The Veldt

Ray Bradbury

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Introduction

"The Veldt" is the first story in Ray Bradbury's anthology, *The Illustrated Man*. Published in 1951 by Doubleday, the book was a great success with readers and critics alike. It was the perfect follow−up to Bradbury's successful publication of *The Martian Chronicles* the year before, and it cemented his reputation as a great writer. The anthology is a collection of short stories, most of which had been previously published individually in pulp and slick magazines. Bradbury tied these stories together with the framing device of the Illustrated Man himself. Each story is represented by a drawing upon the Illustrated Man's body and the stories come to life and tell themselves as he brings each new illustration into view. Bradbury's use of a sideshow character as a framing device reflects his own interest in the world of the carnival and sideshow. As a young boy, Bradbury was fascinated by the grotesque and sinister aspects he found lurking there, and these themes pervade many of his later works.

The rise in the popularity of television had a direct influence on Bradbury's story "The Veldt." At the time the story was written, many American families were acquiring their first television sets, and no one was sure exactly how this new technology would impact the relationships among family members. Some people were afraid that watching too much television would lead to the total breakdown of the family unit. This fear is directly reflected in "The Veldt," but in the story, Bradbury heightens the odds by creating a machine that not only allows children to detach emotionally from their parents, but one that can also physically destroy the parents, as well.

Author Biography

The Veldt: Ray Bradbury [graphic graphicname="TIF00030721" orient="portrait" size="A"]

Ray Bradbury was born on August 22, 1920 in Waukegan, Illinois to Esther Moberg and Leonard Spaulding Bradbury. The family moved often during Ray's childhood. From 1926 to 1933 they moved back and forth from Arizona twice. Finally, in 1934, they settled permanently in Los Angeles. Bradbury attended Los Angeles High School, where he developed a true love for writing. He joined the Los Angeles Science Fiction League and became active in the "fandom" subculture in which groups of science fiction fans would publish their own magazines known as "fanzines." In 1939, Bradbury produced four issues of his own fanzine, *Futuria Fantasia*.

Bradbury graduated from high school in 1938 but lived with his parents while continuing to write. He began trying to sell his short stories to science fiction pulp magazines and was successful in 1941 when his first paid publication, a short story titled "Pendulum," appeared in *Super Science Stories*. By the early 1940s, Bradbury's short stories appeared regularly in the popular pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, and by 1945 Bradbury was selling stories to the more prestigious "slick" magazines. Bradbury quickly gained recognition as a talented writer. In 1946 Bradbury met Marguerite Susan McClure. The two were married in Los Angeles on September 27, 1947. The couple eventually had four daughters: Susan (1949), Ramona (1951), Bettina (1955), and Alexandra (1958).

In 1947 Bradbury's first book, *Dark Carnival*, was published, and his reputation as a talented writer continued to grow. With the publication of his acclaimed book *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950, Bradbury moved to the forefront as one of the premier science fiction writers of the day. In 1951 he followed up this success with the publication of *The Illustrated Man*, an anthology containing the short story "The Veldt." This book was also extremely popular with readers and solidified Bradbury's

reputation. Throughout the following years, Bradbury continued to build upon his success with the publication of *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), *Dandelion Wine* (1957), and *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962).

Through the remainder of the century, Bradbury continued to write novels and short stories but also branched out to many other formats and media. He has written play scripts, screenplays, teleplays, and poetry. His works have been translated into numerous languages and have been adapted many times over. In 1964 three of his short stories, were presented on stage in *The World of Ray Bradbury* and in 1969 a film version of *The Illustrated Man* was released. Bradbury also produced his own cable television series, *Ray Bradbury Theater* from 1985 to 1992. Bradbury's work has won innumerable awards and honors including the O. Henry Memorial Award, the 1977 World Fantasy Award for Lifetime Achievement, the 1988 Nebula Grand Master Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America, and the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters.

Summary and Analysis

Lydia and George Hadley live in a Happy−life Home, a technological marvel that automatically tends to their every need. It dresses them, cooks the food, brushes their teeth, and even rocks them to sleep. The house also contains a high−tech nursery. Lydia tells George that she thinks something might be wrong with the nursery, and she wants him to take a look at it. They go to the nursery, and as they stand in the center of the room, the nursery's previously blank walls and ceiling come to life. The room is transformed into a genuine African veldt, complete with a blazing hot sun and all the authentic sensory experiences that would accompany such a setting. The couple stands and watches the antelopes and vultures that roam the plains. There are also lions off in the distance that seem to be feeding upon a recent kill. Suddenly the lions turn and run toward George and Lydia. The two run out of the nursery and slam the door.

Lydia is still terrified that something has gone wrong and that the nursery settings are becoming too real. George assures her, however, that it is just the machinery of the room creating a realistic environment. The machine works through telepathy. It reads a person's thoughts and then projects them onto the walls to create the environment. George tells Lydia that the children have been reading a lot about Africa and that is why they have created the veldt. Lydia is still not convinced, and she insists that George lock the nursery for a few days. George is hesitant at first because he remembers the tantrums the children threw the last time he locked the nursery as a punishment. He relents, however, and locks the door. Lydia then suggests that they turn off the entire house for a few days. She is worried that she is becoming unnecessary because the house can perform the duties of wife, mother, and nursemaid. She notes that George seems to feel unnecessary too. As the two are talking in the hallway, the door of the nursery trembles as if something has jumped against it from the other side. Lydia is frightened, but George reassures her that the lions in the nursery are not real and therefore they cannot pose any real danger.

