandma. Grandma has a natural gift for cooking. The lodgers and family don't know what she puts in the food, but it really doesn't matter. Rose is curious and wants to know what she is eating, but Grandma is evasive. Determined to be helpful, Rose convinces Grandma to clean and organize her kitchen and, even worse, buys her a cookbook. She also buys Grandma some new glasses so she can see what she is doing with the promise she will be a much finer cook. The next meal is a disaster. A pall falls over the house. Grandfather has had enough and sends Aunt Rose packing. Grandma's next meal is just as bad, and she is afraid she has lost her touch. That night, Douglas sneaks into the kitchen and returns everything to its familiar, chaotic style. He also hides the new glasses. Grandma comes down and discovers the mess. She sets to work making a meal. The lodgers hear the noise and come down stairs. Quietly, they set the linens and cutlery. Grandfather returns from a late night work errand and discovers everyone saying grace. The group dines until the sun rises, enjoying the immense flavors washed down with dandelion wine. Douglas feels that he has paid Mr. Jonas back.

The end of summer is much like it began, except in reverse. Tom, Grandfather, and Douglas take down the porch swing. Douglas plans to look at the dandelion bottles that mark each day of summer so he will never forget how remarkable it was. He watches the people of Green Town go to sleep from his grandparents' house on the last day of summer, 1928.

Pages 223 - 239 Analysis

Similar to other sections of this book, an evident theme is tradition versus change. Grandma's kitchen has always been the way it is, messy and chaotic, but there is a comfortable order to the chaos with mouthwatering results. When Aunt Rose tries to change the kitchen and Grandma's cooking, the new order creates havoc. While there might be value in change, this is not the case in Grandma's kitchen which is steeped in tradition.

The end of summer marks the end of Douglas' first passage into adulthood. He has changed through experiences that didn't affect him the same way when he was younger. This summer, life and death have made a big impact on his beliefs and attitudes.

Characters

Lena Auffmann

Lena Auffmann is married to Leo Auffmann and is the mother of their six children. She attempts to stop her husband from building the Happiness Machine and continues to be the voice of reason throughout the stories about the Machine. She tells Leo that he has made two mistakes with the machine: "You made quick things go slow and stay around. You brought things faraway to our backyard, where they don't belong. . . ."

Leo Auffmann

Leo Auffmann is the Green Town inventor. One evening when Douglas casually tells him to build a Happiness Machine, Auffmann undertakes what he believes will be his greatest invention. He works many long hours on the Machine, nearly destroying his health, his marriage, and his family in the process. After his son and his wife use the Machine to ill effect, he tries it himself, and is nearly killed in the ensuing fire. He realizes later that the real Happiness Machine is right in front of him, sitting on his own front porch: his family.

Mrs. Bentley

Mrs. Bentley is an elderly resident of Green Town, visited by children who refuse to believe that she was ever young. Under the constant pressure from the children, eventually Mrs. Bentley herself believes that she has never been young, that she has been seventy-two years old forever, that she does not have a first name, and that she has always lived in the same house.

Elmira Brown

Elmira Brown is a thirty-two year old woman married to the town postman. She is clumsy and often hurts herself; at the same time, she often blames others for her own problems. When she hears that her rival, Clara Goodwater, has received instruction manuals for becoming a witch, she believes that all of her tribulations have been caused by Clara casting spells. Although it appears that this is ridiculous, the ending of the story is ambiguous. How a reader ultimately receives Elmira largely depends on the reader's reception of Clara as well.

Miss Fern

Miss Fern is an elderly, unmarried woman who, along with Miss Roberta, owns the Green Machine.

Bill Forrester

Bill Forrester is one of the boarders at Grandfather and Grandma's house who finds a special relationship with Helen Loomis.

Colonel Freeleigh

Colonel Freeleigh is an elderly resident of Green Town who has lived all over the world. Charley Woodman discovers him and says that he is a Time Machine. Freeleigh shares his adventures with the boys in such a way that they feel transported to the time and place he describes.

Clara Goodwater

Clara Goodwater is a young matron of Green Town and the President of the Honeysuckle Ladies' Lodge. She has mail ordered books on witchcraft and magic, ostensibly for her cousin Raoul. She says that she is not a witch, in spite of Elmira Brown's accusation. However, by the end of the story, it is not clear whether she is admitting to witchcraft, or humoring Elmira in a fit a guilt over the latter woman's fall down the stairs.

Grandfather

Douglas and Tom's Grandfather owns the boarding house where many of the characters of *Dandelion Wine* live. He is especially important to the story as the maker of dandelion wine. He pays the boys a dime a bag for the flowers, then he processes them through the press in his basement, making one bottle of the elixir for each day of the summer. Grandfather is also the character who decides when summer begins and ends by choosing the day on which to hang the porch swing, and then take it back in the house for the fall.

Grandma

Douglas and Tom's Grandma's major role in *Dandelion Wine* is that of cook. Her meals are magical and unlike anything anyone has ever had. Each day she prepares large quantities of strange, delicious food for her family and for her boarders.

Great-grandma

Great-grandma lives at the boarding house. Her role in *Dandelion Wine* is that of an elder wise woman who knows when it is time to leave this life. She is the character who explains to Douglas just what death is, and who offers him solace from his contemplations of the process.

John Huff

John Huff is Douglas's closest friend. When his father gets a job in Milwaukee, John tells Doug that he will be leaving Green Town. John's importance in the book is that he serves to demonstrate to Doug the impermanence of life. As much as Doug wants things to stay the way they are, the characters continue to change and, in the case of John, leave Green Town.

Mr. Jonas

Mr. Jonas is the Green Town junkman. There is a magical quality about the man; the children can hear him coming long before adults know he is anywhere near. In addition, he is also a healer. During the night hours, he wanders the roads, dispensing aspirin or delivering babies. When Doug nearly dies, it is Mr. Jonas's bottle air that revives him.

The Lonely One

The Lonely One is the name given to a man who terrorizes the nights of Green Town. Women who find themselves in the Ravine after dark have a way of finding themselves murdered. Eventually, the town believes that the Lonely One has been killed by Lavinia Nebbs in her house. The boys, however, do not believe that the man was really the Lonely One; in their need to have a boogieman on which to focus their fears, they convince themselves that the Lonely One survives. More than a physical character, the Lonely One is also the specter of death. Like the Grim Reaper, he represents the end of time, the end of the world, and the end of life for Douglas.

Helen Loomis

Helen Loomis is a ninety-five-year-old resident of Green Town. A beautiful, wild woman in her youth, she passed up the chance for love. Now she develops a special relationship with Bill Forrester.

Lavinia Nebbs

Lavinia Nebbs is considered to be the "prettiest maiden lady in town." Lavinia demonstrates both her courage and her resourcefulness by killing the Lonely One with a pair of scissors.

Miss Roberta

Miss Roberta is Miss Fern's sister, and co-owner of the Green Machine.

