

Something wicked  
this way comes by  
ray bradbury. age  
theme in the novel

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



## **Ageless Times**

In *Something Wicked This Way Comes* by Ray Bradbury, the theme that physical age has very little to do with someone's actual age is very prominent. This becomes apparent in several characters as well as with the over arching plot. Charles Halloway, while an old man in a physical sense, learns that his age does not mean he has to be an old man. He is very young at heart and proves to be a very important asset. Also, while Jim Nightshade is only truly 13 however the way he acts would cause someone to think he was much older if they did not know his age. Also, the entire sense of age in this story is thrown off due to a magic carousel which can cause people to become physically younger. These cause all physical appearances to be an unreliable estimate of age and make you think about a person's actions instead of their looks.

Charles Halloway is an older man who wishes nothing but to be able to do things that he once could in his youth. Even when he is around kids he must struggle to suppress his childish side. " Watching the boys vanish away, Charles Halloway suppressed a sudden urge to run with them, make the pack. He knew what the wind was doing to them where it was taking them, to all the secret places that were never so secret again in life" (15). Charles has the desire to just go and play with the kids but he chooses not to because he thinks of his physical age as if it restricts him from doing so. However later on Charles realizes that his age does not have to hold him back, and if he is a kid at heart he should go with them. " Behind them jogged a middle-aged man with his own now solemn, now amiable, thoughts.

Perhaps the boys slowed. They never knew. Perhaps Charles Halloway quickened his pace. He could not say. But, running even with the boys, the middle-aged man reached out. Will slapped, Jim slapped, Dad slapped the semaphore signal base at the same instant." (212). When he truly accepts his age and does not let it hold him back he is able to just run with the kids and be who he truly is at heart, despite his growing number of years.

Jim Nightshade has a very dark and depressing outlook on life, one that does not seem natural in someone so young. When Jim's mother mentions having children and Jim responds " Never going to have any, [...] No use making more People. People die. That's everything" (31). This shows that Jim has a very morbid sense of reality. This seems like a trait that people would not have as this young of a child. Something that a much older person would more likely have. This also shows that Jim is much older in his mind than he is physically. When Jim realizes there is a storm coming he thinks about something that could prove dangerous. " Storm, he thought , you there? Yes. Why, he thought, why don't I climb up, knock that lightning-rod loose, throw it away? And then see what happens?" (32). Jim thinks about this knowing that it could very well cause lightning to strike the house, endangering not only him but anyone else who was in the house. This shows a very reckless side of him with little care for his own, or others safety. While this is not an exclusively adult trait it is more common in older people where as people his age tend to normally be more care free and happy with themselves.

The Carousel in this story truly destroys any attempt at correlating somebody's physical age with their mental or emotional age. When a man

named Mr Cooger went onto the carousel in reverse, something very strange happened. “ Cooger, as simple as shadows, as simple as light, as simple as time, got younger. And younger. And younger [...] Now no longer forty where he had begun his back-spiraled journey, Mr Cooger was nineteen. Around went the reverse parade of horse, pole, music, man became young man, young man fast rendered down to boy” (58). Somebody who had been an older character up until this point is suddenly looking like a kid again.

However, the carousel does not change somebody’s thoughts and feelings so he is still essentially a forty year old man in a young persons body now.

Charles who is much younger at heart than he is physically is very tempted to use the carousel, however he came to a very smart conclusion. “ Just ten times around, back, thought charles Halloway [...] once you start, you’d always come back. One more ride and one more ride. And, after awhile you’d offer rides to friends, and more friends [...] He hit the control box one or two times until it broke and scattered fitful lightnings” (211). Charles realizes that being physically young is something you can only appreciate when it is there for only a short time, and that it does not truly matter as long as you do not let it matter to you. Also if you change your physical age you are not going to change what people you know think of you, they will see you the same.

Jim Nightshade and Charles Halloway, while very different types of people, have very similar personalities. Neither of them fit in to what they should. Jim is a very overly mature child where as Charles is a very childlike and young at heart adult. Both of them see the carousel as a possible solution to their

problem, however in the end both of them realize that the carousel is not the correct way to deal with themselves. They just needed to accept that they were who they were