Later that day, George and Lydia are eating dinner at their automated table. George is

still thinking about the events in the nursery. Because the nursery creates its environments by telepathically reading the children's thoughts, he is concerned about the images of death that seem to pervade the African veldt that they have created. George and Lydia both wonder why the children no longer want to create beautiful fantasy scenes like they used to. George decides to go and double−check the nursery once again. He walks in and finds himself in the middle of the veldt. Knowing that the room is programmed to react to thoughts, he attempts to change the room into a scene from Aladdin and his magic lamp. The room will not change, however. George returns to the table and tells Lydia about his inability to change the setting in the room.

Wendy and Peter return home and their father questions them about the African scene in the nursery. They deny that there is an African veldt. They take their parents to the nursery and show them that it contains a lovely green forest. George suspects that they are lying, however, and he sends them to bed. Before George and Lydia leave the room, they find a wallet lying on the floor. It is one of George's old wallets. It has been chewed and has blood smears on each side. George and Lydia leave the nursery and lock the door.

That night the couple are lying awake in bed discussing the nursery problem. They believe that it has caused Wendy and Peter to become spoiled and rather cold towards them. George decides that he will invite the children's psychologist, David McClean, over to take a look at the nursery to see what he thinks. A moment later, George and Lydia hear screams and the roar of lions coming from the nursery. The screams sound familiar, but the couple is not exactly sure why.

The next day Peter asks his father if he is going to lock up the nursery permanently. George says that he is considering turning off the entire house for a while. Peter threatens his father that he had better not do that. Soon, David McClean arrives. George takes him to the nursery where the children are playing. It has once again been turned into an African veldt. George and David can see the lions feeding off in the distance. They send the children out. After studying the African scene for a moment, David admits that he has a very bad feeling about what is taking place. He says that

the children seem to care more about the room than they do about their parents and that the situation has become quite dangerous. He suggests tearing down the nursery. As David and George leave, George asks whether there is any way that the lions in the nursery environment could become real. David says he does not think so. The two then find a bloody scarf belonging to Lydia on the floor.

George begins switching off the house while the children cry and beg him to stop. George says that it is time they all went on a little vacation together and that he has asked David McClean to come over to take care of the house. The children plead for just one more moment in the nursery before George continues switching it off. Lydia urges her husband to let them have a few more minutes, and he relents. The children go to the nursery while Lydia and George go upstairs to change clothes. They suddenly hear the children calling them from the nursery. They rush in, but the children are not there. The nursery is once again the veldt, and the lions are approaching from the distance. Suddenly, the door of the nursery slams. George and Lydia run to escape but discover the children have locked the door from the outside. The lions approach as George and Lydia scream. Suddenly they realize why the screams coming from the nursery had always sounded so familiar. They had been their own screams.

The children calmly greet David McClean at the nursery doorway. He enters and sees the lions again off feeding in the distance. Then, Wendy politely offers David a cup of tea.

Characters

George Hadley

George Hadley is a father who wants to provide the best for his family. He loves his children, and is concerned about their welfare. He does not like acting as a disciplinarian, but will punish the children when necessary. Throughout the story, George slowly becomes frustrated with the effect the house is having on his family. He cares more for his family than he does for the convenience the automated house can provide; and therefore, he has no problem turning off the house. George does not jump to conclusions and tries to take a very logical approach to problems. George's logical nature is the reason that he does not realize the true danger of the nursery until it is too late.

Lydia Hadley

Lydia Hadley is a caring mother who loves her husband and her children. She is concerned that the high−tech home they are living in is having a negative effect upon the family relationships, and she longs for a return to a more traditional setting. Lydia has a strong intuition about the threat the nursery poses. Lydia wants to do what is right, but she has a hard time following through with discipline and tends to give in to her children.

Peter Hadley

Peter Hadley is a spoiled ten−year−old boy who does not like to be told "no." He dominates his twin sister, Wendy, and often orders her around. Peter is very strong−willed and is not afraid to stand up to his father. He has a high I.Q. and is especially knowledgeable when it comes to technology. Peter is a cold and calculating little boy who will do whatever it takes to get what he wants. He is not above using

threats and even murder to accomplish his objectives.

Wendy Hadley

Wendy Hadley is ten years old and is Peter's twin sister. She is a follower who obeys the wishes of her brother. She is extremely emotionally dependent upon the nursery and is devastated when her father threatens to turn it off permanently. Wendy has no emotional connection to her parents whatsoever and, therefore, has no remorse for setting them up to be killed.

David McClean

David McClean is a psychologist and a family friend. He is astute when it comes to recognizing the threat that some children's fantasies allude to. He immediately recognizes the dangerous state of mind that the children are in and wants to try and help George repair the emotional damage the nursery has caused.

Themes

Abandonment

Abandonment occurs on two levels in Bradbury's story. First, the children are figuratively abandoned by their parents when they are left in the care of a technological baby sitter. As the character of David McClean tells George, "You've let this room and this house replace you and your wife in your children's affections. This room is their mother and father, far more important in their lives than their real parents." This accidental abdication of parental responsibility sets the children up to become emotionally attached to the nursery. Then, when George threatens to turn off the nursery, the children are terrified because now they are going to be abandoned by their new, surrogate parent, the nursery.

Alienation

Alienation occurs when one feels cut off or estranged from what used to be comfortable and familiar. A sense of isolation and uneasiness takes over. In "The Veldt," this theme is embodied in the character of Lydia. She is the first to recognize that there is something unfamiliar happening in the house and urges George to take a look at the nursery because, it "is different now than it was." Lydia clearly recognizes her own feelings of alienation when she admits very early in the story, "I feel like I don't belong here. "

Consumerism

George Hadley embodies the theme of consumerism because he believes in providing the best that money can buy for his family. George believes that he can show his family love by buying them things. Allowing material possessions to stand in for direct human interaction and expressions of love, however, is what ultimately sets

George up as the enemy to his children. The theme is succinctly summed up near the end of the story when George asks Lydia, "What prompted us to buy a nightmare?" and she replies, "Pride, money, foolishness."