Douglas Spaulding

Douglas Spaulding is the twelve-year-old main character of *Dandelion Wine*. The book begins with his awakening into life and closes with his near death. Doug is a writer. In his notebook with his Ticonderoga pencil, he attempts to make sense of the events of the summer as well as of life and death. It is almost as if he tries to capture each of the days in the same way his grandfather bottles the summer in the dandelion wine. In many cultures, reaching the age of twelve is the traditional coming-of-age time. For Doug, the summer of 1928 is just that. He becomes aware of the rituals and practices that structure Green Town just as he attempts to understand what these rituals embody. For Doug, this is the summer when he understands what it means to be alive; but it is also the summer when he knows in the very core of his being that all creatures die, including himself. This knowledge nearly kills him, and it is only through the intervention of Mr. Jonas with his magical air that he is revived. Doug stands in for Bradbury in this novel; not only is the role autobiographical, it is also a comment on the role of the writer, the one who gets everything moving, and who ultimately decides when the story is concluded.

Mr. Spaulding

Mr. Spaulding, Doug and Tom's father, is an important figure in the book, although his role is small. In the opening sequence of stories, it is Mr. Spaulding who takes the boys into the forest to gather wild berries. He seems to have a special connection to both the boys and nature, something that most adults in *Dandelion Wine* seem to have forgotten. Doug believes that his father has planned the outing specifically to initiate his son into the wonder of being alive.

Mrs. Spaulding

Doug and Tom's mother has only a minor role in the book. Her most important scene is when she and Tom go to look for Doug when he does not return home at the expected time. Her fear demonstrates to Tom that not even adults can control their environment.

Tom Spaulding

Tom Spaulding is Doug's ten-year-old brother. Not yet initiated into the mysteries of life, Tom is both confidant and enumerator for Doug. He keeps track of how many times they have done each of the rituals of summer. In addition, he listens as Doug tries to work through the puzzles of life. While he is not old enough to fully understand Doug's struggles, his listening and companionship allow Doug to accomplish what he must. It is clear that Tom's time will come as well and that in the future, he will have to face some of the same demons that have hounded Doug during the summer of 1928. For now, however, Tom is content and full in the moment.

Mr. Tridden

Mr. Tridden is the trolley driver of Green Town. When the trolley is scheduled for decommissioning, he gives all of the residents one final, free ride on the wonderful machine.

Charlie Woodman

Charlie Woodman is Doug's friend.

Douglas Spaulding

Douglas Spaulding, age 12, is the main character in the novel. Douglas has never traveled outside the small community of Green Town so in essence it is his whole world. He is content in this world, with a secure, loving family environment, good friends, familiar comforts, and small town intrigue. On the first day of summer, 1928, Douglas discovers that he is truly alive. With this new awareness, he keeps a journal of old rites and new adventures and revelations. The discovery has awakened all his senses and makes him appreciate his world in a new way, including the delicate balance between man and nature. At the same time, the summer brings unexpected changes that shake his foundation and childlike perspective. While the discovery of life leaves Douglas' head reeling with joy, experiencing the power of death - people, friendships, and traditions - makes him depressed and unsettled. His coming of age makes him wiser about the fragility of things, living or manmade, and by the end of the novel we sense he will adapt well with a more adult understanding of life cycles and inevitable changes.

Douglas' closest relationship is with his brother Tom, even though they bicker like most siblings. He and Tom share secrets, experiences, and revelations. We see their true feelings for each other, when there is a threat. Tom fears for Douglas' life, when he is out in the ravine at night or sick with a high fever. Douglas fears that Tom might one day leave him the way his best friend John Huff did.

Tom Spaulding

Ten year-old Tom is Douglas' younger brother. He loves to keep statistics for everything, such as how many times he has brushed his teeth or the number of peaches he has eaten in his life. Compared to Douglas, he is much more carefree and optimistic. Douglas believes Tom has already discovered the sudden aliveness he is just feeling, because despite his age, Tom seems that much more attuned to the world around him. Tom also displays normal childhood fears and anxieties and makes personal growth of his own. When out at the dark ravine searching for Douglas, his fear is heightened by the realization his mother is physically vulnerable, seeing her this way for the first time.

Father

Father does not appear often, but he is a steady, reliable presence. At the beginning of summer he teaches Tom and Douglas about the wonders of nature during a hike in the woods. On this hike, Douglas discovers he is truly alive. He believes that Father planned the hike so he would discover the secret. Later that summer, when Douglas tries to save the wax fortuneteller from the arcade, believing that Mme. Tarot is trapped inside, Father helps him put the figuring back together. Father remembers the figuring from his own childhood and understands Douglas' desires to rescue her. Douglas is grateful for his care and support.

Mother

Like Father, Mother is not often literally present unless working with the other Spaulding women or tending to her children. She is kind, patient, and strong in the boys' eyes. In one section she is featured prominently. Douglas is playing in the ravine on evening and it's very late. Rumors of the Lonely One scare her so she takes Tom to the ravine to look for Douglas. Through Tom's eyes we see a woman that is vulnerable and afraid. She is also afraid when Douglas is sick with a high fever, again fearing for his life.

Grandfather

Head of the Spaulding clan, Grandfather thrives on the rituals of the seasons. He is the concoctor of dandelion wine, the novel's title, and directs the process with his grandsons like the captain of a ship to his crew. Intelligent and wise, Grandfather sees the world close to perfect as long as man does not interfere too much. He is a believer in tradition and a slower pace of life that lets him appreciate the little wonders. He strongly resists change, such as when Bill Forrester tries to put in new grass that doesn't need mowing or Aunt Rose tries to change Grandma's kitchen.

Grandma

Grandma is a lesser figure, until the end of the novel. She is a culinary wizard, though follows no recipes in her messy kitchen. Her natural touch is upset, when an interfering aunt tries to bring order to the kitchen. Grandma loses her touch and only regains it after Douglas returns her kitchen to its former state.

Great-Grandma

The matriarch of the Spaulding family, Great-grandma is young at heart if old in body. We learn that she repairs roofs, fixes cars, and keeps the house in good order. She connects to Douglas and Tom and shares wisdom that they can comprehend on her

deathbed. Before her death she is rarely seen except doing summer chores with the other Spaulding women, such as beating the rugs.

John Huff

John Huff is Douglas' best friend. Douglas sees him in a god-like way, because John can do everything better than other boys. He can play ball better, jump higher, and run faster.

John, Charlie, and Douglas spend much of the early summer together, exploring the ravine and other Green Town sites. One day, John announces he is moving away. This is a devastating blow to Douglas. They spend John's last evening together, trying to slow down time until, inevitably, John must hurry to catch the train.

Charlie Woodman

Charlie is one of Douglas' good friends. He is easy going and carefree. He introduces Douglas to Colonel Freeleigh, who he describes as a living time machine.

Leo Auffmann

Leo Auffmann is the town jeweler and movie projectionist. He is married with six children. Although an inventor at heart, he complains of the disasters machines create, such as bombs and car accidents. Douglas gives him the idea to invent a Happiness Machine. Leo undertakes the challenge, hoping to ease the sufferings of humanity. The project ends in disaster as his family unravels and his wife threatens to leave him. When the machine self-destructs, Leo realizes he misinterpreted the meaning of happiness. It is something he already has at home.

