Unit 4

Title: There Will Come Soft Rains

Suggested Time: 3 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.4, RL.9-10.5, RL.9-10.10; W.9-10.1, W.9-10.4, W.9-10.9, SL.9-10.1; L.9-10.1, L.9-10.2, L.9-10.5

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Humans and their inventions are not able to withstand the power of nature and technology is no replacement for nature.

Synopsis

This classic Ray Bradbury Science Fiction story is set in the future after a nuclear Armageddon in which a fully automated house goes through the motions of its final day. The hours pass as the house tries to save itself. But alas, nature prevails when a fallen tree branch causes the demise of the house in a fiery battle. There are no human characters in this story, but Bradbury’s use of extended personification establishes the automated house and nature as main characters.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along.
2. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| What is the organizational structure of this story? What effect does the structure of the text create on the story itself? Provide evidence from the text to support your response. | This story follows a chronological structure. The voice clock, in italics, keeps listing the time as the house goes through its day. The chronological structure creates an orderly effect at first, but as you read on you realize things are out of order. |
| The story begins with the line, “In the living room, the voice clock sang…as if it were afraid nobody would.” What literary device is Bradbury using? What is the effect of the author’s use of this literary device? Provide evidence from the text to support your response. | Bradbury is using personification. This is significant because it helps the reader to understand characterization and it also is a clue to the theme. It is evident from early in the story that there are no human characters and through personification Bradbury makes the house the main character of the story. |
| What do you know about what has happened to this city? | The city was ruined from some sort of nuclear blast. It describes the rubble and ashes and the radioactive glow. On lines 31-33, “Ten o’clock. 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.” |
| What is ironic about the author’s description of the house as on a “mechanical paranoia”? | He describes the house as trying to protect from intruders when it hears the scurrying of otherwise silent animals. When it gets no answer, it shuts itself up, trying to keep everything safe from the outside. The reality is it could not protect against human’s own developed technology and that the technology survived beyond the humans. |
| “The house was an altar with… but the gods had gone away, and the ritual of the religion continued senselessly, uselessly.” What literary device is Bradbury using here and how does it contribute to the message is he conveying? | Bradbury is using metaphor. He is comparing the relationship of the humans and the technology to that of those who practice an organized religion. In this case, the humans were the gods, programming and controlling the house until it acted without command. Now the humans are gone and the house continues to follow their teachings without question, regardless of the fact that they have been destroyed by the very technology they created and worshipped. |
| What point is Bradbury making by introducing the dog at this juncture in the story? | The dog makes its way through the atomic waste and is frantically trying to find the family. The house keeps working, not really realizing that the family is gone. This shows the vast difference between animal instincts and the connection humans and animals have, to the connection humans have to the technology. Whereas the house is being described as having human-like characteristics, but it does not even realize the family is gone. It is mindlessly going through the tasks that it has been programmed to do. |
| How does the author describe the nursery? What is significant about the way the nursery is decorated? | It is a technologically created nature scene, set to reveal itself at a specific time of day. Suggesting that the children in the house experience nature that is manipulated, as opposed to having authentic experiences. The family even uses technology to create the fantastical element of nature, pink and purple animals, etc. |
| The house chooses a poem at random when no preference is given from Mrs. McClellan. Read the poem. What is the theme of the poem and why does the author include it within the text? | This poem is about the effects of war. Nature will move on and not even realize that mankind is missing. The title of the story is the same as the first few words of the poem. Bradbury is connecting the theme of the relationship of man and nature and the destructive force of war and its connection to technology. |
| Explain the difference. What does the author’s choice about structure at this point in the text signify? | The time goes from being written in italics, which signifies the voice clock, to regular print. This is the turning point in the story, the narrator changes, as the house is dying as the technology begins to fail. |
| What does Bradbury’s description of the fire suggest? Provide evidence form the text to support your response. | The author suggests that there are limits to technology. As sophisticated as the technology was, it could not stand up to the power and fury of nature. “The house shuddered, oak bone on bone.” “In the last instant, under the fire avalanche, other choruses, oblivious, could be heard announcing the time…”. Nature wins the battle against technology. |
| Compare Bradbury’s description of the kitchen. What do these differing descriptions illustrate? | The differing descriptions illustrate the shift in mood from the beginning to the end. The story builds from a calm, normal day for the house then to a frantic climax as the house attempts to defend itself from the attack and is ultimately consumed by fire. |
| What is the significance of the repeated references to rain throughout the story? | Rain is an element of the other main character of the short story—nature. The sound of rain is heard throughout the story. It shows up at the beginning as the weather box sings for the rain to go away. Rain could have saved the house from fire but does not. The house was relying once again, on the technology, but that water system failed, and there was no natural rain that night. Even though it had been raining earlier that day and the house wanted that rain to go away. Ultimately, rain is part of nature and cannot be controlled by technology. |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | **These words require less time to learn**  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/  process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | **These words require more time to learn**  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part  of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| **Meaning can be learned from context** | titanic  charred  pelted  silhouette  quivered  decay  preoccupation  bough  sheathing  oblivious  brittle  frantically | paranoia  perished  bounded  psychopathic |
| **Meaning needs to be provided** | linoleum  horrid  solvent  capillaries  shrapnel | sublime  cavorting  tremulous  whims |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt

*Compare and contrast the authors’ themes in Sara Teasdale’s poem and Ray Bradbury’s short story* There Will Come Soft Rains*. After comparing and contrasting explain why the author included the poem within his short story. Compose an argument and support your claims with valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence from the text, including direct quotes and page numbers. Use specific details from both works to support your answer.*

* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided. They should spend time deconstructing the prompt so they know exactly what they need to write about and what evidence they should gather.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should remind students to use any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions.

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| ***Evidence***  ***Quote or paraphrase*** | ***Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument*** |
| Poem—"*Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,* / *If mankind perished utterly;* *And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn* / *Would scarcely know that we were gone*." | This is a key line from the Sara Teasdale poem that the house reads in "There Will Come Soft Rains." By the end of the book, the poem's prediction has come true: every human is dead, even the family dog. The house is destroyed, but the sun still dawns on schedule. Nature goes on, with or without us. |
| Poem—*There will Come Soft Rains*  Description of the nursery, “The nursery walls glowed” paragraph describes a fantasy vision of nature—yellow giraffes, blue lions, pink antelopes, lilac panthers cavorting in crystal substance. “The walls were glass. They looked out upon color and fantasy.” | Bradbury took the title of his story from this poem—The house randomly chooses this poem and it happens to be the lady of the house’s favorite. Was the choice random? Would a precisely programmed house make a random choice? I think it was quite purposeful.  The poem choice is ironic. It illustrates the detachment to nature much like the nursery she decorated that had pictures/murals of fake nature.  The imagery of the poem is echoed and expanded in the story. |
| “At ten o’clock the house began to die.”  “The wind blew. A falling tree bough crashed through the kitchen window.”  The scene with the fire taking consuming the house until finally the tree branch falls into the house.  In the poem Teasdale states that nature will not care in humans are gone. | In the poem nature is happy the war is over and does not even care that all humans are gone.  The following four paragraphs describe the fight between the house and nature.  The placement of the poem was purposeful to Bradbury. He is contradicting the statement of the poem that nature does not care that humans are gone. In these lines of the story nature is fighting the house and definitely seems to care that nature wins over the technological house, which is a representation of humankind.  Sara Teasdale is making statement about war.  Bradbury is also making a statement about technology through the house. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer

The short story, “There will Come Soft Rains” by Ray Bradbury, begins by introducing readers to a computer-controlled house that cooks, cleans, and takes care of virtually every need that a California family of the future might have. The story begins on the morning of August 4, 2026, and follows the house through some of the daily tasks it performs as it prepares its family for a day of work and school. At first, it is not apparent that anything is wrong, but eventually it becomes clear that the family is gone and something cataclysmic has occurred. The house is described as standing amidst the ruins of a city; emitting a "radioactive glow”.