Dystopia

A dystopia is a place in which people lead fearful, dehumanized lives. It is the opposite of a utopia. Dystopias often serve as warnings of potential dangers that can be brought on through the misuse of technology or power. In "The Veldt," Bradbury turns the Hadley's Happy−life Home into a dystopia that gradually dehumanizes the children and destroys the parents. The dangers are revealed slowly through the story as George begins to realize that the wonderful home that he has provided for his family might not be so wonderful at all. His dream home actually turns into a nightmare.

Illusion versus Reality

The ability to distinguish illusion from reality and the co−mingling of the two is a key theme in "The Veldt." George ultimately agrees to turn on the nursery one more time, thus putting himself and his wife in jeopardy, because he believes that there is a definite distinction between illusion and reality. Something that is an illusion can never become truly "real." This is why George believes that the lions pose no real threat. They are only part of a machine that creates wonderful illusions, "Walls, Lydia, remember; crystal walls, that's all they are. Oh, they look real, I must admit—Africa in your parlor—but it's all dimensional superactionary, supersensitive color film and mental tape film behind glass screens." What George fails to understand is, in the world of this short story, illusion and reality are transposable. One can become the other at any moment.

Man versus Machine

One of the major conflicts in Bradbury's story is that of man versus machine. The story is built around the struggle to control and direct the destructive power of the nursery's technology. Whoever controls the machine will have the ultimate power. In this story man is destroyed by the machines in two ways: not only are George and Lydia murdered by the nursery's technology, but the children's humanity is also destroyed. By identifying so closely with the nursery, the children have become less than human. They feel no guilt, remorse or regret when their parents die, and it is clear that they have become as cold and emotionless as the machinery that controls the nursery.

Revenge

"The Veldt" can be read as the ultimate children's revenge story. Children often feel powerless against adults and create elaborate fantasies in which they have the power to conquer any adult who refuses to give them what they want. George triggers these fantasies in Peter and Wendy when he forbids them to take the rocket to New York. The children are used to getting their own way, and they become very angry when they cannot have what they want. Thus the cycle of revenge is set in motion.

Telepathy

Telepathy plays an important role in "The Veldt" as it provides the medium through which the weapons are deployed. The room manifests thought patterns on its walls, thus creating the possibility for evil thoughts to conjure up evil things. The children are able to use their telepathy to direct their destructive powers into the nursery images, thus creating a deadly setting for their parents. In the scientifically advanced world of this short story, thoughts have now become weapons, and children can kill their parents just by wishing them dead.

Style

Ambience

Ambience is the emotional tone that pervades a work of fiction. In "The Veldt" Bradbury sets up a tense, oppressive ambience in the story through his use of description and dialogue. He conveys the hot, oppressiveness of the African veldt through specific descriptive passages such as "The hot straw smell of lion grass, the cool green smell of the hidden water hole, the great rusty smell of animals, the smell of dust like a red paprika in the hot air." These descriptive passages create a sensory atmosphere and add to the sense of dread that pervades the story. The ambience lets the reader know that this is not a cheerful, happy comedy and that there is a good possibility that something terrible might happen.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a technique in which a writer drops hints about what is to happen later in a story. Bradbury uses this technique to hint at the fate of George and Lydia Hadley. While the two are lying in bed, they hear screams coming from the nursery, and Lydia comments, "Those screams—they sound familiar." Later, the reader realizes that the screams sound familiar to Lydia because they are actually her screams and those of her husband.

Science Fiction

Science fiction deals with the impact of imagined science upon society or individuals. Science fiction stories are often set in the future, but they do not have to be. One of the generally accepted rules of science fiction is that the events which occur in a science fiction story must be plausible based upon current scientific understanding. Bradbury follows these principles in "The Veldt." At the time the story was written, television

was becoming a major force in American family life. Bradbury postulated what might happen if the items on these screens could eventually cross over from the world of simulated reality to the world of reality.

Simile

A simile is a comparison of two objects using the term "like" or "as." Bradbury uses similes throughout "The Veldt" to heighten his descriptive passages. When Wendy and Peter return home Bradbury describes them as having "cheeks like peppermint candy, eye like bright blue agate marbles." The similes here serve to emphasize the fact that these are two cute, energetic children who might be found in any typical middle−American family. Bradbury also uses similes to heighten the tension of the short story. For example, after George Hadley turns off the house, he writes, "It felt like a mechanical cemetery." This description provides a clear mental image for the reader and also underscores the themes of technology and death.

Personification

The technique of personification involves attributing human characteristics to things that are not human. Bradbury uses this technique to great effect throughout "The Veldt." He personifies the nursery and the house itself by attributing emotions to these inanimate objects, "'I don't imagine the room will like being turned off,' said the father. 'Nothing likes to die—even a room. I wonder if it hates me for wanting to switch it off?'" By turning the house into a living, breathing entity through personification, Bradbury heightens the tension and the threat. Now the parents are not only fighting their children, they are also pitted against a technological monster that is working to destroy them.

Point of View

The story is told from a third−person point of view which means the narrator does not directly take part in the story but reports the events to the reader. The narrator is closely aligned with the character of George Hadley, however. He follows George's movements throughout the house and does not usually break away to report on scenes in which George is not involved. The story only breaks this pattern at the end, when George and Lydia are already dead and the narrator continues to report on the scene between Wendy, Peter and David McClean.

