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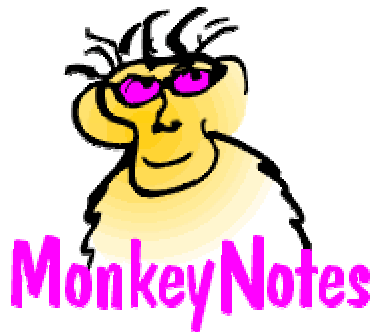
Note: this sample contains only excerpts and does not represent the full contents of the booknote. This will give you an idea of the format and content.

The Martian Chronicles

by

Ray Bradbury

1950



MonkeyNotes by Ray Mescallado

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KEY LITERARY ELEMENTS

SETTING

The primary setting of the stories in *The Martian Chronicles* is Mars. However, it is a Mars borne out of popular imagination more than scientific fact, a reflection of Ray Bradbury's desire for allegorical power over scientific extrapolation. For example, by the time Bradbury wrote his stories of.....

CHARACTER LIST

Characters in specific stories are listed in the plot summary for each story. Given the allegorical nature of Bradbury's stories, the major "characters" are communities and planets, not actual individuals; under.....

Major Characters

Earthians of the United States - Explore, settle, and colonize Mars. As the Americas were explored and settled by Europeans at the expense of indigenous peoples, so the United States now explores and.....

Martians - The native beings of Mars, wiped out by chickenpox from Earthian explorers, though a.....

Mars - While not a person, the actual planet and landscape of Mars as a major character in the book: desolate and forbidding to Earthian explorers and settlers, it holds memories of the native Martians in

Other Earthians - Other nations on Earth, unable to explore and colonize Mars due to war.

Earth - As the planet whose native inhabitants have the hubris to invade its neighbor, Earth is.....

Minor Characters

Nathaniel York - Captain of the first Earthian expedition.

Jonathan Williams - Captain of the second expedition.

John Black - Captain of the third expedition.

Wilder - Captain of the fourth expedition, his views on Martian colonization led to assignments that took him further out of the solar system.

Jeff Spender - Archaeologist of the fourth expedition who kills his fellow crewmen to save.....

CONFLICT

Protagonist - Earthians seeking to colonize the planet Mars, even as difficulties on the home planet lead to international tensions.

Antagonist - Martians and Martian culture under threat of this colonization.

Climax - The Earthians succeed in their invasion and colonization of Mars, but there is an exodus back to their home planet when war breaks out there.

Outcome - As atomic war finally destroys human civilization on Mars, a family from Earth flees to Mars to start over.

SHORT PLOT/CHAPTER SUMMARY (Synopsis)

The Martian Chronicles is a history of the settlement of Mars by Earthians. The first three expeditions fail, and all of their crews are killed by the native Martians; by the fourth expedition, most all the Martians have succumbed to Earthian chickenpox and were killed. Despite the actions of a crewmember of this expedition who was sympathetic to Martian culture, a foothold on the planet was established and colonization began.

This colonization was exclusively by the United States of America, as other nations were tied up in international struggles. There were some Martians left on Mars, who interacted sporadically with Earthian settlers. On the eve before a hundred thousand Chinese and Mexican settlers were to arrive, the Great War began on Earth. Instead of a sizeable increase in Earthian colonizers to Mars, there was a return by colonizers back to Earth until the planet was left almost entirely uninhabited.

Twenty years after the Great War and at the brink of human civilization's final collapse, some Earthians escaped their home planet to start over in Mars.

THEMES

Major Themes

The defining theme is the progress of colonization: how people from another land - in this case, planet - go to another place and claim it as their own. In doing so, they are infringing on the another race's territory and culture, eliminating the native peoples in the process. This story is most familiar to.....

Minor Themes

Related to the major themes are minor themes: the hubris of human achievement, in the belief that great deeds must be recognized by others in order to be validated; the desire for freedom which

MOOD

The mood of these stories is often elegiac, evoking a sense of loss and solemnity. Part of this comes from injustices done to Mars and Martians; another part of it comes from the emotions.....