Further insight into the demise of the family is given when the house recites a poem by [Sara Teasdale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sara_Teasdale) called "[There Will Come Soft Rains](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/There_Will_Come_Soft_Rains)”. The poem describes how [nature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature) is unaffected by the [human extinction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_extinction) that has occurred as the result of [war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War). Teasdale says that nature will not even notice the humans are gone. “Not one would mind, neither bird nor tree,/If mankind perished utterly;/And Spring herself, when she woke at dawn/ Would scarcely know that we were gone”.

Bradbury uses this poem as both irony and foreshadowing. The house chooses this poem in the absence of the nightly request from the lady of the house, Mrs. McClellan: “Since you express no preference, I shall select a poem at random”. The house then refers to the chosen poem as a favorite of hers. It is ironic that the owner of the house would have this poem as a favorite. It further illustrates her detachment from nature and the shallowness and superficiality caused by so much technology. Also, much like the nursery she decorated that was full of fake nature— “yellow giraffes, blue lions, pink antelopes, lilac panthers cavorting in crystal substance. Mrs. McClellan may have seen this as a happy poem about nature--“And frogs in the pools singing at night, /And wild plum trees in tremulous white. If she had read more deeply and tried harder to understand, she would have known the poem was about the destruction of humankind caused by war.

Bradbury also uses the poem to foreshadow the ultimate end of the house, which begins a paragraph later. However, he also makes an argument against the theme of the poem because the final acts of the technological house begin right after the reading of the poem. Nature causes the ultimate demise of the house in a fiery battle. Bradbury is claiming that not only will nature notice, nature will care and take part in the demise of humans. The Teasdale poem describes how happy nature will be when man has destroyed himself, but the truth portrayed in Bradbury’s story is that nature has been decimated by the war as well. The dog that comes in to die is lean and covered with sores. The entire city is rubble and ashes. Radiation hangs in the air.

Teasdale’s main argument seems to be against the futility and senselessness of war and the insignificance of humankind in the larger view of the natural world, while Bradbury’s message seems more directed against technology in general. From the very beginning of the story he writes about human-developed technology that has caused humans to be unattached, isolated from nature, which is what ultimately causes their downfall in the form of a nuclear Armageddon.

The poem, which seems pessimistic, is actually quite optimistic compared to Bradbury’s version of the future. Bradbury's version of “There Will Come Soft Rains” conveys a profound sense of tragedy and loss. While Teasdale’s “There Will Come Soft Rains,” on the other hand, conveys a sense of detachment, even indifference. The earth will neither know nor care that mankind has come and gone, leaving readers to contemplate which is the bigger tragedy.

Additional Task

* Students should complete a quick write answering the following prompt. They will then share their ideas with a partner and debate their points within the quick write: *Ray Bradbury uses non-conventional narrative techniques in writing this story (no human characters, no dialogue, straight chronological, no flashback, extended personification). Do you think this was an effective way for Bradbury to tell this story? Why or why not?*

Answer:

I thought the Bradbury’s approach to telling the story was pretty clever. Since it was a story about the human race being decimated by a nuclear bomb (the technology created by humans) it was powerful to tell the story without one human character. They were all destroyed by technology so they will not be around to tell their story. Bradbury’s use of personification was used in such a way that it actually felt like the characters were human-like, especially in that last scene where the house and the fire were in a battle. Bradbury created a strong sense of connection with the house. I was rooting for the house and was a bit sad that it lost.

Note to Teacher

There are multiple themes for this text. The one included above is built up to by the text-dependent questions within this document. Other themes may include:

* + Technology can be just as dangerous as it can be helpful.
  + Technology can destroy and be destroyed.
  + Even technology can’t save us from ourselves.