Historical Context

Nuclear Proliferation and the Cold War

World War II ended in 1945 when Germany and Japan surrendered to the Allied forces but, unfortunately, the war's end set the stage for a major struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. These countries had very different goals for the postWorld War II world. The United States supported free market capitalism while the Soviet Union believed in a communist society in which property and resources are owned by the nation as a whole, and production is controlled by the national government. Each country's people thought that their own political and economic system was the best, and they were very suspicious of outsiders. The Soviet Union was particularly worried because the United States had used nuclear bombs during the war. The Soviets were also concerned about the United States being the only superpower to have nuclear capabilities, so they quickly began to develop their own nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union successfully tested its first atomic bomb in 1949, long before the United States expected the Soviets to have the capability of creating such a device. The United States also learned that the Soviets had stolen state secrets in order to accelerate their nuclear weapons program. A state of deep paranoia developed in both countries and this feeling of competition and threat began what came to be known as the cold war. The war gained this name because even though there was a struggle between the two superpowers, their armies never fired a shot at each other. The Cold War lasted for more than forty years.

The Red Scare

During the cold war, many Americans were afraid that the Communists were infiltrating the country, and they began to try and seek out and punish Communist sympathizers. This fear of Communism became known as the "Red Scare" and it pervaded all areas of American life. In 1947 the United States government formed the

House Un−American Activities Committee (HUAC) to investigate whether Communists had infiltrated Hollywood. A series of hearings were led by Senator Joseph McCarthy in which he questioned artists who were suspected of being Communist sympathizers. Many careers were ruined during these hearings. The United States also became concerned that the government itself had been infiltrated. In 1950, Alger Hiss, a State Department employee, was accused of selling state secrets to the Soviets. He was tried and convicted of lying to Congress.

The Korean War

One country in which the Cold War played out very specifically was Korea. After World War II ended, the Soviets controlled the northern part of the country, while the United States controlled the south. On June 24, 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea. President Harry Truman immediately ordered American troops to aid South Korea. Soon after that, the Chinese sent troops to help North Korea. The two pushed each other back and forth until they finally ended with a face−off at the 38th parallel of latitude, where the war had originally begun. An uneasy truce was in place for the next eighteen months. In July, 1953, the two sides came to an agreement that they would consider the whole thing a draw.

The Move to the Suburbs

After World War II, suburban housing developments began to spread across the United States. Many families now could afford an automobile, which allowed them to live further from the city. People could now own a home in a quiet suburban community and commute to work downtown.

Pulp Magazines

Pulps were popular magazines that were printed on cheap gray wood pulp paper. They

were inexpensive and were extremely popular among young readers. Each pulp fiction magazine grouped stories by genre. There were western pulps, sports pulps, romance pulps, horror pulps and science fiction pulps, among others. They were usually very sensationalistic and had titles such as *Weird Tales* and *Amazing Stories*. The proliferation of the pulp fiction magazines throughout the 1940s gave many writers their first chance to publish their work. Numerous writers began their careers by selling stories to these publications.

Television

Television became an important force in American life during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Through the medium of television, viewers could see sights from around the world that they were never able to see before. In 1951 the program *See It Now* broadcast simultaneous live images of the Golden Gate and Brooklyn Bridges. At this time, approximately one−fourth of American households owned a television set. Television quickly became a major force in popular culture across the country. In 1951 *I Love Lucy* debuted and established Lucille Ball as a national television star.

Critical Overview

Ray Bradbury gained critical acclaim early in his career, with the publication of *The Martian Chronicles*. This was an unusual situation because Bradbury was writing in the science fiction genre, a genre not usually very well−respected among the literary elite. Despite this, he was able to break through the prejudice and win many admirers. As Willis E. McNelly states in *Voices for the Future*,

> Ray Bradbury, hailed as a stylist and a visionary by critics such as Gilbert Highet and authors such as Aldous Huxley and Christopher Isherwood, remained for years the darling, almost the house pet, of a literary establishment other wise (*sic*) unwilling to admit any quality in the technological and scientific projections known as science fiction.

In fact, it was Isherwood's praise of *The Martian Chronicles* that first propelled Bradbury into the limelight and helped him find a wider audience of dedicated fans.

Bradbury followed this success with the publication of *The Illustrated Man*, another book that showcased his talent for writing in the short story format. *The Illustrated Man* was popular with critics and casual readers alike and has continued to be one of Bradbury's most influential works. As Robin Anne Reid notes in her book *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*, *The Illustrated Man* "is widely considered one of Bradbury's strongest works." "The Veldt" has been a particularly popular story from the collection as evidenced by the fact that it was chosen for inclusion in the 1969 feature film and the stage play that Bradbury himself adapted from the book.

Though Bradbury is usually known as a science fiction writer, this label has been in dispute throughout his entire career. For purists, the definition of a science fiction story is one that uses present scientific knowledge to create events that are plausible. *Plausibility* is the key here, and it is this element that has caused disagreement about how to classify Bradbury's work. Because Bradbury sometimes creates implausible

situations, some critics argue that he is a fantasy writer. As Damon Knight notes in his essay, "The purists are right in saying he does not write science fiction, and never has." Donald A. Wollheim also comments in *The Universe Makers* that "Ray Bradbury is not really a science−fiction writer at all."

Labels notwithstanding, over the years Bradbury's reputation has continued to grow, and he has been recognized as one of the most important American writers of the past fifty years. In his introduction to a collection of critical essays on Bradbury, Harold Bloom calls him, "one of the masters of science fiction and fantasy," and Wollheim praises him as "a mainstream fantasist of great brilliance." The fact that *The Illustrated Man* remained in print for over fifty years since it was first published in 1951 is evidence that the themes contained in these stories continued to hold a fascination for readers through the decades. It is also a testament to Bradbury's talent. The stories contained in *The Illustrated Man* have found an audience for over five decades, and they continue to delight a new generation of readers in the early 2000s.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Kattelman holds a Ph.D. in theater. In this essay, Kattelman examines Bradbury's use of literary devices to create his taut, well−crafted short story.