Lena Auffmann

Leo's wife, Lena, is content with her life, as difficult as it is to manage such a large household. When Leo begins work on the Happiness Machine, it destroys the order of her routine and leads to fighting between all the family members. Lena tries to argue her case that man should live with nature, not question or interfere with it. Leo is stubborn and refuses to listen. Finally she gives Leo an ultimatum and threatens to leave. Before going she tries the Happiness Machine. The experience makes her cry as it shows her a world she could never have, such as trips to Paris.

Colonel Freeleigh

As his name implies, Colonel Freeleigh fought many a battle during the Civil War. An elderly man confined to a wheelchair, the Colonel relishes in the expansive memories of

his youth, like watching roaming buffalo, seeing President Lincoln, and traveling the world. We learn that he was born in Illinois, raised in Virginia, married in New York, built a house in Tennessee and late in life made his home in Green Town. The boys call the Colonel a Time Machine because of the vivid way in which he presents his stories. Just before his death, the Colonel places several calls to Mexico City to hear the vibrancy of a city he visited in his youth. The phone is still connected, when Douglas discovers his lifeless body.

Helen Bentley

Seventy-two year-old Helen Bentley is a widow, who moved to Green Town five years ago after selling off all her husband's rental properties. She saves everything meticulously, from childhood china to her husband's silk hat and cane. All the items in her home remind her of her youth, which she sorely misses. When she meets Tom and a couple of girls, they refuse to believe she was ever young or even has a first name. Mrs. Bentley desperately tries to prove she was young through items she has saved, but still the children won't believe her. She realizes that she is living in the past instead of the present. She gives away all her old things and agrees with the children that she was never young and has no first name.

Bill Forester

A lodger at Grandfather's house, Bill Forester is an amiable young newspaper reporter. He and Grandfather have differing views on the world, evidenced when Bill tries to plant grass that doesn't need mowing. After listening to Grandfather speak on the small pleasures of life, such as the smell of fresh cut grass or the sound of a mower, he good-naturedly relents and throws out the grass. He is a bachelor who has not found a woman he is attracted to, until he meets elderly Helen Loomis. They share a mutual meeting, and they develop a close friendship, until she dies about three weeks after their first meeting.

Helen Loomis

Helen, the 90-year-old spinster, appears in only one section. Although she had opportunities to marry when she was young, she was far too wild. Instead, she spent her adulthood traveling the world. She is a fascinating, educated woman as a result but regrets her decision not to have a life partner. Helen develops a meaningful friendship with Bill Forester. At the end of August, Helen Loomis passes away just days after she predicts her own death.

Mr. Tridden

Mr. Tridden, the trolley conductor, plans to retire with the retirement of the trolley, which will be replaced by a bus. An easygoing, friendly man, he takes a group of children on a free ride and picnic on the trolley's last day of operation.

Lavinia Nebbs

Lavinia Nebbs is a 33-year-old spinster, who lives alone. She is considered the prettiest woman in Green Town but tends to put men off with her strong-willed nature. She spends her evenings home alone or out with friends. One night, Lavinia and a friend come across the murdered body of a woman they know in the ravine. Lavinia's friends are scared to be out, because the Lonely One has struck again. In contrast, Lavinia feels excited by the danger and insists on walking home alone through the ravine. When she senses she is being followed, she is gripped by fear and realizes she has been a fool. She races home only to hear a man inside the house. We discover through the children that Lavinia managed to fight off the Lonely One and kill him with a pair of sewing shears.

The Lonely One

The Lonely One is the feared murderer of young women. To the children, he is a mythological character, who grew up in an icehouse and is pale and frightening. The chubby middle-aged man, who is eventually killed by Lavinia Nebbs is hardly the stuff of their imagination. The children convince themselves that this man was not the Lonely One, who must still be lurking somewhere in the shadows.

Miss Fern and Miss Roberta

Miss Fern and Miss Roberta, the elderly sisters, are owners of the Green Machine, an electric two-seater scooter with a parasol and rubber bulb horn. They live together with a younger brother. They are sweet women, who often let the children hitch rides on their machine. One day they accidentally run a man over and hide in their attic in a panic. Although they later discover the man was unharmed, they decide not to ever ride the Green Machine again for fear they might hurt someone else. They agree that they are too old to take such risks.

Mr. Sanderson

Mr. Anderson is a middle-aged man, who owns the shoe store where Douglas buys his Litefoot sneakers. He remembers the joys of his own childhood, when Douglas convinces him to try on a pair of sneakers. He agrees to give Douglas the sneakers he wants in exchange for running errands.

Elmira Brown

A jealous, accident-prone woman, Elmira keeps up on town gossip from her postmaster husband. She believes that her neighbor, Clara Goodwater, is a witch. Elmira covets her position as president of a ladies lodge and believes that witchcraft has stopped her from ever being elected. An accident changes their feuding relationship and Elmira finally inadvertently achieves her goal.

Clara Goodwater

Clara is the president of the Honeysuckle Ladies Lodge. She has held this position since anyone can remember. She is easy going and well liked by all except Elmira Brown. She toys with Elmira's gossipy ways and silly beliefs that she is a witch. However, she feels a great sense of guilt, when Clara falls down a long flight of stairs as a result of their feud. She gives up the presidency to Elmira to compensate.

Mr. Jonas

An independent, free spirited man, Mr. Jonas gave up a conventional job to become a junk dealer. He appears toward the end of the novel with his wagon full of goods. The children are able to barter their toys for others. When Douglas is sick, Tom seeks Mr. Jonas' help. Mr. Jonas compares himself to Douglas. They are sensitive sorts, who get sadder than others, because they feel things more. He helps Douglas recover by giving him two bottles of arctic air to inhale.

Aunt Rose

Aunt Rose is a minor character, who appears toward the end of the book. She has come to visit the Spaulding clan and is staying in the grandparent's home. A woman who likes functionality and order, she makes Grandma neaten her kitchen and change her cooking habits. The consequences are dire. Grandfather is furious over the interference and politely sends Aunt Rose packing on the next train.

Objects/Places

Green Town

Green Town is the main location in the novel and is based on the author's experience of growing up in Waukegan, Illinois. This small Midwestern town is divided in half by a ravine. There is also a train that runs through it, as well as a drug store and numerous small businesses. It is the sort of town where everyone knows each other and spends time visiting neighbors on porches in the summer.

The Woods

The woods outside Green Town, visited by Douglas, Father, and Tom on the first day of summer, are where Douglas discovers he is truly alive. It is a place where Father and the boys have often ventured to collect fox grapes and wild strawberries and picnic under the trees.

Grandfather and Grandma's House

Grandfather and Grandma's rambling 3-storey house is also a home to lodgers. Great-grandma also lives there until her death. Douglas and Tom also spend one night a week at the house, which is next door to their own. It is the home that Douglas wakes up in on the first day of summer and the one he goes to sleep in on the last day. It is a comfortable, happy place full of activity and the smells of Grandma's wonderful cooking. The cool basement also holds all of Grandfather's bottles of dandelion wine.