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 enjoyed - speculative stories of fantasy and science - earned him less recognition than "legitimate" fiction. However, he stuck with his.....

LITERARY / HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Science fiction - and genre fiction in general - was not considered legitimate literature at the time Ray Bradbury wrote *The Martian Chronicles*. Wary of the label of science fiction, Bradbury tried to have it removed from the trade dress on this book. He failed to do so but successfully lobbied to have the title removed from the cover of his next collection, *The Illustrated Man*.

For his part, Bradbury wanted to move outside of the perceived limitations of genre fiction, as he believed his work had a universal appeal. The metaphors he employed may be about technology and what may happen in the future, but Bradbury was always more concerned with the passions of the human.....

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

January 1999: Rocket Summer

CHARACTERS

No specific ones.

CONFLICT

Protagonist - The rocket.

Antagonist - Winter, metaphorically set aside by the rocket's heat.

Climax - The rocket descends and melts winter away.

Outcome - The town is temporarily in summertime again.

THEMES

The seasonal shift emphasizes the changes brought by technology on human life, and in turn foreshadows the theme of human life (with their technology) changing Mars and the Martians when they colonize the planet.

Summary

The rocket descends on a small town in Ohio during winter, bringing summer in its heat.

Notes

This vignette is very brief and intends to convey a sense of awe and wonder at what technology is capable of. Summer is symbolic of youthfulness and energy, which space travel and colonization is supposed to inspire.

February 1999: Ylla

CHARACTERS

Ylla K - A Martian wife.

Yll K - Ylla's husband.

Nathaniel York - The Earthman who contacts Ylla through dreams.

Pao - A friend of Ylla's who lives in the Green Valley.

Doctor Nlle - A friend of Yll and Ylla.

CONFLICT

Protagonist - Ylla, who wishes to meet the Earthman from her dreams.

Antagonist - Yll, who is jealous of Ylla's attention towards this seeming imaginary figure.

Climax - Yll deceives Ylla, forcing her to stay home at the time the Earthman is supposed to arrive.

Outcome - Yll kills the Earthman, causing a rift between himself and his wife.

THEMES

Marriage and jealousy are the two main themes of this story. What makes a marriage work? How much trust is necessary? And what happens when someone or something threatens the marriage?

Summary

Ylla K has dreams about a man from Earth arriving on Mars. She shares with Yll details of this Nathaniel York's exotically strange appearance, the music of his culture, and the belief that he will and in the Green Valley. Yll K suppresses his jealousy as best he can and tries to be more attentive to his wife, but realizes she intends to meet York when he lands. Using the ruse of a supposed visit by Doctor Nlle, Yll convinces Ylla not to go to Green Valley - she herself tried the ruse of visiting Pao to go to the area. She stays home and Yll goes out hunting, killing York. Though nothing is said of this, Ylla is aware of what happened.

Notes

The wife's name is an extension of the husband's, subtly indicating her subservience to him. The married couple never admit to each other that Ylla's dreams of York are based in reality, instead speaking of it as a kind of imaginative fancy. However, both of them *behave* as if York's arrival is real, making him Yll's rival for Ylla's affection. The marriage is kept together tenuously by this refusal to speak of things that could tear their bond apart.

August 1999: The Summer Night

CHARACTERS

No specific ones.

CONFLICT

Protagonist - Martians who are receiving telepathic signals from Earthmen.

Antagonist - Earthmen who are unwittingly sending their thoughts ahead of them as they travel towards Mars.

Climax - The Martians grow disturbed by the sudden influx of alien information.

Outcome - The Martians become uneasy and restless.

THEMES

The psychological toll of invasion and colonization.

Summary

On a pleasant summer night, Martians are surprised by alien thoughts from Earth, giving them insights of a culture they had never encountered before.