Writing a well−crafted short story is not easy. To be a good short story writer, the writer must know how to use many literary devices. Because the finished piece will not be very long, each word must be carefully chosen to deliver the maximum impact. Edgar Allen Poe, master of the short story, believed that a good short story must provide a "single effect." In other words, the action of a short story should be concentrated to deliver one strong emotional jolt, especially if that story is dealing with horror, suspense, or terror. Ray Bradbury openly acknowledges that he as a young writer was influenced by Poe, and he always strives to create the single, concentrated effect suggested by Poe. Bradbury masterfully uses similes, metaphors, dialogue, point of view, tone, and many other literary devices to draw the reader in and to heighten the emotional experience. In his story "The Veldt," for instance, there are many fine examples of how Bradbury uses these literary devices to create a story that is engaging, clever, and shocking.

Bradbury always has a very strong start to his stories, and this is true of "The Veldt" as well. The story opens with the following bit of dialogue:

> "George, I wish you'd look at the nursery."
>
> "What's wrong with it?"
>
> "I don't know."
>
> "Well, then."
>
> "I just want you to look at it, is all, or call a psychologist in to look at it."

From these five brief lines the reader learns several things. First, he/she learns that there is a problem with the nursery and that one of the characters is concerned enough about it to ask for a second opinion. Also, through the somewhat unusual request for a psychologist, the reader gets the idea that the problem with the nursery is somehow connected with the human mind, thus raising the possibility that the story is taking place on another planet or during another time far in the future. The opening definitely lets the reader know that something strange is going on here. By dropping bits of provocative information right at the beginning, Bradbury piques the reader's interest and propels the reader into the story. This opening exchange also clues the reader in to what will become the central problem in the story—the nursery. From these few lines of dialogue, one immediately knows that the nursery is going to somehow be important, and now that Bradbury has accomplished this set−up, he can slowly reveal the strange world of the story bit by bit.

Bradbury often builds his themes around things that should be familiar but that are slightly altered in some way. He uses this idea in "The Veldt." Many people have an idea of what a nursery is, and they usually picture it as a safe, happy place in which children can play and interact with their caregivers. In this story, however, Bradbury has injected a twist. He has kept the idea of the nursery being a place for play and interaction, but he has replaced the typical caregivers—parents or a nanny—with an inanimate, unfeeling machine. This change becomes the catalyst for all of the disastrous events that take place in "The Veldt." Because the children have shifted their emotional attachments from their parents to the mechanistic nursery, it becomes both caregiver and an instrument of destruction. The nursery remains a safe, happy place for the children, but it becomes something entirely different for the parents. It becomes a mechanized beast. This technique of taking something very familiar and altering it in some way is one that is used by Bradbury consistently. In the volume *Voices for the Future,* Willis E. McNelly comments upon how Bradbury's use of this technique provides not only an interesting story, but adds an element of social commentary as well,

> He pivots upon an individual, a specific object, or particular act, and then shows it from a different perspective or a new viewpoint. The result can become a striking insight into the ordinary, sometimes an ironic comment on our limited vision.

The atmosphere or ambience in a short story helps to build a reader's expectations and to set him or her up for the "single effect" that Poe lists as a short story's desired result. Two literary devices that Bradbury employs to help create a strong atmosphere in his stories, and thus to achieve his desired effect, are similes and metaphors. In his essay "When I was in Kneepants: Ray Bradbury," Damon Knight calls these similes and metaphors Bradbury's "trademarks," and he remarks that the use of these devices is one of the primary features that sets Bradbury apart from other, more traditional science fiction writers. Throughout "The Veldt" there are excellent examples of how Bradbury uses similes and metaphors to help create the ambience in the story. For example, when George is eating dinner and thinking about his recent experience in the nursery, Bradbury uses the phrases, "That *sun*. He could feel it on his neck, still, like a hot paw." This simile serves two purposes. Not only does it heighten the description of George's sensation by making the sun's heat seem much more tangible, it also foreshadows the ending of the story when George and Lydia are attacked by lions. Bradbury also uses a metaphor effectively near the end of the piece when he has George ask, "Lord, how did we ever get in this house? What prompted us to buy a nightmare?" By using the metaphor of house as nightmare, Bradbury not only conveys the fact that George has become very concerned but also that he still believes everything will turn out all right. After all, a nightmare is only an illusion. Or, at least that's what George believes.

While reading "The Veldt," one may notice that there are no very long passages describing what the characters are thinking. Bradbury sometimes provides brief phrases to let the reader know what is going on in a character's mind, but never more than a few carefully chosen words. This is typical of a well−written short story. Since there is no time for extended descriptions or long discussions, the author's choice of words must convey as much information as possible quickly and succinctly. As Robin

Anne Reid comments in her *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion*, in short stories "more character development occurs through dialogue and description of actions than through in−depth descriptions of characters' thoughts and emotions." Bradbury is a master at this technique. He is always economizing and making his descriptive passages and dialogue serve a dual purpose. One fine example of this occurs in the following exchange between George and his son, Peter:

> "Will you shut off the house sometime soon?"
>
> "We're considering it."
>
> "I don't think you'd better consider it any more, Father."
>
> "I won't have any threats from my son!"
>
> "Very well." And Peter strolled off to the nursery.