The Ravine

The ravine divides Green Town and is full of folklore to the boys, who cut through its trails to their various destinations. It is an untamed wilderness that threatens the town and is perpetrated by it in a constant battle between man and nature. It is also the place where the Lonely One finds and kills his victims, which adds to its dark mystery.

The Drugstore

The small drug store also serves up ice cream. It is where Douglas and Bill Forrester meet Helen Loomis while they are ordering a unique ice cream flavor.

The Arcade

The arcade has been around as long as anyone can remember. It even existed when Grandfather was a boy. It is run by a drunken, callous owner called Mr. Black. The arcade holds the tarot card wax figure that Douglas eventually steals, as he believes the real life Mme. Tarot is encased inside.

Summer's Ice House

Summer's ice house is the coldest place to be in summer. The vast brick building contains fifty, one hundred, and two hundred pound chunks of ice. The boys believe that the Lonely One was born, raised and still lives here, because how else would he make them shiver on the hottest of nights? They describe how the ice house even smells like him.

The Green Machine

The Green Machine is a two-seater electric scooter with a parasol and bulb horn. It is owned by elderly sisters Miss Fern and Miss Roberta. It is a familiar sight on the streets of Green Town until the sisters agree never to ride it again after running over a man.

The Happiness Machine

Leo Auffmann invents the Happiness Machine in his garage. The mechanically operated device is an eight-foot high orange box. The passenger sits inside and experiences sights, smells, and sounds of magical wonders, such as images of Europe and Egypt, the smell of perfume, and a phonographic recording of the Blue Danube. However, the machine causes nothing but unhappiness to Leo's family. When it is finally destroyed by fire, Leo realizes that happiness is something he already has in his home.

The Trolley

The lever-controlled orange trolley has brass fixtures, a chrome bell, and yellow lettering. It is run on the tracks by conductor Mr. Tridden. Years before, the trolley used to run to Chessman's park where a brass band played. Now, in the summer of 1928, the trolley is being replaced by a bus. On the last day of operation, Mr. Tridden gives the children the last ride in the trolley to the park for a surprise picnic.

Themes

Time

As in many of his other works, Bradbury explores time in *Dandelion Wine*. The book begins on the first day of summer, 1928, and continues on chronologically until the last day of summer of the same year. This is calendar time, the day-by-day progression throughout the year. Bradbury underscores this progression through the scenes where the boys and Grandfather make dandelion wine, each bottle labeled for each day in the summer. As the number of bottles increases, the days of the summer dwindle. Calendars and clocks, however, only represent the kind of time that is measurable; these devices divide time up into ever smaller, equal divisions. Yet anyone who has ever thought about it knows that sometimes time passes more quickly or more slowly than at other times. Thus, while the calendar or the clock mark a linear, chronological progression, there is much that these devices do not reveal about time.

Bradbury introduces another notion of time through Colonel Freeleigh, a man who is able to travel freely through his memories, so much so that the children call him a Time Machine. When he tells the children his stories, he is able to transport them into a different kind of time, one that is cyclic, or circular. This is the time of stories and memory, moments that can be revisited again and again. Likewise, through the rituals of summer, those things the children do again and again, they are able to create a kind of sacred space that exists out of time.

Bradbury also uses clocks and calendars metaphorically in this novel to represent the time allotted to a person for a life. When Doug discovers he is alive, he suddenly realizes that he himself is a timepiece: "Twelve years old and only now! Now discovering this rare timepiece, this clock gold-bright and guaranteed to run three score and ten . . ." Thus, the passage of time through the summer in *Dandelion Wine* also serves to remind the reader that each human being has a metaphoric spring, and autumn in his or her life.

In *Dandelion Wine*, Doug experiences both kinds of time, chronological as well as ritual. In the tension between the two, Doug finds himself facing the most important questions of human existence.

Technology

Bradbury is often accused of finding technology distasteful or negative. In an article in *English Journal*, Marvin E. Mengeling notes that Bradbury's "distrust of too much technology and mechanization" is a major theme in *Dandelion Wine*. In this novel, Green Town seems poised on the brink of a new age, one in which technology threatens to change human existence. Bradbury's attitude toward technology seems to be that people need to remember what is important in life. Leo Auffmann's attempt to

build a machine that will give people happiness, for example, does just the opposite. People who use the machine find that because they see things they never knew they missed, they are now much more unhappy than they have ever been. In this case, then, Bradbury seems to be criticizing the way technology leads people into the desire for things, and for more technology. The real source of happiness, however, is not more things, but rather family. Indeed, Bradbury's concern with technology is also tied to his concern with time. He seems to be telling the reader that time with family and with friends is the way time ought to be spent, rather than monkeying around with new machines.

Death

Just as Douglas discovers early in the book that he is alive, and that he is part of a larger world in which everyone and everything is alive, he also discovers later in the book that he will eventually die, just as everyone and everything will eventually die. This is a difficult concept for Douglas; however, the realization follows logically from not only what Doug can reason, but also from what he observes. In the space of a few short weeks, Doug loses his Great-grandma, Colonel Freeleigh, and Helen Loomis. In addition, he finds the corpse of the Lonely One's murder victim. The realization is overwhelming for Doug, and he falls into a strange illness, one that threatens to kill him. Only through the intervention of Mr. Jonas, and through his own decision that living is preferable to death does he recover. But the introduction of death as a theme in *Dandelion Wine* shifts the book away from a sentimental recollection of the perfect boyhood and toward a darker understanding of human existence.

Life and Death

The exploration of life and death are central to Douglas' coming of age in this novel. Douglas' revelation that he is truly alive, while out in nature, gives him a sense of awareness he wants to keep forever. It is as if he has been reborn. Douglas' summer begins full of life and joy. He has a new appreciation for all the rites of summer, such as picking dandelions or running through the ravine with his friends. The new awareness has rejuvenated him with an exuberant energy. However, as summer passes, it brings change, loss, and death. These had occurred in his life before, but now he sees such matters with a new sense of importance. There is the death of tradition, such as the trolley car being replaced with a bus. There is a loss of friendship, when John Huff moves away. There is the real death of acquaintances, like Colonel Freeleigh and Helen Loomis. In addition, there is death close to the heart, when his Great-grandma dies.

The events hit Douglas with a domino effect until he realizes, with horror, that one day he too will die. He sinks into a depression that manifests itself into a deathly illness. Once recovered, life seeps back into him. He is now wiser for the summer experiences and has a clearer understanding of life and death and the mutual existence and endurance of both.

Tradition and Progress

Progress is slow in Green Town yet its effects are certainly felt, especially by the oldest and youngest citizens, who cling to tradition and familiarity. Grandfather is especially prone to tradition. He thrives on the small pleasures of life and does not like having his routine or environment altered in any way. He is against new-fangled devices that save time yet detract from his idea of pleasure, such as the toil of pulling weeds that puts your whole body into the presence of nature.

When a visiting aunt tries to rearrange his wife's kitchen and cooking habits, Grandfather is the first to take action and send her packing. The aunt had no understanding of the importance of mealtime for him and the rest of the household. His grandson Douglas is like-minded. Children take great comfort in familiarity and Douglas is no exception. He thrives on the rites of summer, such as helping Grandfather pick dandelions for his wine. He also relishes familiar manmade objects that have been there since he can remember, such as the trolley car or the arcade. He is devastated when these things disappear and, although open to new adventures, he resents all forms of change that are out of his own control.

