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### **Sample MonkeyNotes**

**Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.**

# ***The Illustrated Man***

by

**Ray Bradbury**  
**1951**



**MonkeyNotes by Ray Mescallado**

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## **KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS**

### **SETTING**

See individual stories for the setting, though the framing sequence takes place in Wisconsin.

### **CHARACTERS**

See individual stories.

### **CONFLICT**

See individual stories.

### **PLOT SUMMARY (Synopsis)**

A young man meets an Illustrated Man, whose tattoos are imbued with the power to tell stories and see the future. Despite the Illustrated Man's warnings, he looks at the tattoos, which tells him eighteen stories about the following:

- A virtual reality nursery that becomes a deadly African veldt.
- A rocket that explodes, leaving its crew to die in space.
- A Mars populated by black people, now faced with its first rocket of white settlers.
- A Third World farmer who doesn't understand that atomic war is "the end of the world".
- Survivors of a rocket crash on Venus who must cope with the planet's never-ending rain.
- A family torn apart by the father's constant trips to outer space.
- A planet that's visited by a rocket from Mars the day after the Messiah dropped by.
- A normal family faced with a quiet end of the world.
- A Mars populated by the exiles from book censorship that fights an.....

With all these stories told, the narrator finds one last tattoo forming: it depicts the Illustrated Man strangling him to death. He flees for safety.

### **THEMES**

The stories in this collection are diverse but certain common themes emerge. The first is the dangerous nature of the creative imagination: related to this is the allure of storytelling and the danger of children in particular, which in turn leads to the theme of family and its dissolution. Another prevalent theme is.....

### **MOOD**

The overall mood of these stories is solemn - holding a clear moral view, but refusing to expound on it so that readers can come to their own conclusions. As many of these stories are tied to contemporary concerns of American culture and the foibles of human nature, this seriousness helps to emphasize subtly the.....

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BIOGRAPHY**

As one of the best-known authors of science fiction, Ray Bradbury played a significant role in not only making the genre more widely popular, but also to legitimize the form critically among mainstream critics. His unique blend of poetic nostalgia, imaginative flights of fancy, and allegorical social commentary.

Ray Douglas Bradbury was born on August 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois. His family moved several times, returning to Waukegan each time, before settling down in Los Angeles in 1934. In his teen years he befriended another future legend of science fiction, Forest Ackerman, who published some of Bradbury's earliest stories in fanzines. Even in high school, Bradbury saw how writing the kind of fiction he.....

## LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Science fiction - and genre fiction in general - was not considered legitimate literature at the time Ray Bradbury first started publishing his books. Wary of the label of science fiction, Bradbury tried to have it removed from the trade dress on his first book, *The Martian Chronicles*. He failed to do so but successfully lobbied to have the science fiction label removed from the cover of his next collection, *The Illustrated Man*. As with that first collection, *The Illustrated Man* featured a vast majority of stories that first were published in magazines, with Bradbury adding a framing sequence - as opposed to the bridge chapters of *The Martian Chronicles* and later *Dandelion Wine* - to give the stories an overall coherence.

The framing sequence isn't the only aspect of the book to give it a sense of unity. Bradbury wanted to.....

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

### PROLOGUE: *THE ILLUSTRATED MAN*

#### SETTING

A remote part of Wisconsin in early September.

#### CHARACTERS

**Narrator** - On a two week walking tour of Wisconsin.

***The Illustrated Man*** - A man covered in tattoos who the narrator meets on his walk.

#### CONFLICT

**Protagonist** - The narrator, who is on a walking tour.

**Antagonist** - The Illustrated Man, who shares the narrator's camp.

**Climax** - The Illustrated Man warns the narrator not to stare too long at his tattoos, or the stories will start to tell themselves.

**Outcome** - The narrator is compelled to stare and the first story begins to form.

#### THEMES

The theme of the framing sequence of *The Illustrated Man* is the lure of storytelling. The tattoos are a metafictional device - that is, something about the work of fiction that calls attention to its creation as a work of fiction. The idea of storytelling as having power - that is, the influence of creativity on a person's life - is common. Bradbury makes it a dangerous endeavor, however, and there is a bit of Nietzschean self-fulfillment in the tattoos. That is, one gazes into the abyss of the Illustrated Man's skin, but that abyss gazes also, exacting a price on the viewer. Thus, a related theme is the danger of the imagination.

#### Summary

One afternoon, on the last leg of a two week walking tour of Wisconsin, the narrator settles down when the Illustrated Man joins his camp site. He asks the narrator where he can find the job, but the narrator doesn't know; the Illustrated Man goes on to tell him that in forty years he hasn't had a job that lasted. Though sweating in the afternoon heat, the Illustrated Man wore a wool shirt that covered his neck and wrists. The narrator offers him some food, the Illustrated Man accepts but says he will regret making that invitation. As they talk, the Illustrated Man begins to unbutton his shirt and show his tattoos, which fascinates the narrator. He compliments

the Illustrated Man, who speaks derisively of wanting to be rid of them: in sunlight, the tattoos look fine, but at night the pictures move and change, predicting the future.

