

The power of  
technology:  
comparing "rocket  
summer," "there will  
come soft rains," ...



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Imagine if all those fortune tellers and palm readers are right and their “predictions” hold meaning. Think of how much that would change our world today. Everyone would be given an opportunity to change the negative aspects of their futures. Through his writing, Ray Bradbury can be seen as a fortune teller. When reading his stories, the reader gets a sense that Bradbury is issuing a warning about the future and technology. In *Rocket Summer*, *There Will Come Soft Rains*, and *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury warns against technology’s effect on the environment, its destructive power and its control over society. Bradbury’s writing forewarns the reader of the consequences that come with the unheeded development of technology.

Bradbury warns the reader of the negative effects technology has on the environment. In *Rocket Summer*, Bradbury takes a winter scene and changes it to summer in a blink of the eye: “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.” (Bradbury 1). Bradbury made the dramatic change from winter to summer to emphasize the rocket’s effect on the environment. The change in weather warns to not forget about the environment as technology develops, or else the technology will change it completely. The rocket destroyed its surroundings, changed the season, its landscape, and therefore man: “The failure of man to live in harmony with nature is the failure of man.” (Eller 1). By neglecting nature man has forgotten that the earth is essential in providing basic human needs such as food and water. By disregarding these necessities, man fails to provide for themselves and will suffer both the short and long-term consequences of the rocket’s environmental impact. Bradbury

creates a drastic environmental change to warn about neglecting the environment. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury takes a different approach to technology's destructive potential on nature; he ignores nature completely. Bradbury creates a world that is so filled with technology that it distracts not only the reader from nature, but the characters as well: "Bet I know something else you don't. There's dew on the grass in the morning. He suddenly couldn't remember if he had known this or not, and it made him quite irritable." (Bradbury 50). Montag lives in a world so overwhelmed by technology that he is distracted from nature that is all around him. Bradbury explores the idea of being trapped in a world of overwhelming interference from technology to demonstrate man's neglect of the environment. Bradbury uses the dramatic change in weather and the disregard of nature to warn against the negative effects technology has on the natural world.

Bradbury uses fire to warn the reader of technology's destructive power. He includes a great deal of fire imagery because fire – like technology – can easily become out of control. The amount of destruction fire causes in *Fahrenheit 451*, obviously has some meaning. The fire destroys not only books, but entire houses and people. Throughout the novel, the enabling of fire's destruction is done by technology: "With the brass nozzle of the flame-gun in his fists, with this great python spitting its venomous kerosene upon the world, his hands were the hands of some amazing conductor playing all the symphonies of blazing and burning" (Bradbury 3) The flame-gun enables the firemen to burn books and houses, the salamander (the fire truck) enables them to get to the books. The flame-gun enables Montag to kill the woman and Beatty. Technology is so developed in *Fahrenheit 451* that it

makes things that normally should be impossible to comprehend (burning an innocent woman alive) easy. Technology essentially lessens the consequences of the crime. Without consequences there is no incentive to stop, leading to continual destruction. In *There Will Come Soft Rains*, Bradbury further expands on fire and technology's power to destroy through its inevitable destruction of itself: "Bradbury's themes are structured around fire and death as though it is necessary to forewarn the coming of an America bent on destroying itself." (Zipes 11). When fire burns out of control it burns everything around it, and eventually it runs out of things to burn. Without anything to burn the fire dies. In *There Will Come Soft Rains*, technology does the same. Every aspect of the house is run by technology and there is no need for human control: "The house was an altar with ten thousand attendants, big, small, servicing, attending, in choirs. But the gods had gone away, and the ritual of the religion continued senselessly, uselessly." (Bradbury 3). It is no surprise that after the house ran out of people to use it, food to make, dishes to clean, and dogs to pick up after, it went up in flames: "Cleaning solvent, bottled, shattered over the stove. The room was ablaze in an instant!" (Bradbury 4). Bradbury warns that technology enables endless destruction due to lack of consequences and its inevitable destruction of itself.

Along with fire, Bradbury uses the setting to further emphasize the destructive power of technology. Bradbury sets up *Rocket Summer* as a "classic" Ohio winter: "One minute it was Ohio winter, with doors closed, windows locked, the panes blind with frost, icicles fringing every roof, children skiing on slopes, housewives lumbering like great black bears in

their furs along the icy streets.” (Bradbury 1). Even though the setting is futuristic, he makes it very easy to visualize. The reader can get such a clear image of winter in Ohio in their mind, making the unexpected change from winter to summer even more startling. This emphasizes the destruction the rocket reeked on the setting when it completely changed the weather.