Young and Old

There are many generational themes in the novel, echoing the central themes of life and death. The elderly and young of Green Town are more connected than those in between their generations. The elderly closer to death thrive on the energy of the young and like to pass on their wisdom and stories. The young often find the elderly a curiosity yet their openness allows a communication that is less common with other adults. The divergent generations also share a comfort in familiar customs and objects that the rest of the world seems to want to put aside in the name of progress.

Most of the people whom Douglas feels closest to, outside of immediate family and young friends, are elderly folk. Grandfather, Grandma, and Great-grandma offer security with their predictable patterns. Colonel Freeleigh takes Douglas into an exciting past with his stories. The sisters, who own the Green Machine, and Mr. Tridden, who operates the trolley, are part of the town's identity. Mr. Jonas, the junk dealer, infuses life back into him during his illness.

Man versus Nature

Man versus nature is a prevalent theme in the novel. On the first outing to the woods, when Douglas discovers he is truly alive, his father describes the difference of taste in nature versus indoors. The first time Douglas crosses the ravine, he thinks about how man can't really tame nature as the ravine's wild growth keeps creeping back on the town. Grandfather wants nothing to do with man's convenient devices as they separate him from the pleasure of living things. The theme also appears in many other individual stories. When Leo Auffmann tampers with man's understanding of happiness, the

results are disastrous but eye-opening. The sisters, who own the Green Machine, realize they may not be powerful enough to rein its energy after running over a man. Mr. Tridden's trolley, which used to take people to a local park to enjoy picnics outdoors, is being replaced with a strictly functional bus. The overriding message is that humanity and nature should learn to coexist, but change and progress are inevitable.

Style

Setting

In *Dandelion Wine*, the setting of Green Town becomes almost another character. On the one hand, Bradbury has been very clear that he modeled Green Town after his own childhood home of Waukegan, Illinois. According to Bradbury, there were tree-lined streets, people sitting on porches on a summer evening, and even a frightening dark ravine. However, Green Town becomes mythic in its significance to *Dandelion Wine*. The town is isolated, surrounded by a deep forest, with no connection to the outside world. Symbolically, the town is a kind of Garden of Eden for Doug, the place where one day he realizes he is alive. Likewise, the Lonely One, skulking about in the ravine is akin to the serpent in Eden, the serpent who brings death to humankind. Doug's growing awareness of life and death is paralleled by Green Town's gradual change from an isolated city where no one new arrives and no one ever leaves to a town where people die, and people go away. For Doug, this new knowledge of his city is dangerous; it is after witnessing the murdered corpse in the ravine that he falls into the coma that nearly wins him for death. Thus, while Green Town is simply the setting, it provides the mythological grounding for the novel.

Archetypes

The Swiss psychologist Carl Jung theorized that there are particular, images, character types, settings and stories that operate across cultures, and that these archetypes are embedded deep within the human subconscious. Bradbury, who writes frequently in books such as *Zen and the Art of Writing* about tapping his own subconscious mind for material, makes use of the idea of the archetype in *Dandelion Wine*. Douglas is the archetypal young hero and his story is the archetypal quest story. In this type of story, the hero is nearly always a young person about to enter adulthood who receives a calling that starts him or her on his journey. For Douglas, the quest is metaphoric as he moves through a series of initiatory rites designed to bring him from childhood into adulthood. He first is aware of this on the day his father takes him to pick grapes. He realizes that his father and his grandfather "live on riddles;" that is, they have knowledge that is outside of his understanding as a child. However, when he is in the forest, he receives the archetypal call when he realizes that this is the day when everything will change. He is aware of some presence outside himself ready to pounce. When this "something" finally makes itself known, "the world, like a great iris of an even more gigantic eye which has also just opened and stretched out to encompass everything, stared back at him." From this moment on, with the utter certainty that he is alive, Douglas begins his journey to adulthood, encountering loss through both death and change, and his own near death.

Other archetypes that Doug encounters in *Dandelion Wine* include wise, older helpers such as his Grandfather and Colonel Freeleigh. He also encounters evil in the form of

The Lonely One. In an archetypal subplot, through his dream, he wanders in the "other world" where he sees John Huff, the Happiness Machine, the trolley, Colonel Freeleigh, and his great-grandma, all people and things that have passed out of his life. Mr. Jonas, then, plays the role of spiritual guide, the archetypal character who brings Douglas home from the otherworld. Douglas's awakening from his fever dream signifies a rebirth, and the end of his metaphoric journey. He is no longer a child, having earned his adulthood.

Points of View

The story is told from third person point of view, though is mostly from the perspectives of Douglas and Tom Spaulding. This allows readers to see the world of Green Town from a child's perspective. The point of view often shifts in small measure to various individuals, who are connected to Douglas and Tom in some way. This allows the reader to gain a better understanding of those individual's thoughts and motivations. While the reader feels sympathy for Douglas, as he experiences death in many forms, the third person point of view helps to portray a larger picture that Douglas does not yet understand at his age. Although there are many stories woven into the novel, the narrative stays close to Douglas as the central figure. The other stories are secondary to the core story about Douglas' discovery of life and painful experiences with loss and death. The novel primarily revolves around his coming of age and his resistance toward change and growth. The other stories parallel and enhance Douglas' experiences.

Setting

The main setting for the novel is the small Midwestern community of Green Town. Since this town encompasses Douglas' whole world, there are many settings within the town that hold special meaning and feelings. The ravine is especially important. It divides the town and is a place of happiness and fear. Douglas and his friends run through the ravine in play but fear the Lonely One there at night. The ravine is also symbolic of man's battle with nature. Man flattens nature to build houses and manicured lawns around it, but the ravine is relentless in its wild savagery and constant encroachment. Grandfather's house is also important. Living within there often are four Spaulding generations that are kept united through this environment. Douglas' special place is a 3rd story bedroom he sleeps in one night a week, high above the town, where orchestrates the beginning and end of summer in his imagination.

Language

The highly descriptive language is at a level that young adult readers can understand, yet many descriptions and phrases have a subtext that are more easily interpreted by older readers. The style of speech and descriptors are in keeping with the time period and location. As all the citizens are from the same community, their speech tends to be quite similar. The differences in speech tend to be generational in how an adult or child

perceives the same event differently. As a novel seen primarily from a young boy's point of view, the author uses the language of a child's wonderment when describing the physical world of Green Town and its people. This helps to provide an emotional connection to people and places inherently important to children, rather than those of the adult world.

Structure

The novel is structured in many short sections and follows a linear progression beginning with the first day of summer, 1928, and ending with the last day of that summer. It parallel's Douglas' discovery that he is alive to his acceptance of change and death. Most sections follow an individual story, followed by shorter sections of Douglas and Tom's interpretation of events. Some individual stories fill only one section while others are spread over multiple sections. This gives a sense of how all the individual lives in the town are interconnected.