He goes on to explain that in 1900, when he was twenty, the man who would be Illustrated was working at a carnival, broke his leg, and decided to get tattooed while he recovered. The artist, which he claims to be a witch from the future, used her magic needles on him one night, resulting in his appearance now. He's been hunting her for fifty summers now, intend on killing her when he finds her.

As night approaches, the Illustrated Man explains how in three hours you could see eighteen or twenty stories acted out on his skin and that people who are around him long enough can see their own futures among the illustrations. He has never found the old woman, but still believes she was from the future, or else how would she know the stories painted on him? His shirt now off, he warns the narrator not to look at his illustrations but the narrator can't resist. As he stares, the Illustrated Man asks if the tattoos are moving; the narrator affirms that they are. Thus, the eighteen illustrations become eighteen tales and the first story comes to life.

## ***THE VELDT***

### **SETTING**

An automated home sometime in the future.

### **CHARACTERS**

***George Hadley*** - Concerned father.

***Lydia Hadley*** - Concerned mother.

***Peter Hadley*** - Child of George and Lydia.

***Wendy Hadley*** - Child of George and Lydia.

***David McClean*** - Psychologist friend of the Hadleys.

### **CONFLICT**

**Protagonist** - The Hadley parents, who are concerned about the morbid imagination of their children.

**Antagonist** - The Hadley children, who are strangely protective of their virtual reality nursery.

**Climax** - The Hadley parents decide to shut down the nursery, but let the children play in it one last time.

**Outcome** - The nursery sets its lions on the Hadley parents, killing them and protecting the Hadley children from being deprived of its comforts.

### **THEMES**

The main theme is the abuse of technology. In this case, there is a chain of causality: the laziness engendered by a fully automated home has destroyed the familial bond, as the parents have ceased parenting; with the familial bond broken, technology has stepped into the vacuum and become the new parent of the children, providing not only comfort and care but the means to eliminate the old parents. Related to this theme is the danger of the imagination, as the children have conjured the reality that preys on their parents.

## Summary

Lydia Hadley expresses concern to her husband George about the children's nursery, a virtual reality room in their Happylife Home automated house. They go to the nursery, which had taken on the form of an African Veldt for some time; Pamela hears a scream while they look around, but George doesn't hear. They are almost attacked by a pack of lions, but run out the nursery in time - George laughing at his foolishness, Pamela alarmed and frightened. Lydia makes George promise to curb the children's reading of Africa and perhaps lock up the nursery for a few days; George agrees, but notes that past attempts to shut down the nursery has caused tantrums from both Peter and Wendy. Lydia wants the whole house shut off for a few days and the family to take a vacation; she believes the house had taken on her previous roles as wife, mother, and nursemaid, making her feel unnecessary.

With Wendy and Peter at a carnival, George and Lydia eat dinner alone. George goes to the nursery to look again, considering how thoughts of death have taken over his children's minds at much too young an age. Followed by Lydia, he hears a faraway scream and the lions roar; he tries to take advantage of the nursery's ability to make the room disappear by projecting his thoughts. However, the African veldt persisted despite George's wishes, which Lydia fears may be because the room has been set in Africa too long or because Peter had modified the machinery. At this point, the children arrive; when asked about the Africa in the nursery, they deny it's there. Wendy runs into the room to check, returning to inform her parents it's not Africa at all; George checks and is greeted by a forest with Rima. Unsure of how to respond, George sends the children to bed. In the nursery's forest, he finds an old wallet of his, smelling of the veldt and lion, chewed up and covered in blood. That night in bed, he talks with Lydia about all that's happened, and they worry about not being strict enough in disciplining their kids. They hear two screams from the nursery and the roar of lions, and the screams sound familiar to them.

The next day at breakfast, Peter asks if the nursery will be locked up for good, and George tries to reason with his son about trying different scenarios besides Africa. When George mentions the possibility of turning off the house, Peter threatens him and goes off to the nursery. George is soon joined by David McClean, a psychologist friend of the family; they go down to the nursery, hear a screaming, and walk into the room to find the children in the veldt, watching the lions feed. George sends the kids out of the room and the two grown-ups watch the lions feed. David is told the veldt has been going on for a month and his instinct tells him the whole room should be torn down. The room was made as a release from destructive thoughts, he points out, not a way to channel and build them.

If anything, the children have been spoiled, but David points out that George's weak attempts at discipline have made the children prefer the house's indulgences to the control of the real-life parents. George opines that the room wouldn't want to be switched off, yet he goes to the fuse box and kills the nursery. The two children go into hysterics and Lydia pleads for George to turn on the nursery for a little while; he agrees, and the children are happy again. He and Lydia get dressed for their vacation to Iowa and realize they left the kids alone. They hear the children calling for them and rush into the nursery, where their children lock them in. George and Lydia are attacked by the lions and scream, at last realizing why the screams they heard were so familiar. David McClean returns to the house and finds the children having tea in the nursery veldt; he asks where the parents are and watches as the lions finish feeding. Wendy offers him a cup of tea.

