

All Summer in a Day



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF RAY BRADBURY

From his earliest years, Ray Bradbury was inspired by the intrusion of fantasy into everyday life. As a child, he avidly read horror stories, collected early science fiction magazines, and attended magic shows. High school marked the end of his formal education, but by that time, Bradbury had already established himself as a talented short story writer. In the prolific years to come, Bradbury wrote celebrated novels including [Fahrenheit 451](#) as well as hundreds of short stories, some of which were collected in *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950 and *The Illustrated Man* in 1951. Though many of his works include futuristic settings and imagined technologies, Bradbury resisted categorization as a “science fiction” writer—he maintained that his works were more like myths about human nature than speculative fiction. Indeed, many of his short stories use fantastic settings or futuristic technology as tools for exploring timeless themes like nostalgia, censorship, or anxiety about the future. When he died at 91, Bradbury was regarded as one of the most prominent science fiction writers of his time.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

During Ray Bradbury’s childhood in Waukegan, Illinois—which later served as the inspiration for Bradbury’s fictional “Green Town”—the small frontier town, like many in 1920s America, underwent a significant transformation. The arrival of new, industrialized technology like mass transit seemed to erase the old character of the quaint semi-rural town. This kind of rapid modernization, which rearranged communities and signaled a further remove from life close to nature, was a source of anxiety for many writers of Bradbury’s era. Similarly, the 1950s were an era of rapid suburban development that made it easier than ever for people to live surrounded by modern conveniences but far removed from nature. The end of World War II and beginning of the Cold War also brought significant advances in rocket science. Rockets had great potential for use—and misuse—as both weapons and tools of exploration. The possibility of space travel was closer than ever before—as was the specter of a nuclear conflict that could drive humans into underground shelters.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

“All Summer in a Day” is one of many Ray Bradbury short stories to imagine the social and psychological consequences of colonizing other planets, including many of his stories in both

The Martian Chronicles and *The Illustrated Man*. In these works, Bradbury frequently returns to ideas about nostalgia for childhood and nature on Earth. Like “All Summer in a Day,” Bradbury’s 1950 story “The Long Rain” (originally published as “Death by Rain”) is set on a perpetually-raining Venus, where human colonizers long for the healing power of the sun; on this version of Venus, the fatal effects of sunlight deprivation are even more extreme. Bradbury has often said that he was inspired by the works of earlier science fiction writers Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, both of whom also imagined the human impacts of travel to fantastical other worlds. Published the same year as “All Summer in a Day,” William Golding’s speculative fiction novel [Lord of the Flies](#) also explores themes of power and bullying among children in extreme circumstances. [Lord of the Flies](#), like much of Bradbury’s work, uses a futuristic backdrop and an extreme social setting to draw out truths about ordinary human conflict. This is especially powerful given that both stories were published during the technological and societal uncertainty of the Cold War.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** All Summer in a Day
- **When Published:** March 1954
- **Literary Period:** Post-war/science fiction
- **Genre:** Science fiction
- **Setting:** A classroom on the planet Venus
- **Climax:** The sun comes out while Margot is locked inside a closet
- **Antagonist:** William and classmates
- **Point of View:** Third person

EXTRA CREDIT

Community of Tomorrow Bradbury worked on the 1964 World’s Fair in New York alongside Walt Disney, and, years later, he helped Disney design the “Spaceship Earth” attraction at Epcot. Bradbury believed that the park could help demonstrate ways to avoid the kind of futures he wrote about: “If we can borrow some of the concepts of Disneyland and Disney World and Epcot, then indeed the world can be a better place,” he said.

Transit of Venus “All Summer in a Day” is one of several Bradbury stories about Venus. Coincidentally, the author died in 2012 during the brief transit of Venus—the last time the planet would cross between Earth and the sun for more than a century.



PLOT SUMMARY

“All Summer in a Day” takes place on the planet Venus, a generation after the first colonists from Earth arrived there. Venus has a peculiar climate: every seven years, **the sun** comes out for just two hours. The rest of the time, it rains—all day, every day. The planet is covered with thick jungles and unruly **weeds**, perpetually caught in a cycle of growth and destruction. Humans live underground in a network of tunnels, eagerly awaiting the very brief summer.