While the story is told in present tense, reflections of bygone times are shared by many of the elderly citizens, giving readers a strong sense of the town's history and slow but inevitable progress toward the future.

Historical Context

The Great Depression

Bradbury was born in 1920, and so was just nine years old when the Great Depression began, throwing his father out of work and forcing the family's move from Waukegan, Illinois. This event had a lasting effect on the writer. In his choice of his novel's setting, Green Town during the summer of 1928, Bradbury attempted to recreate a time and place that no longer existed, a place where the economic, political, and technological upheavals of the twentieth century had not yet touched. For Bradbury, the pre-Depression Midwestern town represented a kind of Eden, a place isolated from the rest of the world where people sat out on their porches at night and were truly neighborly. The social chaos brought on by the downward economic spiral of the Depression followed closely by the horrors of World War II made the final years before the Depression look particularly innocent and golden by comparison. This contrast, between the world of 1928, and the world of 1957, the year of the book's publication is stark, and renders Douglas's experiences all the more bittersweet.

The Cold War and the Nuclear Arms Race

During the years that Bradbury worked on *Dandelion Wine*, the United States was engaged in both World War II and the Korean War. Even when these wars ended, the struggle for world power between the Soviet Union and the United States continued in the cold war. At stake was the survival of the entire world, for as the cold war continued, both the United States and the Soviet Union (along with a number of other nations of the world including France, England, India, and China) began stockpiling stores of nuclear weapons to be used as a last resort against the other nations in the event of full-scale war. Such use, however, would mean the end of the world, as the nuclear arsenal grew to such a size that scientists estimated that nations could blow up the planet seven times over.

Bradbury clearly hoped to return to a gentler, more naive time in his creation of Green Town. His thinly veiled distrust of technology had its roots in the 1950s, as he saw his nation rushing frantically toward some gigantic conflagration. The launching of the unmanned satellite Sputnik in 1957 by the Soviet Union, the first human object in orbit around the earth, only served to confirm both the promise and the dangers of technology for Bradbury, ground he had explored earlier in his 1950 collection, *The Martian Chronicles*. Although *Dandelion Wine* might seem to have little to do with the world at large, the novel, through its idealization of small town America in the years before the Depression, marked a rejection of the political and technological dangers of mid-twentieth century America.

Critical Overview

Dandelion Wine is a popular book that has never been out of print since its first publication in 1957. Often assigned to students in junior and senior high schools, *Dandelion Wine* is a book much-loved by readers and critics alike. Nevertheless, the book did not receive as much early attention as it might have. As George Slusser in his article "Ray Bradbury" in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* notes in 1978, although Bradbury is an important writer, he has "unjustly suffered from critical neglect." Likewise, Marvin E. Mengeling, in his 1971 article "Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*: Themes Sources, and Style," in *English Journal*, argues that although "Ray Bradbury happens to be one of America's major prose writers. . . . his works have been abysmally neglected by critics."

Like a number of later critics, Mengeling addresses this need in both the *English Journal* article, published in 1971, and much later in his book *Red Planet, Flaming Phoenix, Green Town: Some Early Bradbury Revisited*, published in 2002. Mengeling reads *Dandelion Wine* from an archetypal perspective in both sources, noting in the latter that "*Dandelion Wine*. . . is Ray Bradbury's first major imaginative attempt at reconciliation with his past and family. More specifically, it is Bradbury's first tentative step toward reconciliation with the Father."

In addition to Mengeling, many other critics note the archetypal patterns Bradbury uses in *Dandelion Wine*. For example, John B. Rosenman in the *South Atlantic Bulletin* looks specifically at the heaven and hell archetype in both Faulkner's "That Evening Sun" and Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*. He argues that the ravine is "mysterious and malignantly alive." Further, the ravine "exert[s] a primal terrifying force and exude[s] an ominous menace that pervades the work with an air of expectancy and suspense."

In one of the only readings that accounts for gender in *Dandelion Wine*, Robin Anne Reid argues that the book "focuses on the masculine world." Further, while Reid writes positively about *Dandelion Wine*, she also notes that the novel "does an excellent job of showing the initiation and maturation of a man in a traditional patriarchal culture, but its theme is not universally applicable to everyone, especially to women."

Finally, another approach that critics often take is a consideration of Bradbury's theme of childhood in his work. Damon Knight, in a much reprinted critique, offers a negative view of this treatment in *Dandelion Wine*: "Childhood is Bradbury's one subject, but you will not find real childhood here. . . ." He further accuses *Dandelion Wine* of being a "glutinous pool of sentimentality." Lahna Diskin, however, takes a much deeper look into Bradbury's children in an important essay, also reprinted in several volumes. She examines all of Bradbury's children, focusing particularly on Doug and Tom from *Dandelion Wine* and the boys of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. She writes of the children, "Their most outrageous actions are instinctive ploys against the inevitable doomsday of exile from childhood. Thus, in both books, the boys live at the quick of life, marauding each moment. They are afire with ecstatic temporality, resplendent immediacy."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1

Critical Essay #1

Henningfeld is a professor of English at Adrian College who writes widely on literary topics for academic and educational publications. In this essay, Henningfeld analyzes Dandelion Wine *as an example of magical realism.*

Magical realism (sometimes called magic realism) is one of the most interesting literary trends to emerge worldwide during the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century. Generally associated with South American writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Isabel Allende and Gabriel García Márquez, recent critics have also included North American writers such as William Faulkner and Toni Morrison within the genre. *Dandelion Wine*, written in the 1950s as a mainstream autographical novel, however, has not generally been read as a magical realist text; nevertheless, Bradbury as a self-admitted fantasist, leaves himself open for just such a reading. Indeed, an accounting of the magical elements in *Dandelion Wine* not only deepens the reader's understanding of the novel, it also revitalizes the text, making *Dandelion Wine* a surprisingly contemporary vintage. The purpose of this essay, then, is threefold: first, to provide a working definition of magical realism; second, to identify the elements in *Dandelion Wine* that can be classified as magical realism; and third; to consider how this approach opens the text to the twenty-first century reader.

Magical realism, in simplest terms, is the mixture of realistic elements along with fantastic elements. Further, the characters treat elements that might seem fantastic to the reader matter-of-factly. Likewise, everyday realistic elements for the reader may be treated as something magical by the characters. For example, in García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the characters scarcely notice the flying carpets that gypsies ride into town, yet they are utterly astounded by ice. William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, in *A Handbook to Literature*, write that in a magical realist work, "[t]he frame or the surface of the work may be conventionally realistic, but contrasting elements□such as the supernatural, myth, dream, fastasy□invade the realism and change the whole basis of the art."

Dandelion Wine clearly offers examples of these elements. Its setting (or surface) is early twentieth-century, small-town America, its characters the men, women, and children of this town, all engaged in everyday, daily activities. Yet magic erupts from the first moment that Douglas climbs into his grandparents' cupola and wills the town into existence. Even in the most quotidian circumstance, an election for the presidency of a ladies club, there is an implication that witchcraft might be involved. Likewise, the main character, Douglas, is saved from death by a magical healer.