Here, the reader should notice that, rather than whining or crying when his father says the house might be shut off, Peter very calmly says, "I don't think you'd better consider it any more, Father." This well−spoken sentence, coming from a little boy who is upset, clues the reader into the fact that Peter is not your average ten−year−old. The measured, almost overly−subdued tone also conveys a coldness about the child. The reader gets the idea that Peter is a very calculating boy who is well in control of his own emotions. Even the fact that Peter replies with the phrase, "Very well," rather than saying "okay" provides a clue that this young boy is different than other boys of his age. The word choices convey a subtle creepiness about the boy. Another instance of effective dialogue occurs in the following exchange between George and Lydia:

> "Those screams—they sound familiar."
>
> "Do they?"

"Yes, awfully."

This is a wonderful instance of foreshadowing, as well as a subtle pun. The phrase, "awfully familiar" usually means extremely familiar. By breaking it up and inserting it into the dialogue in the manner above, however, Bradbury subtly evokes another meaning. Now the screams are not only awfully familiar, but they are also familiar as well as awful.

Bradbury is indeed a skilled writer, who brings together many important literary elements in "The Veldt." This ability to manipulate and combine words for maximum effect is what has set Bradbury apart from many other short story writers. It is what has cemented Bradbury's reputation as an important and influential American writer. It is this skill that has also sustained Bradbury's popularity throughout his long and varied career. In her essay, "Ray Bradbury and the Gothic Tradition," Hazel Pierce explains the ultimate appeal that Bradbury has had for fans throughout the years. She notes that, while readers admire his imagination and creativity, they also appreciate his artistry. "Devoted readers of Bradbury have long recognized him as a poet in the fullest sense of the word—a maker and doer with words." Critics and fans alike recognize that Bradbury is a gifted artist who is constantly striving to write the very best story he can. His short stories continue to provide that "single effect" for readers, and they also stand as a fine example for other writers of what can be accomplished if you know how to use the tools correctly. As Damon Knight notes in the essay collection titled *Ray Bradbury*, "He is a superb craftsman, a man who has a great gift and has spent fifteen years laboriously and with love teaching himself to use it."

Source: Beth Kattelman, Critical Essay on "The Veldt," in *Short Stories for Students*, Gale, 2005.

Critical Essay #2

Hart, a former writing teacher, is a freelance writer and author of several books. In this essay, Hart examines the reversal relationships that make up the heart of this story.

Ray Bradbury has a point to make in his short story "The Veldt." It is a rather simple and obvious point—Bradbury does not like machines. But the more interesting part of this story is not his dislike of a mechanical world but rather it is Bradbury's explanation of why he does not look upon a world run by machines as some kind of utopia in which human beings are free to pursue other things than the mundane chores of every day living. Quite contrary to the notion of a utopia, in Bradbury's view, machines turn the world upside down, ruining human relationships and destroying the minds of children. Instead of leaving time for people to ponder the higher thoughts of spirituality and philosophy, a world run by machines leaves people open to boredom and thoughts riddled with fear, anger, and vengeance. And it is these results that make Bradbury very unhappy.

Bradbury's husband and wife protagonists, George and Lydia Hadley, live in what Bradbury calls a Happylife Home, a place any person in their right mind would drool over, or at least that is what the Hadleys thought when they plunked down the cash to convert their normal habitat into one they thought would solve all their problems. The house was energy efficient, turning lights off and on when people entered or left a room. The house was soothing, rocking them and their children to sleep at night. The house was nurturing, fixing their meals, dressing them, and keeping their environment as clean as if they had a twenty−four−hour maid. Who could ask for more from a house?

Well, as some people believe, there is no such thing as utopia. And this concept partially forms the foundation of Bradbury's story. In the least, Bradbury contends that an existence heavily dependent on machines will cause as much strife as it eases. It

might be fun to imagine fantastic realities but attempting to put them into play in a material world causes unforeseen hardships or maybe even fatal catastrophes. Something always seems to go wrong. In the case of Bradbury's creation, a lot of things go wrong, and the Hadleys' world is turned on its head. Something is wrong, they suspect, but they do not quite know what it is. What they do know is the heart of this unnamed flaw is located somewhere in the nursery.

The Hadleys are well intended parents who do not let money stand in the way of their children's happiness. They have installed something that Bradbury has imagined well before its time, a personal virtual reality room, which in turn would provide them with well−balanced, happy little minds. But the Hadley children's minds, as it turns out, are only happy at their parents' expense, and the debt involves a lot more than their parents' money.

It takes a while for the Hadleys to realize that something is amiss in the nursery. When George steps into the room one day he suddenly is overwhelmed by the heat. And the lions! They seem so real. Is it possible that the virtual reality machine has converted itself, has moved up a notch closer to being less virtual and more real? And what has happened to George, once ruler and lord of his household? He seems incapable of doing anything to change the course of the foreshadowed disaster that looms in the nursery. Even though he tries to avert a catastrophe and recapture the power that once was his, his attempts come up short. He locks the room and threatens to shut the machine off, but the children overthrow his rule. George is a king dethroned in his own castle.

The children, the narrator informs the reader, have taken over the parental role, whether or not George and Lydia want to face this. They throw tantrums when George locks them out of the nursery. And George, the misguided parent that he is, wants his children to be happy. After all, this is the reason he bought the Happylife Home in the first place. So the tantrums work. George does not want to see his children cry. Tantrums make no one happy. George backs down yet another degree as the children mastermind a plot to ensure total authority over their parents.

Next, in steps fear. Lydia is afraid of the nursery. Those virtual reality lions look like they are ready to pounce on George and Lydia. But then Lydia thinks this thought out again. Maybe she is just growing paranoid. After all, she has so much time to think now that she has less to do around the house. As a matter of fact, it is not that she has less to do, rather she has nothing to do at all. And that is another problem. The Happylife Home has left her with too much leisure. The mechanisms of her Happylife Home were supposed to give Lydia time to relax and have fun. So why does George examine his wife and tell her she looks tired? And why does Lydia say that maybe they need a vacation from this perfect little home? What has happened to their initial concept that this house will alleviate all their burdens?