When the story opens, a group of nine-year-old children are gathered excitedly by the window of their underground classroom. After seven long years, today is the day that scientists predict the sun will make its brief appearance; indeed, the rain seems to be slowing. One child, Margot, stands apart. Unlike most of the children, Margot lived on Earth until five years ago, so while they all speculate about what the sun is like, Margot can actually remember quite well. Margot has not taken well to her new home on Venus: she is frail, quiet, and pale, as if “the rain had washed out the blue from her eyes and the red from her mouth and the yellow from her hair.” Lately, she has begun to panic at the touch of water.

As the two-hour summer approaches, the schoolchildren read and write short stories about the sun. Margot finds herself the object of teasing when William, a boy in her class, tries to antagonize her by claiming she didn’t write the poem she shared with the class. This is typical torment for Margot: the other children tend to tease her or avoid her, because they envy her childhood on Earth and the fact that her parents may even spend thousands of dollars to move her back there. To some extent, Margot seems to have brought this isolation upon herself, because she refuses to participate in games or songs unless they relate to the sun. For Margot, life on Venus is all but unbearable and the sun is all-important, and she makes no secret of these feelings.

On the day the sun is set to appear, these tensions are close to a boiling point. While their teacher is briefly out of the room, William pushes and taunts Margot, but she doesn’t respond, continuing to stare out the classroom window. Angered, William tells Margot that the sun won’t come out after all. She’s unsure whether to believe him, but clearly alarmed. Soon, the other children join William in taunting Margot about the sun, the thing she most cares about. William leads the other children in grabbing Margot and pushing her into a closet. She struggles and cries, but they lock the door, smile at one another, and return to the classroom. They seem to forget about the incident immediately.

Just as the children return to the classroom, the rain slows even more and, finally, stops. They crowd eagerly by the classroom door. In the sudden roaring silence and stillness, the sun comes out, flooding the sky and jungle with radiant light.

The jungle is revealed as a tumultuous tangle of “flesh-like weed,” resembling a “nest of octopi” bleached a sickly ash grey by years of relative darkness.

The children rush outside and peel off their jackets, reveling in the warmth of the sun. It is far better than they even imagined it would be. They run, laugh, and yell, staring at the sun and trying to savor every joyful moment. But all too soon, a girl begins to wail—she has caught a single raindrop in her palm. Immediately sobered, the children walk and then run back to the underground classroom as the sky darkens and the torrential rain recommences. It seems somehow louder and more painful than before, and the seven year distance between the present and the next glimpse of sunshine seems incomprehensibly long.

Just as these somber feelings overtake the children, they suddenly remember Margot, still locked in the closet. They glance at each other, guilty and chastened. Slowly, against the backdrop of the terrible rain, they walk to the now-silent closet. They let Margot out.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Margot – Margot, the protagonist of “All Summer in a Day,” is a nine-year-old girl who moved from Ohio to the planet Venus when she was four years old. Margot longs intensely for **the sun**, which she remembers vividly from her time on Earth. Without the sun, Margot has become withdrawn, pale, and somber, eschewing the company of other children and thinking only of summertime. Margot’s classmates treat her coldly or with jealousy, because they have hardly experienced the sun at all and will likely remain on Venus for the rest of their lives, while Margot may be lucky enough to return to Earth. On the much-anticipated single day of summer, Margot becomes a scapegoat for the other children’s longing and deprivation: they lock her in a closet so she won’t be able to see the sun, which is the experience she most craves.

William – William is a boy in Margot’s class, and he acts as a ringleader for the other students. Because he is jealous of Margot’s experiences, he discredits her when she talks about **the sun** and tries to provoke her into fighting with him. William vents his frustration by getting the other children to help him lock Margot in a closet during the brief time that the sun is out.

Children – William and Margot are the only students named in the story, but the other students also join William in teasing Margot, and they get to play outside in **the sun** while Margot is locked up. In their unruly excitement before the sun comes out, Bradbury writes that they are like jumbled **weeds**. But after they have experienced the sun’s revitalizing energy, the schoolchildren are devastated by the return of the rain and they suddenly feel ashamed about how they have treated

Margot.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Teacher – The teacher reprimands William for trying to discredit Margot. She is out of the room when the other children bully Margot, and she does not notice that Margot is missing when she sends the class outside.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



JEALOUSY, BULLYING, AND ISOLATION

“All Summer in a Day” tells the story of a group of children ostracizing and bullying a child who doesn't fit in. Margot, who moved to Venus from

Earth several years before, has real memories of **the sun**, unlike her classmates who have seen only Venus' constant rain. As sunlight is the experience that the children on Venus cherish the most, Margot becomes a scapegoat for the children's frustration and longing. Their jealousy of her experiences leads them to a profound act of cruelty, which suggests that jealousy and deprivation, rather than outright hatred, are the engines of bullying.