Notes

In a literal foreshadowing of events to come, the psychological impact of the Earthian invasion of Mars takes place before the invasion actually becomes effective.

August 1999: The Earth Men

CHARACTERS

Jonathan Williams - Captain of the second expedition from Earth to Mars.

Three unnamed Earthians - Williams' crew.

Mrs. Ttt - Martian annoyed by arrival of Williams and his crew.

Mr. Ttt - Sends the Earthmen to Mr. Aaa.

Mr. Aaa - Sends the Earthmen to Mr. Iii.

Martian girl - Listens to the Earthmen describe their journey.

Mr. Iii - Locks the Earthmen in an insane asylum.

Mr. Xxx - "Cures" the Earthmen and himself of insanity by killing them and himself.

Mr. Uuu - Martian who claims to be from Earth.

Miss Rrr - Martian who claims to be from Earth.

Mr. Www - Martian who claims to be from Earth.

Mr. Qqq - Martian who claims to be from Earth.

Mr. Vvv - Martian who claims to be from Earth.

CONFLICT

Protagonist - Jonathan Williams, who tries to make the Martians believe he and his crew are from Earth.

Antagonist - The Martians, who all believe Williams is insane and his crewmen are external delusions borne of this insanity.

Climax - Williams and his men are placed in an asylum.

Outcome - Trying to cure Williams, Mr. Xxx kills Williams and his men, then kills himself when the delusion persists.

THEMES

There are two themes that create tension when they interact in this story: the ego of achievement and the limits of credibility. The ego of achievement is embodied by the astronauts from Earth, who are not content to have completed their feat, but to be universally recognized for what they did. The limits of credibility are embodied by the Martians, who find it preposterous and unbelievable that someone would travel from another planet to Mars. Of course, this is the same attitude Earthians have about people they encounter who make similar claims.

Summary

Captain Jonathan Williams and his crew of three men have arrived from Earth to Mars. They arrive at the home of Mrs. Ttt and wait to meet her husband for several hours, only to then be sent to Mr. Aaa and then Mr. Iii. Along the way to Mr. Iii, they speak to a little girl who seems unimpressed by the story she hears of their travels. Finally, Mr. Iii takes them to a room where they are feted by a group of Martians - only to discover they also claim to be Earth and are actually insane asylum inmates. Williams realizes he has been declared insane: seeing the insane Martians manifest their thoughts while sleeping, he understands that his strange Earthian appearance is being dismissed as yet another insane Martian using his everyday mental abilities to do the same.

The next morning, Mr. Xxx meets with Williams to cure him of this illness: Williams takes the doctor to the Earthian spaceship but Mr. Xxx deems him incurable thanks to the extent of the delusion - three seemingly solid crewmen and a seemingly solid spacecraft. Thus, Mr. Xxx decides to kill Williams, but the delusions persist; he then shoots the other three crewmen "delusions" but the craft is still there. Deciding he himself is incurably insane, Mr. Xxx does the merciful thing and kills himself. Later, Martians find the spacecraft and, not knowing what to do with it, pass it along to a junk dealer.

Notes

Obliquely, this story shows the hazards - and advantages - of thinking too logically, of not trusting imagination. A hazard, since the truth of the situation is never quite figured out by the Martians; but also an advantage along

the lines of "ignorance is bliss" since they unwittingly fended off yet another invader from Earth. This story paves the way for both "The Third Expedition" and "The Martian", stories that build on the abilities of Martians.....

OVERALL ANALYSES

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

When we consider that the major characters of *The Martian Chronicles* are not individuals but whole races and planets, the importance of Bradbury's implicit question becomes clear: can mankind learn its lesson or is it doomed to self-destruction? As "- And the Moon Be Still as Bright" and "A Night Meeting" shows, Bradbury can take the very long perspective and acknowledge that all civilizations eventually die out, that the life of one race is a mere blink in the cosmic scheme of things. Further, the Earthian community he depicts in the book is indeed less than ideal: its governments are corrupted by self-interest, leading to imbalances both.....