The Illustrated Man shifts in his sleep and a new story takes shape in the depths of space.

## Notes

Rima the Jungle Girl is a character from the 1904 novel *Green Mansions*, who later appeared in a movie and comic books. The names Wendy and Peter are themselves a reference to *Peter Pan* and the wish of some children to never grow up and live in an imaginative neverland.....

## OVERALL ANALYSIS

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

As this is a short story collection with a framing sequence to unite the different stories, there is no real character development worth noting.

### PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

This is a short story collection with a framing sequence. The framing sequence is meant to tie together these stories in a very loose fashion - with the exception of "The Illustrated Man", none of these stories have any apparent relation to one another or to the framing sequence. However, they tie together in ways outside of actual plot.

As for individual stories, Bradbury often lays out a situation and follows it to a conclusion that seems inevitable to the reader. The premise may be fantastic in some manner, but ultimately spring from the predictability of human nature. Sometimes he provides a plot twist to the end - Hernando is puzzled by .....

### THEMES - THEME ANALYSIS

Themes didn't develop in this collection of short stories; rather, when different stories handled the same themes, they often provided different perspectives on the same concerns. This in itself is instructive, if only because it shows the complexities of Bradbury's ideas and beliefs in his fiction.

The dangerous nature of the creative imagination manifests itself in many ways, but is almost always fatal. For daring to partake in the stories of the Illustrated Man, the narrator of the Prologue and Epilogue has unwittingly placed his life in danger. Ettil Vrye of "The Concrete Mixer" fears the Earthian imagination as a way to fend off a Martian invasion; however, even he could not predict how the .....

### AUTHOR'S STYLE

Bradbury has a straightforward writing style that seeks to evoke a sense of wonder through two seemingly opposed concerns: the careful construction of mundane details and a sharp eye for vividly capturing imaginative flights of fancy. Combined, they create Bradbury's signature style, finding wonder in everyday life by using fantastic / unrealistic elements to highlight the vagaries of human nature. Often, this means the.....

## IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS - QUOTES AND ANALYSIS

### 1.) From the Prologue:

The narrator describes the tattoos on the Illustrated Man:

*If El Greco had painted miniatures in his prime, no bigger than your hand, infinitely detailed with all his sulphurous color, elongation, and anatomy, perhaps he might have used this man's body for his art. The colors burned in three dimensions. They were windows looking in upon fiery reality. Here, gathered on one wall, were all the finest scenes in the universe, the man was a walking treasure gallery. This wasn't the work of a cheap carnival tattoo man with three colors and whiskey on his breath. This was the accomplishment of a living genius, vibrant, clear, and beautiful. (3)*

The reference to El Greco is meant as a high art reference, further emphasized by the museum-like description of the man as "a walking treasure gallery". This is contrasted sharply to the conventional view of the tattooed man in carnivals, which paints a picture of tawdry dissolution. However, the danger of this more primitive tattooed man still exists in the Illustrated Man, as the .....

## SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS / IMAGERY / SYMBOLS

Certain motifs are repeated in various stories of this collection, some exploring different aspects of the same image.

The tattoos are the first motif in the story, symbolizing the lure and danger of storytelling. This unifies the collection, providing the metafictional means to tie together the stories in one setting (the body of .....).

## IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

**Title:** *The Illustrated Man*.

**Author:** Ray Bradbury.

**Date Published:** 1951.

**Meaning of Title:** The character whose tattoos comprise the stories in this short story collection.

**SETTING:** Wisconsin woods in frame sequences.

**Genre:** Science fiction primarily.

**Protagonist:** The Illustrated Man.

**Antagonist:** The narrator.....

## STUDY QUESTIONS - MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUIZ

1. Where does the narrator of the Prologue / Epilogue encounter the Illustrated Man?

- a. At the edges of a carnival.
- b. In the Wisconsin countryside.
- c. Hitchhiking down a highway.
- d. All of the above.

2. How did the Illustrated Man gain his tattoos?

- a. He claims he was born with them.
- b. He cannot remember, it happened too long ago.
- c. An old woman from the future gave them to him.
- d. None of the above.....

### Answer Key

1.) b 2.) c 3.) a 4.) c 5.) a 6.) c 7.) b 8.) a 9.) c 10.) b 11.) c 12.) d 13.) c 14.) d 15.) a

## ESSAY TOPICS - BOOK REPORT IDEAS

1. It's often noted that science fiction is a reflection, not of the future, but the present in which it was written. Given that perspective, what can we say about the present in which Bradbury wrote his stories? How is it the same or different from our own present? .....

**END OF SAMPLE MONKEYNOTES EXCERPTS**

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