The children are jealous of Margot because, while they can only speculate about what sunlight is like, Margot spent her early childhood on Earth. As the classroom prepares for Venus' short period of sunlight, Margot writes a clever poem about the sun. Because only Margot remembers the sun, her poem and recollections are the most true to life. In order to undercut this advantage, William tries to discredit Margot, saying, “Aw, you didn't write that!” Similarly, when Margot recalls that the sun is “like a penny,” the other children, led by William, say that she is wrong or lying. They act as if they have more knowledge of the sun than her, when the opposite is true.

Just before the sun is set to come out, the children, again led by William, torment Margot by telling her that the predictions are wrong and the sun won't appear. Then, they shut her in a closet to keep her from going outside—while the sun appears, she will be trapped in the dark. In this way, they deprive her of experiencing the sun, just as they felt they had been deprived. The nature of these specific acts of bullying shows that the children are motivated by jealousy. Margot has been able to experience what they desired but were denied, and now they have the power to turn the tables. Bullying, therefore, is an expression of the children's own sense of misfortune, as well as a twisted way attempt to fix a perceived injustice.

Though their cruelty is reprehensible, their jealousy is understandable—not only did Margot live on Earth for years before moving to Venus, but she also may return one day, as her family can afford the “thousands of dollars” it would cost to move back. Therefore, Margot has opportunities that the others don't, and perhaps her sour attitude towards Venus doubly wounds them in light of her privilege. As the children prepare for the sun to come out, Margot shows off her superior memory of the sun, telling the other children that the sun is “like a penny,” or “a fire...in the stove.” To the other children, this is a reminder that Margot's experiences have given her special knowledge of the sun, which they can only imagine. In addition, Margot refuses to participate when the other children try to include her in activities like playing tag and singing. In fact, when William begins to bully Margot, she is intentionally standing apart from the other children. Margot makes it clear that she thinks life on Earth is better than life on Venus, and that making friends with the children there is pointless. Margot has a “waiting silence” and a “possible future,” so it is clear to the other children that she does not value life on Venus and, unlike them, she has the option to leave. In both her behavior and her circumstances, Margot shows that she comes from a better world and that she is uninterested in Venus or its inhabitants. In this way, the children are made repeatedly aware that they are suffering from the sun's absence, and, unlike Margot, can do little about it. In the face of this powerlessness and inequity, the children direct their frustration towards Margot.

Although Margot's behavior intensifies the children's animosity towards her, their decision to lock her in the closet is more about the children's own anxieties and desires than it is a retaliation against Margot's personality. This is clear because, in the moments leading up to Margot's relegation to the closet, she is simply standing quietly, looking out the window with the rest of the children. William and the others attempt to taunt her, but she remains unengaged even when physically pushed. Their actions, then, seem broadly cathartic rather than directed at Margot herself. The children who inflict great harm on Margot do so not because they personally hate her, but because of a very real sense of deprivation. Margot is unjustly tormented for having seen the sun, but the children are also intensely aware that she has access to the thing that is most scarce and desirable to them. Ultimately, the story shows that even extremely cruel bullying is driven by more complicated motives than hatred alone.



THE POWER OF NATURE

“All Summer in a Day” imagines a world in which humans have left Earth for Venus, an inhospitable planet where they must live completely indoors and can only dream about the pleasures of being outside. This estrangement from nature changes humanity, both physically and emotionally, by draining people of color, vitality, and even

empathy. In this way, Bradbury shows how central nature—and particularly **the sun**—is to humankind.

The strongest example of this is the story's protagonist, Margot, a little girl who moved to Venus from Earth several years before and is therefore alone among her classmates in remembering the sun. Bradbury's descriptions of Margot reveal that her life on Venus has left her much diminished from her days on Earth. For example, Bradbury's physical description of Margot suggests that Venus has weakened her body—Margot is "frail" and her color has drained away to the extent that she looks like "an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away, and if she spoke at all her voice would be a ghost." She also seems so demoralized by her surroundings that she has become uninterested in the typical pleasures of children. "If they tagged her and ran," Bradbury writes, "she stood blinking after them and did not follow. When the class sang songs about happiness and life and games her lips barely moved. Only when they sang about the sun and the summer did her lips move as she watched the drenched windows." Therefore, Bradbury depicts Margot as a child so heartbroken and diminished by the loss of nature that she has become nearly inhuman.

