

Authors: Ray Bradbury

By Biography.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 08.11.16

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Ray Bradbury pictured in August 1975 Alan Light

Synopsis: Ray Bradbury was an American author. His best-known book is "Fahrenheit 451," a study of future American society in which critical thought is outlawed. He is remembered for other

works, including "Something Wicked This Way Comes." Bradbury won a special Pulitzer award in 2007, and is one of the most celebrated authors of the 21st century. He died in June 2012, at age 91.

Early Life

Ray Douglas Bradbury was born Aug. 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois, to Leonard Spaulding Bradbury, a utility lineman, and Esther Moberg Bradbury, a Swedish immigrant. Bradbury had a pleasant childhood, which he later described in his writing. As a child, he was a huge fan of magicians. He also loved to read adventure and fantasy, or imaginary, stories, especially by L. Frank Baum, Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Bradbury decided to become a writer at about age 12 or 13. He later said that he wanted to follow his heroes and "live forever" through his writing.

Bradbury's family moved to Los Angeles, California, in 1934. As a teenager, he participated in his school's theater club and occasionally befriended Hollywood stars. His first official pay as a writer was for contributing a joke to a TV show. After graduation from high school in 1938, Bradbury could not afford to go to college, so he went to the library instead.

"Libraries raised me," he later said. "I believe in libraries because most students don't have any money. I couldn't go to college, so I went to the library three days a week for 10 years."

Literary Works And Honors

To support himself while he wrote, Bradbury sold newspapers. He published his first short story in a fan magazine in 1938, the year he graduated from high school. The next year, he published four issues of his own fan magazine, *Futura Fantasia*. He wrote nearly every piece in the magazine and used pen names to hide that the magazine was a one-man show.

Bradbury sold his first professional piece, the story "Pendulum," in November 1941. It was a month before the United States entered World War II. Kept out of military service by vision problems, Bradbury became a full-time writer by early 1943. His first collection of short stories, *Dark Carnival*, was published in 1947.

That year, he married Marguerite "Maggie" McClure, whom he met while she was a clerk at a bookstore. Early in their marriage, McClure supported Bradbury as he worked on his writing for little to no pay. The couple had four daughters, Susan (1949), Ramona (1951), Bettina (1955) and Alexandra (1958).

In 1950, Bradbury published his first major work, "The Martian Chronicles," which detailed the conflict between humans colonizing Mars and the planet's natives. While many labeled it science fiction, Bradbury considered it to be fantasy. "Science fiction is a depiction of the real. Fantasy is a depiction of the unreal," he said at the time. "So 'Martian Chronicles' is not science fiction, it's fantasy. It couldn't happen, you see?" Television and comic book forms of Bradbury's stories began to appear in 1951.

Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451" was published in 1953, and it became popular for its exploration of censorship, or limiting views. In 2007, Bradbury disputed that censorship was the main theme of

"Fahrenheit 451," instead explaining the book as a story about how television discourages interest in reading.

Despite his apparent dislike of television, Bradbury wrote a number of screenplays, including for the 1956 film, "Moby Dick." In 1986, Bradbury developed his own HBO television series, using his short stories. The series ran until 1992.

Bradbury wrote for several hours every day throughout his life. He published more than 30 books, close to 600 short stories, and numerous poems, essays, screenplays and plays.

Bradbury was pleased to be asked to contribute ideas for the United States Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair. "Can you imagine how excited I was?" he later said. "'Cause I'm changing lives, and that's the thing. If you can build a good museum, if you can make a good film, if you can build a good world's fair ... you're changing the future."

Death And Legacy

Bradbury wrote well into his 80s. Though he cut back on traveling and public appearances, he granted interviews and helped to raise money for his library.

In 2007, Bradbury was awarded a Pulitzer Prize Special Citation for his long career. In his final years, Bradbury felt content about having achieved his childhood ambition of living forever through his work.

Bradbury died in Los Angeles on June 5, 2012, at age 91. Bradbury's works, which have been published in 36 languages around the world, will be remembered for years to come.

Quiz

- 1 Which paragraph in the section "Early Life" BEST shows that Bradbury didn't let hardships stop him from working toward his goals?
- (A) Bradbury's family moved to Los Angeles, California, in 1934. As a teenager, he participated in his school's theater club and occasionally befriended Hollywood stars. His first official pay as a writer was for contributing a joke to a TV show. After graduation from high school in 1938, Bradbury could not afford to go to college, so he went to the library instead.
 - (B) "Libraries raised me," he later said. "I believe in libraries because most students don't have any money. I couldn't go to college, so I went to the library three days a week for 10 years."
 - (C) Bradbury decided to become a writer at about age 12 or 13. He later said that he wanted to follow his heroes and "live forever" through his writing.
 - (D) Ray Douglas Bradbury was born Aug. 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois, to Leonard Spaulding Bradbury, a utility lineman, and Esther Moberg Bradbury, a Swedish immigrant. Bradbury had a pleasant childhood, which he later described in his writing. As a child, he was a huge fan of magicians. He also loved to read adventure and fantasy, or imaginary, stories, especially by L. Frank Baum, Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs.
 - (E) Other
- 2 Which answer choice BEST characterizes Bradbury's reaction to being asked to help with the 1964 World's Fair?
- (A) honored and hesitant
 - (B) humbled and nervous
 - (C) enthusiastic and awed
 - (D) committed and anxious
- 3 What is the MOST likely reason the author included the names of several of Bradbury's works?
- (A) to show that his work is very popular and respectable
 - (B) to show that he wrote many different things
 - (C) to show the difference between science fiction and fantasy
 - (D) to show the importance of his first literary magazine
- 4 Which selection from the article BEST suggests that Bradbury had strong opinions about his writing?
- (A) While many labeled it science fiction, Bradbury considered it to be fantasy.
 - (B) In 2007, Bradbury disputed that censorship was the main theme of "Fahrenheit 451," instead explaining the book as a story about how television discourages interest in reading.
 - (C) Despite his apparent dislike of television, Bradbury wrote a number of screenplays, including for the 1956 film, "Moby Dick."
 - (D) He published more than 30 books, close to 600 short stories, and numerous poems, essays, screenplays and plays.

Answer Key

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- (B) "Libraries raised me," he later said. "I believe in libraries because most students don't have any money. I couldn't go to college, so I went to the library three days a week for 10 years."**
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