

Ray Bradbury

Ray Bradbury was a famous American writer. His most well-known book is "Fahrenheit 451," which talks about a future where thinking for yourself is not allowed. He also wrote other famous books like "Something Wicked This Way Comes." In 2007, he won a special award called the Pulitzer. Bradbury was one of the most respected writers of the 21st century. He passed away in June 2012 at the age of 91.

Early Life

Ray Bradbury was born on August 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois. His parents were Leonard Bradbury, who worked with power lines, and Esther Bradbury, who came from Sweden. Bradbury had a happy childhood, and he wrote about it in his books. As a kid, he loved magic and reading adventure and fantasy stories by authors like L. Frank Baum, Jules Verne, and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Bradbury decided he wanted to be a writer when he was around 12 or 13 years old. He wanted to be like his heroes and "live forever" through his writing.

In 1934, his family moved to Los Angeles, California. As a teenager, he joined his school's theater club and sometimes met Hollywood stars. His first paid writing job was for a joke on a TV show. He finished high school in 1938 but couldn't afford college, so he went to the library instead.

He said, "Libraries raised me. 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."

Writing Career

Bradbury sold newspapers to make money while he wrote. He published his first short story in a fan magazine in 1938, the year he finished high school. The next year, he made his own magazine called Futuria Fantasia and wrote almost everything in it himself, using fake names so people wouldn't know.

In November 1941, he sold his first professional story, "Pendulum." Because he had problems with his eyesight, he couldn't join the army during World War II, so he became a full-time writer in 1943. His first collection of short stories, "Dark Carnival," was published in 1947.

That same year, he married Marguerite "Maggie" McClure, who worked in a bookstore. She supported him while he wrote for little or no pay. They had four daughters: Susan (1949), Ramona (1951), Bettina (1955), and Alexandra (1958).

In 1950, Bradbury's first major book, "The Martian Chronicles," was published. It talked about humans going to Mars and their conflicts with the native Martians. Although many people called it science fiction, Bradbury said it was fantasy because it couldn't really happen. In 1951, his stories started appearing on TV and in comic books.

"Fahrenheit 451," published in 1953, became popular for its theme of censorship, or stopping people from seeing certain information. But in 2007, Bradbury said the book was really about how television makes people less interested in reading.

Even though he didn't like TV much, Bradbury wrote several screenplays, including for the 1956 film "Moby Dick." In 1986, he created his own TV show on HBO called "The Ray Bradbury Theater," which ran until 1992.

Bradbury wrote every day and published more than 30 books, almost 600 short stories, and many poems, essays, screenplays, and plays.

He was excited to be asked to help with the United States Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair. He said, "Can you imagine how excited I was? '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."

Later Life and Legacy

Bradbury continued to write into his 80s. Although he traveled less and made fewer public appearances, he still gave interviews and helped raise money for libraries.

In 2007, he received a special Pulitzer Prize for his long career. In his final years, he was happy to have achieved his dream of living forever through his work.

Ray Bradbury died in Los Angeles on June 5, 2012, at the age of 91. His works, which have been translated into 36 languages, will be remembered for many years.

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 Bradbury was born Aug. 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois, to Leonard Bradbury, a utility lineman, and Esther 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) Although many people called it science fiction, Bradbury said it was fantasy.

(B) In 2007, Bradbury said that censorship was not the main theme of "Fahrenheit 451." Instead, he explained that the book was 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, almost 600 short stories, and numerous poems, essays, screenplays, and plays.