While Margot reels from the loss of nature, her classmates have never even known the sun. Their upbringing on Venus, in an environment hostile to human life, seems to have shaped them to be meaner than their counterparts on Earth. The constant rains and lightning are dangerous and depressing, and the lush vegetation—which Bradbury describes as a "nest of octopi, clustering up great arms of fleshlike **weed**"—is the color of "rubber and ash," making even the natural elements of Venus seem dead and hazardous. Because of this, and because the sun comes out only once every seven years, humans must live in underground tunnels to survive. Just like this environment, Margot's classmates behave hostilely towards her. They taunt her, mock her, and they ultimately leave her locked in a closet during the only two hours of sunlight they will see for seven years—an act that is particularly cruel since Margot longs so fervently for the sun. In this way, Bradbury strongly ties the children's behavior to their environment. After the sunlight has passed, the children remember Margot and seem, for the first time, remorseful for how they treated her. Seeing the sun has either imbued them with a warmth and empathy they had lacked beforehand, or their experience of seeing and losing sunlight has made them finally sympathetic to her grief.

The power that nature and sunlight have over all of the children suggests that humanity is, at least in part, defined by its relationship to nature. Without the sun, human beings in this story do not seem whole—they lack physical vitality and emotional warmth. Perhaps in recognition of the sun's centrality to human life, the people in the story practically worship it, making the sun an object of fascination and longing. This dystopian fetishization of nature by people who are

acutely affected by its absence can be read as a parable of technological progress and urbanization. Published in 1954, the story appeared in the midst of the postwar boom of suburban development and aerospace technology. In light of this, Bradbury seems to suggest that human beings are better off living in landscapes that keep them alongside the natural world, and that technologies that estrange people from nature—like the rocket that transported earthlings to Venus—can diminish humanity rather than further its progress. By depicting both characters who long for the nature of Earth and characters who suffer from never having known it, Bradbury suggests that contact with nature and the sun are centrally important to human health and wellbeing. Without this contact, humans seem to lose an important piece of themselves.



NOSTALGIA AND DISCONTENT

"All Summer in a Day" depicts a world in which **the sun**, though absent, has tremendous power over people's lives. Characters are obsessed with their memories of the sun; Margot is sustained by her detailed memories, while her classmates—whose memories of the sun are either distant and brief or altogether nonexistent—are anxious and insecure that they can't remember it better. Through his depiction of a society obsessed with memory and absence, Bradbury demonstrates that nostalgia leads to social unrest and personal dissatisfaction.

Unchecked nostalgia is a social sickness that prevents people from appreciating the present. This is clear on Venus. Since the sun appears only once every seven years, inhabitants spend much of their time recalling these brief moments of summer. Most children are too young to remember the last appearance of the sun, so they dream about it and long to experience it firsthand. The sun has such mythological and emotional importance in their society that the children's lack of coherent memories of the sun (or lack of firsthand experience with it) makes them feel insecure and anxious, disconnected from an important source of cultural meaning. In addition, since seeing the sun is such an important cultural experience, memories of the sun are a source of conflict on Venus. Margot "stands apart" from the other children because she knows that her memories of the sun are more recent, detailed, and reliable than theirs. The other children are frustrated by this imbalance, which makes Margot vulnerable to bullying. In these ways, Bradbury shows that living in a place in which sunlight is simultaneously so scarce and so valued makes both the ability and inability to remember the sun socially fraught.

In addition to the social ramifications of remembering the sun, these memories have profound personal effects. Characters who focus too much on their memories have a hard time enjoying the present, which shows the detrimental effects of a society so consumed with nostalgia. Margot is the most

extreme example of this phenomenon, as she experiences nostalgia so strong that the present is intolerable to her. Instead of joining the other children in games of tag or songs about life on Venus, Margot only participates in activities relating to the sun. She refuses to experience even the more pleasant parts of life on Venus, instead focusing solely on her memories of life on Earth. This fixation isolates her from her peers and even affects her health: she is pale, thin, and occasionally overwhelmed by the constant rain on Venus. Her parents consider moving her back to Earth to spare her from her anguish. And, after the other children have experienced the sun, they, too, feel dissatisfied with the normal state of things on Venus. The sound of the rain has become “gigantic,” and already they cannot wait for the return of the sun. It seems as if their memories of this day will make them more like Margot—their delight in the sun will eclipse their enjoyment of everyday life.