This house that does everything for them is obviously making their life worse. Surely the Happylife Home keeps their house clean, feeds and cares for them in every way a full range of maids and butlers would, but the Happylife Home has also robbed George and Lydia of something very precious to them—their roles. It has taken away Lydia's need to be a wife, mother, and nursemaid. This is what her dream was. With the Happylife Home having rid Lydia of these chores, in Lydia's mind, she has no other reason to exist. The house has also corrupted George's role as head of household and makes George feel superfluous. This makes George very nervous. He smokes and drinks more than he should and is confused about how to handle his children. Whereas he thought the house would make his son and daughter happy and therefore grateful, they have instead turned into vile and spoiled children. This so−called utopian invention is giving them the opposite of what they want.

On top of this, everyone in the Hadley household appears to be stuck in a rut. Lydia wants the family to run away from the home, but the children will not hear of it. George wants to change the course of their lives, but as soon as the children complain, he reverses his intent. The children, too, seem to be stuck. Or at least, their parents think so. George and Lydia have never known their children to become so involved in one nursery theme for such a long time. Why are they so interested in Africa? And worse yet, why are they so fascinated with death?

In an act of desperation, the parents consult David McClean, the psychologist who understands the virtual reality machine and uses it to evaluate the health of children's minds. The mechanisms are suppose to clean (as in David's last name) all the bad parts of a child's psyche by allowing them to play out their neuroses. But when David walks into the nursery, he immediately senses that something is not right. The room has evolved into something unintended by the psychologists. Instead of alleviating negativity, it has drawn the Hadley children toward destructive thoughts. It has encouraged them to run amuck in childhood alienation. As the Hadleys will soon find out, the children's anger has actually developed more fully with the help of the virtual reality room, and the Hadley kids have become preoccupied with getting rid of their parents. The good doctor, although he suggests that George and Lydia immediately get rid of the mechanisms in the children's nursery, points his finger of blame not at the virtual reality diagnostic tool but rather at the parents. They have spoiled their children, he tells them, more than most parents would do. And in many ways, as the Hadleys attempt to rein their children in, they are now disappointing them. The children, David tells them, have replaced their parents with their room. The children believe that their parents are disposable. They have everything they need. As a matter of fact, they could quite easily function much better without mom and dad, or so they think.

Turn it all off, the doctor suggests. And George follows his orders. It is not too late, David says, to save the children. But everyone must go through retraining. It appears that George is finally learning a very important lesson. But Lydia is lagging behind him. The children throw tantrums again, and Lydia suggests that they give the children one more trip to the nursery. George gives in. Anything to keep the children happy. Of course, this is just what the children want. They set the trap, and the parents walk right into it and disappear.

But the story does not end here. The doctor returns to make a visit. He engages the children in their room. They seem content, but not everything looks well. That sun, which represents the children's anger, is still visible and very hot. And now it is the psychologist's turn to sweat. In addition, George and Lydia are nowhere to be found.

But there is even more going on, things that Bradbury just leaves to the reader's imagination. Although the children believe that things have once more gone topsy−turvy in their favor as they relish what they imagine to be a new−found freedom, readers might question just how free they are in allowing the nursery to replace their parents. The children sit there in their room in apparent calm, acting as adults as they entertain the doctor and offer him some tea. But what is really to become of them? How long can they pull off this charade? Just how much of a benefactor is this Happylife Home? Will it provide the children with food forever? What is the source of its energy? And more importantly, who will pay the bills? The children may be smart, but it is easy to conclude that they have not thought out all the consequences of their actions. They are, after all, just children. So by the end of Bradbury's story, the factual reality sets in. Despite all the promises of the mechanical world, Bradbury seems to be saying, machines will never fully replace humans. And in the process of humans making machines to improve the world, people should, unlike the Hadleys, think through their choices and the consequences of those choices.

Source: Joyce Hart, Critical Essay on "The Veldt," in *Short Stories for Students*, Gale, 2005.

Media Adaptations

The Illustrated Man was adapted as a film in 1969 by Jack Smight. The film stars Rod Steiger as the Illustrated Man and features only three stories from the book, including "The Veldt." This is widely regarded as a terrible adaptation of Bradbury's work, and Bradbury himself has commented that he "hates" this film version. It is available from Warner Studios Home Video.

The Fantastic Tales of Ray Bradbury is a 2002 audiobook adaptation of several of Bradbury's notable stories, including "The Veldt." The stories are read by the author himself. It is available from Random House Audible audio downloads at http://www.audible.com.

Another audio adaptation of "The Veldt" can be found in Books on Tape's 1988 edition of *The Illustrated Man*. This time the classic tales are read by Michael Prichard.

"The Veldt" was also adapted as a stage play by Bradbury himself in a compilation called *The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit and Other Plays* (1972). This publication is available from Bantam Books.

Topics for Further Study

"The Veldt" deals with human beings who use technology to perpetrate evil. Can you think of any other stories or films that have a similar theme? Can you think of some stories or films where technology is used for good? If you were going to write a similar story, would you portray technology as good or evil? Why?

The early 1950s was a time when the United States was gripped by a fear of Communism known as the Red Scare. Research the form of government known as Communism. What are the main ideas behind this system of government? Why do you think it seemed so threatening to the United States in the middle of the twentieth century?