PLOT STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The book is obviously designed as a series of short stories tied together by the same theme and over-arching narrative arc: the exploration and colonization of Mars by people from Earth. The very title - using the word "chronicle" in a classic sense - makes the story's scope broadly historical rather than one concerned primarily with individual lives and achievements. This works towards Bradbury's strengths as a writer, as he uses.....

THEMES ANALYSIS

Bradbury takes different themes in the course of *The Martian Chronicles* and develops it from different angles: the perspective on loneliness in "The Silent Towns" is quite different from that in "The Long Years", which in turn has a different take on the routines of daily life from that of "There Will Come Soft Rains". In this manner, Bradbury makes full use of the fractured nature of the short story collection format, playing with.....

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. The former emphasizes the nostalgia for small town life that is one hallmark of his work, the latter emphasizes the fiery imagination that is the other hallmark. Combined, they create Bradbury's signature style, finding wonder in everyday life by using fantastic / unrealistic elements to highlight the vagaries....

IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS - QUOTES

From "Rocket Summer":

The rocket lay on the launching field, blowing out pink clouds of fire and oven heat. The rocket stood in the cold winter morning, making summer with every breath of its mighty exhausts. The rocket made climates, and summer lay for a brief moment upon the land... (2)

The opening story of the collection lays out the fearsome power of the rocket - as a symbol of change and the power of technology, it is able to perform miraculous feats and change the way people understand their world. Notice also how the rocket is personified, made to seem like a beast that breathes fire - that is, a dragon. It is something to be feared, as well as respected.

From "The Third Expedition":

"I dare say there's lots on every planet that'll show you God's infinite ways." (41)

This line of homespun wisdom is an apt description of Bradbury's philosophy: that we can find surprises and mysteries in the most unexpected and mundane of places, all of which points to a higher level of order that we only begin to suspect exists in our lives.....

SYMBOLISM / MOTIFS / IMAGARY / SYMBOLS

The over-arching narrative of *The Martian Chronicles* mirrors established patterns of colonization: that is, it extrapolates the real history of colonization as the basis for the colonization of Mars. Most all of the major symbols and imagery in the book reflect this historical connection.

The planet Mars is a symbol rife with multiple meanings throughout the book, and takes on its own unique character. Like other frontiers, it challenges the human spirit with its desolation and forbidding terrain - and thus, it must be "tamed" and shaped into something that humans can live in. And like the.....

IMPORTANT / KEY FACTS SUMMARY

Title: *The Martian Chronicles*

Author: Ray Bradbury

Date Published: 1950

Meaning of the Title: A history of the colonization of Mars by Earth.

Setting: Mars primarily, with several stories on Earth.

Genre: Science fiction, specifically science fantasy.

Protagonist: Earthians colonizing Mars.

Antagonist: Mars as a frontier, Martian culture.....

STUDY QUESTIONS / MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

1. What happens to the first Earthian expedition sent to Mars?
 - a. The sole Earthian is killed by a jealous Martian husband.
 - b. He falls in love with a Martian woman and cuts off contact with Earth.
 - c. He drowns in a Martian canal.
 - d. None of the above.
2. Where do the four members of the second Expedition spend their first night on Mars?
 - a. At a camp set up by the canals.
 - b. In a Martian hotel with surprisingly high prices.
 - c. At the home of a Martian family.
 - d. In a Martian insane asylum.....

ANSWER KEY

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

ESSAY TOPICS / BOOK REPORT IDEAS

1. How would the stories of *The Martian Chronicles* be different if they adhered more stringently to actual scientific findings? Choose two or three major stories as specific examples.
2. Create a timeline of events on Earth based on the information in all the stories. How is it a reflection of contemporary concerns - that is, at the time Bradbury wrote the stories?.....

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