

"there will come soft  
rains": from poem to  
story



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In a futuristic world, what part will technology and nature play? Back in the 1950s, during the Cold War, Ray Bradbury published a story about life in 2026. In the story, Bradbury describes a day in a house full of technology but no humans. Bradbury used Sara Teasdale's poem "There Will Come Soft Rains" in his story and for his title because the poem contains similar themes of nature will always prevail, destruction of humanity, and man (technology) versus nature.

One evident theme that both literary works show is that nature will always prevail. In order to illustrate this theme, the Teasdale writes, "And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn/ Would scarcely know that we were gone" (Teasdale, stanza 6). In this quote, Spring, a symbol of nature, has awoken, but humanity is gone. From the viewpoint that the victors are the last ones standing, it can be inferred that Nature has won, as mankind is gone but nature still remains. To further emphasize that nature will always win, Bradbury describes a fierce battle between nature and technology in which nature wins: "And then, reinforcements...The fire backed off as even an elephant must at the sight of a dead snake. Now there were twenty snakes... killing the fire...But the fire was clever. It had sent flames outside the house...The fire burst the house and let it slam flat down, puffing out skirts of spark and smoke" (Bradbury, pg. 4). Fire is part of nature; here, it is clear that the house represents technology and is fighting against nature. At the end of the battle, the house is destroyed and nature has prevailed. Therefore, based on the evidence above, both the story and the poem contain the same theme of nature will always prevail.

Both Bradbury and Teasdale also convey the same theme of destruction of humanity in their works. For instance, Teasdale writes in her poem, " And not one will know of the war, not one/ Will care at last when it is done./ Not one would mind...If mankind perished utterly" (Teasdale, stanzas 4-5). The quote has stated quite upfront that mankind has been destroyed, presumably because of war. Therefore, it can be implied that the poem contains the theme of destruction of humanity. Similarly, Bradbury also includes the theme of mankind's destruction in his story: " The house stood alone in a city of rubble and ashes. This was the one house left standing. At night the ruined city gave off a radioactive glow that could be seen for miles...The house was an altar with ten thousand attendants...But the gods had gone away, and the ritual of religion continued senselessly, uselessly" (Bradbury, pgs. 1-2). Here, it can be inferred that the city was destroyed in a war, possibly with a nuclear weapon. The house is empty, which further supports the fact that mankind is gone, at least from this city. Overall, based on parts of both the story and the poem, both pieces of literature express the theme of destruction of the human race.

Another theme that both compositions demonstrate is man (technology) versus nature. In order to show this situation, Bradbury gives a picture of an intense clash between technology and nature: " The house gave ground as the fire in ten billion angry sparks moved with flaming ease from room to room and the up the stairs. While scurrying water rats squeaked from the walls, pistoled their water, and ran for more. And the wall sprays let down showers of mechanical rain" (Bradbury, pg. 3). In this quote, readers can see that technology is battling nature in the form of the house fighting the fire.

From this, readers can then infer that the theme is technology versus nature. In the poem, however, the theme is not as obvious: " And not one will know of the war, not one/ Will care at last when it is done. / Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree, / If mankind perished utterly" (Teasdale, stanzas 4-5). Here, the " one" refers to the birds, frogs, plum tree, et cetera, that symbolizes nature in this poem. It states in the poem that nature will not mind if mankind perished; therefore, nature must not like humanity. If you are friends with another person, you will obviously care about their well-being. On the flip side, if you absolutely detest the other person, whether they live or die is not your problem; you would not care at all. From this view point, it can be assumed that nature does not like humanity, and is therefore against it.

Upon analysis of Bradbury's story and Teasdale's poem, we have seen that Bradbury used Teasdale's poem in his story because both contain the same themes of nature will always prevail, destruction of humanity, and man (technology) versus nature. From battling against each other to not caring about the welfare of another, both literary works show, in their own way, the themes that they use are the same. After reading the story " August 2026: There Will Come Soft Rains", readers may understand the warnings and messages about war and technology embedded in the plot. In the near future, how advanced will technology become? How dangerous will weapons used in war become? What will happen to the nature we have grown up with and known as children?