In psychoanalysis, people's thoughts and feelings are analyzed in order to help them sort out problems. What if George had sent Wendy and Peter to a psychoanalyst immediately upon realizing that the nursery was becoming a threat? Do you think the story would have turned out differently? Why or why not? What do you think Wendy and Peter would have told the psychoanalyst? Write an imaginary conversation between these three characters.

If you were going to design your own Happy−life Home, what automated conveniences would you put in it? Would you put in any safety mechanisms in case something went wrong? If so, what kind of mechanisms would you install?

Research an African veldt. What kinds of plants and animals can be found there? Do you think Bradbury's description in the story is accurate?

In his story, Bradbury uses careful descriptions and similes to create the sensory experience of the African veldt for the reader. Research another environmental setting, such as a tropical rain forest or the Arctic tundra. What descriptive words or phrases could help convey this environment to a reader? Can you think of some similes that

would help the reader really "feel" the environment? Write a descriptive passage that evokes this sensory experience.

Compare and Contrast

Early 1950s: The minimum wage is $0.75 per hour.

Today: The minimum wage is $5.15 per hour.

Early 1950s: Pulp fiction magazines are widely read, but their popularity is on the decline due to competition from television, comic books, and the paperback novel.

Today: Very few pulp fiction magazines exist. Most books are now printed on more expensive paper and some only exist in electronic form.

Early 1950s: Approximately 23.5 percent of American households own a television set. All sets are black and white.

Today: Ninety−eight percent of American households have a television and of these, 76 percent have more than one. Ninety−nine percent of all televisions owned are color televisions. High definition and plasma televisions are now available.

Early 1950s: Businessman Frank MacNamara and his friend Ralph Schneider introduce the Diners Club card. This is the first credit card in history, allowing members to charge food and drinks at twenty−eight participating New York City restaurants.

Today: Travelers can carry one credit card that is accepted in countries all over the world. There are hundreds of different types of credit cards.

Early 1950s: Treating children through psychoanalytic techniques is a new practice. The main interest in using these techniques on youngsters is sparked by the publication of Anna Freud's *The Psychoanalytic Treatment of Children* in 1946. It is several years before the practice is widely adopted.

Today: Child psychology is a well−established field that can be studied in major universities across the country. Some psychoanalytic techniques are still in use in the field.

Early 1950s: American children play with the Slinky toy and the Candyland board game.

Today: Children spend a great deal of time playing video games.

What Do I Read Next?

I Sing the Body Electric! and Other Stories is an excellent collection of classic Ray Bradbury short stories. The book is filled with great science fiction and fantasy pieces that are similar to those in *The Illustrated Man*. Although first published in 1976, the book contains work that spans Bradbury's early career from the 1940s through the 1970s.

Selected Stories of Philip K. Dick (2002) collects some of the very best short stories from this master of mind−bending science fiction. Dick often writes about realities that have been manufactured by media, governments, and big corporations, and his stories have been the basis for numerous science fiction films including *Bladerunner*, *Total Recall*, and *Minority Report*. This volume is an excellent introduction to the work of this provocative author.

Published in 2003 by Pocket Books *Great Tales and Poems of Edgar Allen Poe* collects some of the best works of this famous author. The edition also contains a selection of critical excerpts and suggestions for further reading.

The Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume I contains twenty−six of the greatest science fiction stories ever written. The book was originally published in 1970 in order to honor the best science fiction writers of the day. Isaac Asimov, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert A. Heinlein, and Daniel Keyes are just a few of the great writers whose works are represented.

Forest J. Ackerman's World of Science Fiction is a book by one of the premier experts on science fiction. Ackerman has also been a lifelong friend of Ray Bradbury's. Published in 1997, this lavishly illustrated volume presents Ackerman's take on the history and major authors of the science fiction genre. He also discusses the pulp magazines and science fiction on television and in film.

For Further Reading

Disch, Thomas M., *The Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of: How Science Fiction Conquered the World*, Free Press, 1998.

This book explores the impact that science fiction has had upon American culture. It shows how science fiction has been a catalyst for new realities and also how it has helped us to adjust to those realities.

Eller, Jonathan R., and William F. Touponce, *Ray Bradbury: The Life of Fiction,* Kent State University Press, 2004.

This is the most comprehensive textual and cultural study of sixty years of Bradbury's work. It looks at his entire career, from the earliest writings to his most recently published novel, *Let's All Kill Constance*.

Haining, Peter, *The Classic Era of American Pulp Magazines*, Chicago Review Press, 2001.

This book provides a comprehensive review of the various types of pulp magazines that were popular in America during the first half of the twentieth century. Each chapter explores one particular genre.

McCaffery, Larry, *Across the Wounded Galaxies: Interviews with Contemporary American Science Fiction Writers*, University of Illinois Press, 1991.

In this book, famous writers such as Ursula LeGuin, William Burroughs, Gene Wolf, and Octavia Butler discuss their work.

Stein, R. Conrad, *The Great Red Scare*, Silver Burdett, 1998.

Stein's book is an overview of America's fear of Communist subversion during the late 1940s and early 1950s and is directed toward a young adult reader. The book also examines how Senator Joseph McCarthy was able to exploit America's fear of Communism to further his own agendas.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's“For Students” Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate

college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on “classic” novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard−to−find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for

College−Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty−five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of “classic” novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals— helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the

character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man−the character is listed as “The Narrator” and alphabetized as “Narrator.” If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. • Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name “Jean Louise Finch” would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross−reference would be the nickname “Scout Finch.”

- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts

from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an “at−a−glance” comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty−first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes “The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,” a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

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> Malak, Amin. “Margaret Atwood's “The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,” Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9−16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133−36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

> Adams, Timothy Dow. “Richard Wright: “Wearing the Mask,” in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69−83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59−61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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