When considering the role of nostalgia in the story, it’s important to also consider that, for those living on Venus, the sun is a relic of an earlier time before humans colonized Venus. In this way, the planet’s obsession with the sun is not simply about the one hour of sunlight they receive every seven years, but rather about a deeper nostalgia for an era when all humans lived on Earth. Therefore, nostalgia for the sun has several levels of meaning—in the more immediate sense, nostalgia prevents characters from enjoying their everyday lives, and in a larger sense, nostalgia for the sun indicates a broad social pathology in which nobody is able to accept Venus as human reality. Instead of creating new values, myths, and expectations that fit their reality, humans on Venus remain nostalgically obsessed with the sunlight that defined a bygone era of human life on Earth.



ANTICIPATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT

As its title suggests, “All Summer in a Day” is about a single day of great importance, one that the inhabitants of Venus have anticipated eagerly for seven years. While great anticipation often leads to dashed expectations, Bradbury’s story shows that there is an even worse fate than unmet expectation: the brief moment of sunlight on Venus brings more joy than the children could ever have imagined, which leaves them with a demoralizing longing for the future, an anticipation that prevents them from enjoying their lives.

At the beginning of the story, anticipation of **the sun’s** arrival puts the children in a heightened, anxious state that ultimately breaks into hostility. Leading up to the sun’s appearance, they worry that something will go wrong—the sun won’t appear, or their teacher will let them outside too late. These mixed emotions leave the children tense and volatile, which ultimately spills over into violence. At most times, the children avoid Margot, but on this day, William tries to start a fight with her

for staring out the window. He and the other children are so agitated with their own anticipation that they inflict on Margot the very outcome that they themselves most fear: they prevent her from seeing the sun. Margot is distraught. She attempts to escape by “protesting, and then pleading, and then crying,” and then throwing herself against the closet door. For Margot, this day marked the return of the thing she most loved and missed, and her dashed anticipation feels catastrophic.

For the children who do see the sun, it doesn’t disappoint. Despite their high expectations, they experience more joy than they thought possible. However, this means that, when the sun finally vanishes, the children are devastated. As a result, the close of the brief summer is a tragedy. When one student catches the first returning raindrop in her palm, she begins to cry. As the rains roll in, the children lose their cheer immediately, “their smiles vanishing away” as they return to the underground classroom. Their anticipation for the summer and the brief joy it brought has been suddenly replaced by an overwhelming sense of sadness and loss. After such a long wait, it’s difficult to accept that their period of great happiness is already over. Even worse, now that the children realize what they’re missing, their anticipation of the next summer is more bitter and fervent than before.

In the end, the day seems to have brought far more sadness than joy, as instead of imagining the sun, they now miss something they have personally experienced. For the first time, the children truly understand Margot’s longing for the sun and seem to become aware of the magnitude of what they have done to her. After they return inside, they are frozen with this realization, and feel too guilty to meet one another’s eyes. Like Margot, they are now “solemn and pale.” In the wake of the wonderful afternoon, the reality of the seven years they will have to wait to experience it again is difficult to bear. When the children return inside, they are more aware of the misery of their conditions: they “heard the gigantic sound of rain falling in tons and avalanches, everywhere and forever.” This newfound sense of loss, impatience, and guilt will forever be bound up with the children’s anticipation, as well as with their experience of their everyday reality. For Bradbury, then, having anticipation rewarded with brief, unmitigated pleasure is a greater curse than never knowing such pleasure at all.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE SUN

The sun, the most important symbol in “All Summer in a Day,” embodies all of nature, and its effects on people demonstrate the inextricable connection between

humans and the natural world. On Venus, the sun only comes out once every seven years, and for the remainder of the time people live underground in the darkness hiding from the pelting rain. Venus, therefore, is a society that is entirely removed from nature, something both caused by and symbolized by the absence of sun. Margot is the only character who can remember the sun, and in its absence, she has become not only sad and subdued, but also physically less healthy: she is “frail” and “washed out” like “an old photograph.” The other children initially seem healthy enough, but when they finally get to play outside in the sun, its revitalizing effects are immediately apparent: the children tumble and play with newfound energy, laughing and wondering at how nice the sun feels and looks. Clearly, the sun has made them physically and emotionally stronger, just as its absence weakened Margot. In addition, after this period in the sunlight, the children are suddenly awash with regret for locking Margot inside, as if the sun has made them more self-aware and empathetic. With its power to restore health as well as inspire empathy, the sun represents renewal, vitality, and the power of nature. Without sunlight, the people on Venus seem slightly less than human.