In their classic book *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris argue that "magical realism is a mode suited to exploring□and transgressing□boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic. Magical realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds. . . ." Further, magical realist texts "often situate themselves on liminal territory between or among worlds□in phenomenal and spiritual

regions where transformation, metamorphosis, dissolution are common. . . ." In other words, magical realist texts often include many different ways of interpreting the world, interpretations that often exist side by side. "Liminal territory" is something like a borderland, or the space between two places, ideas, or worlds. In boundary spaces, characters and locations can find themselves transformed, changed, or even dissolved. Focusing on these elements of magical realism offers a particularly rich reading of *Dandelion Wine* because it is in the geographical, temporal, mythological, and spiritual boundaries that magic most often erupts in the novel.

As Zamora and Faris describe above, Green Town coexists in two separate worlds. In the first, it is the real city of Waukegan, Illinois, the place where writer Bradbury was born. Readers know this from Bradbury's 1975 introduction to the book. At the same time, however, Green Town is a mythical location, a place that is not really anywhere or anytime. This is largely because Bradbury isolates the town; there is no one coming into the town from the outside, so it functions much as a Brigadoon or a Shangri La, or, for that matter, an Eden. At an even deeper level, however, Green Town is not anywhere or anytime because in the final analysis, it only exists in Bradbury's memory and imagination. Bradbury's description of the town imbues it with mythical qualities, and leads readers to understand that Green Town itself is a liminal space, a place where boys are transformed into men: "And here the paths, made or yet unmade, that told of the need of boys traveling, always traveling, to be men."

Likewise, the ravine serves multiple functions in the novel. Just as Waukegan is a real city, there is a real ravine in Waukegan, according to Bradbury. It is a place where the river cuts through the city to Lake Michigan. In *Dandelion Wine*, however, the ravine is not just a gully, but an opening into another mythic space not bound by the order or structure of the town. The ravine divides the town in two, and Douglas senses the primeval struggle between life and death in the space: "Panting, he stopped by the rim of the ravine, at the edge of the softly blowing abyss. . . . Here the town, divided, fell away in halves. Here civilization ceased. Here was only growing earth and a million deaths and rebirths every hour."

The ravine indicates the "coexistence of possible worlds." Whereas Green Town itself is ordered and ultimately knowable for Douglas, the ravine is not. It functions under a different reality from town, and the contrast opens the uncomfortable gap between order and chaos, between the knowable and unknowable. The ravine is the space where anything can happen: a young woman can be transformed into a corpse, or a young man into a hero. There is just no telling in such a magical place.

Dandelion Wine also suggests another pair of alternative realities coexisting in the same space. Bradbury clearly sets up two worlds, the world of the children and the world of the adults. When the children visit Mrs. Bentley, they are able to convince her that she never was a child herself. Indeed, Tom reports to Douglas who writes it down in his table, "Old people never *were* children!"

Tom, throughout the novel, is clearly within the realm of the children. When Douglas falls ill, for example, Tom tells Mr. Jonas "It's been a tough summer. . . Lots of things

have happened to Doug." What he lists are the concerns of a child: Doug has lost his best aggie, someone stole Doug's catcher's mitt, Doug dropped his Tarzan statue, and it broke. Because he is a child, Tom fails to recognize that the summer has been hard on Doug not because he has lost his toys, but because he has lost his boyhood. Further, although Tom senses that Doug has had difficulties over the summer, there is no way that he can understand that the metamorphosis from child to adult has been exquisitely painful for Doug.

As Doug wanders in the liminal territory between childhood and adulthood, he becomes obsessed with the Tarot Witch, a wax arcade fortuneteller. This obsession is a manifestation of Doug's fear of the future. Doug wants the Witch to reassure him that the future can be known, because if it can be known, then it can be controlled. When she issues a blank card, the blank card of the future, Douglas falls into a state of serious, and life-threatening, melancholy.

This is the final, and ultimate, liminal space of *Dandelion Wine*, the boundary between life and death that Doug travels as he falls ill. His is a disease of the spirit; the extraordinary transformation and metamorphosis that he has experienced over the summer threatens him with utter dissolution. In magical realist texts, these are the moments when magic is most likely to erupt, and so it does. Mr. Jonas, who is both junkman and spiritual healer in the coexistent worlds of Green Town, offers Doug a magic elixir: "GREEN DUSK FOR DREAMING BRAND PURE NORTHERN AIR. . . . derived from the atmosphere of the white Arctic in the spring of 1900, and mixed with the wind from the upper Hudson Valley in the month of April, 1910, and containing particles of dust seen shining in the sunset of one day in the meadows around Grinnell, Iowa. . . ." Doug, in a coma and dreaming under an apple tree in his back yard, breathes in the magic air and is healed.

It is clear in the final chapters that Doug has been transformed in the borderlands between life and death, and has become a healer himself, restoring his grandmother to her magical self after his Aunt Rose attempts to organize her kitchen. When Doug, in the final section, climbs once again to his grandparents' cupola to put the town to sleep at the end of the summer, he does so as a young man, not as a child.

Some earlier critics have found *Dandelion Wine* to be a cloyingly sweet and overly sentimental bit of autobiographical and nostalgic fluff. These readers seem to have wanted Bradbury to create a "realistic" vision of childhood. However, a more contemporary consideration of magical realism suggests that Bradbury has created multiple worlds in his simple tales. Readers can find on the streets of Green Town front porches, families, furniture□a perfect place to spend a long summer evening. At the same time, however, readers also find the spaces where the unpredictable and chaotic seep through. Indeed, a reading that takes into account magical realism opens the door to the boundary lands where reader, writer, and text are utterly transformed by acts of co-creation. Like Grandfather in the cellar, like Douglas in the cupola, and like Bradbury at his typewriter, readers create *Dandelion Wine* for themselves, the liminal space of the novel welcoming them in for just another sip.

Source: Diane Andrews Henningfeld, Critical Essay on *Dandelion Wine*, in *Novels for Students*, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Quotes

"I'm *really* alive! he thought. I never knew it before, or if I did I don't remember!" p. 10

"Pride of lions in the yard. Stare, and they burn a hole in your retina. A common flower, a weed that no one sees, yes. But for us, a noble thing, the dandelion." p. 12

"Feel those shoes, Mr. Sanderson, *feel* how fast they'd take me? All those springs inside? Feel all the running inside? Feel how they kind of grab hold and can't let you alone and don't like you just *standing* there?" p. 23

"I'm going to divide the summer up in two parts. First part of the tablet is titled: RITES AND CEREMONIES. The first root beer pop of the year. The first time running barefoot in the grass of the year. First time almost drowning in the lake of the year. First watermelon. First mosquito. First harvest of dandelions. Those are the things we do over and over and never think. Now here in back, like I said, is DISCOVERIES AND REVELATIONS or maybe ILLUMINATIONS, that's a swell word, or INTUITIONS, okay?" p. 27

"The ravine at night don't belong in Mr. Auffmann's Happiness Machine, if he ever builds it." p. 45

"Bill, when you're my age, you'll find out it's the little savors and little things that count more than big ones. A walk in a spring morning is better than an eighty-mile ride in a hopped-up car, you know why? Because it's full of flavors, full of a lot of things growing." p. 52

