

The illustrated man the fox and the forest



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In the short story, "The Fox and the Forest," from the anthology *The Illustrated Man*, Ray Bradbury uses suspense and symbolism to support the theme of the story. In the story, a young couple, William and Susan Travis, are trying to escape their past, which would be our future. They want to escape the future because it is all industrial, with a bomb and biological war occurring and human's lives having little value. They use time travel to go back in time to Pennsylvania as a vacation, but during their stay, they ran away to Mexico.

That's where they are hiding when the searchers find them and a high tension capture of the couple happens. The theme of the story is, "Out of the frying pan and into the fire." Symbolism and suspense are a key part of understanding why the couple so want to get away from the searchers and the future and why staying in the past is so important for them. Symbolism is a literary device that is defined as a greater meaning attached to a natural object or fact. The other main literary device used in this short story, foreshadowing, is defined as a warning or indication of a forthcoming event.

These two elements support the theme because they give meaning to all the parts of the plot that show how the couple tried to jump out of one bad situation, but got themselves right into one much worse. Symbolism is almost half of the story, in "The Fox and the Forest," and is used extensively to express the meaning of escape and freedom. The story title itself is symbolism, because foxes hunt rabbits in the forest. The couple, Susan and William Travis, is like rabbits running through the trees, trying to hide and escape their hunters.

The searchers from the future would be the foxes, slyly running down their prey. Another use of symbolism is what escaping their future to the past meant for the couple. They hated the future, and it represented a bad life, unhappiness, and pain for them. Staying in Mexico and evading the searchers permanently symbolized freedom, a good future, peace, and happiness. In Mexico, at the beginning of the story, the couple is at a celebration, and there are fireworks. The fireworks represent a bright future in Mexico and the happiness of their freedom from the oppressive totalitarianism of the future government.

At the festival there was a dragon manned by the head searcher sent after the couple, and stood for all the danger of being caught and brought back to the future. Symbolism was used to define the importance of escape and capture, which in turn supports the theme, and by how running like rabbits through the wood can just get you eaten by a fox. The beginning events of "The Fox and the Forest" foreshadow the later conclusion and closure of the story, and are what make it such an intriguing tale. The couple are so frightened of being captured and taken back to the future, that it makes you suspect they will eventually be caught.

At the festival they attended in Mexico, the couple took keen notice of this one stranger who Bradbury took care to describe clearly. The stranger had, "...bottles at his immaculate elbow; a fat bottle of creme de menthe, a clear bottle of vermouth, a flagon of cognac, and seven other bottles of assorted liqueurs and, at his finger tips, ten small half-filled glasses from which, without taking his eyes off the street, he sipped..." This is an important detail because it draws attention to his heavy drinking, and Bradbury says <https://assignbuster.com/the-illustrated-man-the-fox-and-the-forest/>

specifically that people from the future don't have alcohol and cigarettes so they indulge when visiting the past.

So it clues you in that this stranger is someone to look out for, and indeed he ends up discovering the couple's lies and he almost takes them back to the future. The eight "movie producers," too, have alcohol on their breath when they first meet the couple, which points you slightly in the direction of their true identity. But it's not easy to tell though, until the movie producers invite the couple up to their room for a drink and a smoke. After William Travis runs over and kills the first searcher, he's frightened that if they do get caught, the punishment will be much worse.

This makes us suspect, but afraid, that they will somehow be taken into custody and retrieved for the future. Through subtle hints and clues, Bradbury uses foreshadowing to show how getting out of one bad place, got the couple hunted and pulled right into something worse. In "The Fox and the Forest" from the short story anthology *The Illustrated Man*, Ray Bradbury used symbolism and foreshadowing to craft a tale that haunts your late night thoughts and makes you ponder the true meaning of happiness.