Bradbury does the same thing in *There Will Come Soft Rains*. However, this time Bradbury uses the setting of a desolate land destroyed by the radiation of an atom bomb: “ The sun came out from behind the rain. 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 which could be seen for miles.” (Bradbury 4) The desolate land itself, emphasizes the destruction of technology, specifically nuclear warfare. The setting – once a thriving city – and the in-depth detail of the now lone house, allows the reader to emotionally connect with the story, making the destruction of the atom bomb more impactful. Bradbury uses setting to emphasize technology’s destruction, warning the reader of its potential.

Bradbury explores the idea of materialism to warn the reader of technology’s control over society. In *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury uses futuristic entertainment to demonstrate technology’s control through materialism. “ It’s really fun. It’ll be even more fun when we can afford to have the fourth wall installed. How long you figure before we save up and get the fourth wall torn out and a fourth wall-TV put in? It’s only two thousand dollars” (Bradbury 19). Bradbury creates a society that worships technology purely for entertainment. “ Bradbury has drawn the sword against materialism, and against society as a producer and consumer equation.” (Kirk 17).

Technology's control lies in consumer spending. The more people spend on technologies they don't need, the more they begin to rely on it, giving technology control. In *There Will Come Soft Rains* Bradbury demonstrates technology's control through a self-sustained house. "In the kitchen, the breakfast stove gave a hissing sigh and ejected from its warm interior eight pieces of perfectly browned toast, eight eggs sunnyside up, sixteen slices of bacon, two coffees, and two cool glasses of milk. "Today is August 4, 2026," said a second voice from the kitchen ceiling, "in the city of Allendale, California." It repeated the date three times for memory's sake. "Today is Mr. Featherstone's birthday. Today is the anniversary of Talita's marriage. Insurance is payable, as are the water, gas, and light bills." (Bradbury 2). Bradbury demonstrates technology's control over mankind through the house doing everything for the people that live in it. By doing everything for the owner, technology controls everything. Bradbury makes the point that people should not give technology control by depending on it to do something as simple and as necessary as making breakfast.

In *Rocket Summer*, Bradbury exhibits technology's control through the citizens of Ohio's reaction to the rocket's impact on the weather: "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. (Bradbury 1). Before the rocket, the people did not need to rely on technology to change the weather, Mother Nature did that for them. However, after the rocket destroyed the environment, the people became more materialistic and had to depend heavily on the rocket. Henceforth, technology gained power and control over the citizens of Ohio.

Bradbury warns the reader of materialism and demonstrates technology's control through entertainment, the self sustained house and the rocket.

To warn the reader of technology's control through fear, Bradbury uses animal imagery. In *Fahrenheit 451*, animal imagery is used to demonstrate how technology controls us through the fear of what it might become: "The Mechanical hound slept, but did not sleep, lived but did not live in its gently humming, gently vibrating, softly illuminated kennel." (Bradbury 64). The fear Montag has for the hound effects his actions throughout the novel.

Montag is reluctant to go back to the fire station because he knows the hound will be there. In the end, it is the fear of the hound (technology) that he has to overcome in order to escape from the city. The imagery of the hound is used because dogs can be both depicted as vicious and lovable. Montag is not afraid of the hound; he is afraid of what the hound can do to him. Bradbury demonstrates that it is not our fear of technology that controls us, it is our fear of technology's potential. In *There Will Come Soft Rains*, Bradbury uses animal imagery to demonstrate how technology controls us through the fear of living without it. "It quivered at each sound, the house did. If a sparrow brushed a window, the shade snapped up. The bird, startled, flew off! No, not even a bird must touch the house!" (Bradbury 2). The house protects itself from other animals out of fear that even if a small bird were to touch it, it would break. Bradbury uses the imagery of a small animal to depict the caretaker's fear of the house breaking. The owner can't imagine life without their "do everything" house and this makes even a small bird a threat. Bradbury warns against technology's control through fear with the

mechanical hound and the bird, illustrating our fear of technology's potential and life without it.

Ray Bradbury is a fortune teller; in his writing, he issues a warning to the reader of technology's potential negative effects, if it keeps developing without restraint. To warn against technology's negative effect on the environment, Bradbury creates drastic change and neglects nature completely in his writing. To warn against technology's destructive capability, Bradbury uses fire to exhibit how technology enables endless destruction and will inevitably destroy itself. Bradbury also warns about technology's destruction using the setting to allow the reader to visualize and emotionally connect to the destruction. Bradbury uses futuristic entertainment, a self sustained house and the rocket to warn about materialism and emphasize technology's control over society. He also uses the mechanical hound and a small bird to warn about technology's control over society through fear. In *Rocket Summer, There Will Come Soft Rains* and *Fahrenheit 451*, Bradbury uses a foreboding theme to warn the reader of the consequences that come with too much use of technology.