"A man who thinks like that, how it runs, how things work, falls off the trapeze in the circus, chokes wondering how the muscles work in his throat." p. 54

"Old age is dreadfully formal. It's always 'Mrs.' Young people don't like to call you 'Helen.' It seems much too flip." p. 70

"Sure, Colonel Freeleigh didn't *invent* this Time Machine. But he's got a proprietary interest in it, and it's been here all the time. We were too darned dumb to notice!" p. 80

"'I think that' - Fern stared at the wall for a long time - 'we shouldn't drive the Green Machine ever again.'" p. 95

"Promise me just one thing, Doug. Promise you'll remember me, promise you'll remember my face and everything. Will you promise?" p. 105

"You may be my brother and maybe I hate you sometimes, but stick around, all right?" p. 112

"If you find a great big fig in my bed all shriveled up come sunrise, Tom, you'll know who picked the fruit in the vineyard. And look to see Mrs. Goodwater president til she's a hundred and ninety-five years old." p. 120

"August up ahead," said Douglas. "Sure. But the way things are going, there'll be no machines, no friends, and darn few dandelions for the last harvest." p. 139

"For fifty years I've watched the grandfather clock in the hall, William. After it is wound I can predict to the hour when it will stop. Old people are no different. They can feel the machinery slow down and the last weights shift." p. 151

"Whatever happened to happy endings?" p. 155

"Born, raised, and *lives* here! All that winter, Tom, all that cold, Doug! Where else would he come from to make us shiver the hottest nights of the year? Don't it *smell* like him? You know darn well it does. The Lonely One... the Lonely One..." p. 157

"Someone's following me," she whispered to the ravine, to the black crickets and dark-green hidden frogs and the black stream. "Someone's on the steps behind me. I don't dare turn around." p. 173

"I'm not really dying today. No person ever died that had a family. A thousand years from now a whole township of my offspring will be biting sour apples in the gumwood shade." p. 183

"Tom, a couple weeks ago, I found out I was alive. Boy, did I hop around. And then, just last week in the movies, I found out I'd have to die someday." p. 199

"Some people turn sad awfully young," he said. "No special reason, it seems, but they seem almost to be born that way." pp. 219-220

"Everything runs backward now. Like matinee films sometimes, where people jump out of water onto diving boards. Come September you push down the windows you pushed up, take off the sneakers you put on, pull on the hard shoes you threw away last June. People run in the house now like birds jumping back inside clocks. One minute, porches loaded, everyone gabbing thirty to a dozen. Next minute, doors slam, talk stops, and leaves fall of trees like crazy." p. 238

Adaptations

Bradbury adapted *Dandelion Wine* as a musical several times, most notably in the 1967 Lincoln Center production. While reviews of the performance are available, there are no films of the production.

Dandelion Wine was released on tape by Books on Tape on August 1, 1987.

Topics for Further Study

Fahrenheit 451 (1953) is a disturbing look at the future when books are burned by firemen. Read this book, and consider the importance of reading and writing in both *Fahrenheit 451* and *Dandelion Wine*.

Bradbury is often classified as a science fiction writer. Research what is meant by the term "science fiction." Does Bradbury fit into this classification? Why or why not? Is *Dandelion Wine* a work of science fiction?

Read Bradbury's *Zen and the Art of Writing*. What are some of Bradbury's major ideas about writing? Does Douglas use the same techniques in his writing that Bradbury describes? Practice some of the techniques he describes, and develop a portfolio of writings based on his ideas.

Bradbury wrote many screenplays in addition to his novels, short stories, and plays. Perhaps his most famous is his 1956 screenplay for director John Huston's *Moby Dick*. Watch this version of the movie. Can you identify some of Bradbury's themes and ideas present in the film? Are there any points of connection between *Moby Dick* and *Dandelion Wine*?

Compare and Contrast

1920s: In the aftermath of World War I, the United States enters an isolationist phase, concerning itself with its own economy and politics, an isolationism that continues until the American entry into World War II in 1941.

1950s: In the aftermath of World War II, the United States engages in the cold war with the Soviet Union, as the country attempts to stop the spread of communism throughout the world.

Today: The Soviet Union no longer exists, and the cold war is now over.

1920s: The stock market booms, and many invest in the stock market, often on credit, undermining the economic stability of the country. In 1929, the good times come to a halt with the stock market crash of October, ushering in the ten long years of the Great Depression that follows.

1950s: As soldiers return home first from World War II and then the Korean War, unemployment rises and the country experiences another economic slow down, although not nearly as serious as in the Depression-era 1930s.

Today: The bombing of the World Trade Center towers in 2001 leads to a substantial drop in the stock market, pushing up the unemployment rate and causing economic hardships for many Americans.

1920s: The automotive and aviation industries are in their infancy, although it is clear that increased technology will lead the way to ever-greater productivity in both fields.

1950s: Americans purchase cars in record quantities, made affordable by the growth of technology. The newly born aerospace industry races to develop technology to compete with the Soviet Union's launching of spacecraft.

Today: Growth in technology has taken Americans to the moon and back, and now makes possible communication satellites and further exploration of space. The world grows ever more accessible because of cell phones, jet aircraft, computers, and television, all products of the rapid technological growth.

What Do I Read Next?

The Martian Chronicles (1950) is a collection of intertwined short stories about a series of attempts to colonize Mars. Many critics consider this to be Bradbury's best book.

Conversations with Ray Bradbury (2004), edited by Steven L. Aggelis, is an important collection of many interviews with Bradbury, who talks about his life and his writing.

Jonathan R. Eller and William F. Toupance's *Ray Bradbury: The Life of Fiction* (2004) is the definitive critical biography of Bradbury and his work.

Bradbury: An Illustrated Life: A Journey to Far Metaphor (2002), by Jerry Weist and Ray Bradbury, is a coffee table book with wonderful illustrations, copies of posters, photographs, scenes from films, and more.

Fahrenheit 451 (1953) is perhaps Bradbury's most famous book, set in the not-so-distant future when reading is a crime.

Further Study

Bloom, Harold, ed., *Ray Bradbury*, Modern Critical Views series, Chelsea House Publishers, 2001.

While most of the essays included in this collection are reprints, the collection as a whole gives students a broad survey of Bradbury criticism.

Bradbury, Ray, "Memories Shape the Voice," in *The Voice of the Narrator in Children's Literature: Insights from Writers and Critics*, edited by Charlotte F. Otten and Cary D. Schmidt, Greenwood Press, 1989, pp. 132—38.

In this essential article, Bradbury discusses how he wrote *Dandelion Wine* using his own memories. This essay, titled "Just This Side of Byzantium: An Introduction," also appears in the 2001 William Morrow edition of *Dandelion Wine*.

Johnson, Wayne L., *Ray Bradbury*, Frederick Ungar, 1980.

Johnson provides an interesting chapter on Bradbury's Green Town stories.

Mogen, David, *Ray Bradbury*, Twayne, 1986.

Mogen's book offers both a thorough introduction to Bradbury and a work-by-work analysis of Bradbury's major fiction.

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