WEEDS

Weeds and unruly plants appear multiple times in this story, sometimes unexpectedly. They are used to emphasize the damaging effects of deprivation from the sun: both the physical environment and the inhabitants of Venus have become cruel and inhospitable in the absence of sunlight. Because of the constant rains, Venus is covered in sickly pale, overgrown vegetation, a jungle that “grew and never stopped growing, tumultuously, even as you watched it.” The jungle is described in vivid, uncanny detail as a “nest of octopi, clustering up great arms of flesh-like weed.” Venus is an untamed, inhospitable environment which the constant rains have covered in tangled grey weeds. Just as the rains have created this hostile environment, they also seem to have fostered hostility among the people of Venus: the unruly children are described in the opening of the story as “so many roses, so many weeds, intermixed,” pressed close together as they peer out the window. In the absence of the sun and in their feverish anticipation, the children have become themselves like uncontrolled weeds. Just as the lack of sunlight has turned the surface of Venus into a frightening jungle, it has also turned the children into an unruly mob. Weeds symbolize the ugly behaviors that have proliferated unchecked in this harsh environment.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Bantam edition of *A Medicine for Melancholy and Other*

Stories published in 1990.

All Summer in a Day Quotes

☞ The children pressed to each other like so many roses, so many weeds, intermixed, peering out for a look at the hidden sun.

Related Characters: Children

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 88

Explanation and Analysis

In this opening scene, the children wait eagerly in the classroom for the rain to slow and the sun to make its appearance. The anxiety of such a long-awaited, important day has made them excited and unruly. The children are compared idyllically to roses, but also to weeds, which are chaotic and unwelcoming, echoing the tangled landscape outside. This important comparison suggests two things. The first is that the built-up anticipation the children experience has put them on edge and brought tension very close to the surface. Later, this simmering tension will break into violence. Second, the comparison to overgrown weeds suggests that, like the plants outside, the children have become ungoverned and hostile in the absence of the sun.

☞ Sometimes, at night, she heard them stir, in remembrance, and she knew they were dreaming and remembering gold or a yellow crayon or a coin large enough to buy the world with. She knew they thought they remembered a warmth, like a blushing in the face, in the body, in the arms and legs and trembling hands. But then they always awoke to the tating drum, the endless shaking down of clear bead necklaces upon the roof, the walk, the gardens, the forests, and their dreams were gone.

Related Characters: Margot, Children

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Margot reflects on the differences between herself and the other children—differences which isolate her and push the other children to bullying. Margot is intensely aware of the fact that her memories differ from those of the other children: while they can recall vague sensations (“a blushing in the face”) or simplified descriptions (“a yellow crayon”) of the sun, those recollections are unreliable and insubstantial. In contrast, Margot remembers the sun quite well and she sustains herself on those vivid memories. This shows readers the extent to which memory has become a defining aspect of Margot’s identity, influencing how she perceives herself in relation to the other children and keeping her from connecting with them. The contrast between the children’s vague experiences and Margot’s own far richer ones is also a clear demonstration of the special advantages and privileges she has experienced, which engenders jealousy and even hostility in the other children.

☹️ Margot stood alone. She was a very frail girl who looked as if she had been lost in the rain for years and the rain had washed out the blue from her eyes and the red from her mouth and the yellow from her hair. She was an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away, and if she spoke at all her voice would be a ghost.

Related Characters: Margot

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

As the rain continues to slow, the other children talk excitedly amongst themselves. But Margot doesn’t engage them, instead standing apart and staring out the window. In this evocative description, Bradbury shows the full extent of the damage that deprivation from the sun has wreaked on Margot. Lack of sunlight has left her physically weak and drained to the point that she is visibly frail. She is pale, as if the rain has “washed out” her color and vitality. These descriptions show that being outdoors in the sun is important for physical and mental health. But more than that, this description of Margot seems to suggest that she has become something less than real, or less than human: she is more like a ghost or an old photograph than a young girl. In this way, Bradbury demonstrates that nature, and

particularly the sun, are essential parts of being human.

☹️ They edged away from her, they would not look at her. She felt them go away. And this was because she would play no games with them in the echoing tunnels of the underground city. If they tagged her and ran, she stood blinking after them and did not follow. When the class sang songs about happiness and life and games her lips barely moved. Only when they sang about the sun and the summer did her lips move as she watched the drenched windows. And then, of course, the biggest crime of all was that she had come here only five years ago from Earth, and she remembered the sun and the way the sun was and the sky was when she was four in Ohio. And they, they had been on Venus all their lives, and they had been only two years old when last the sun came out and had long since forgotten the color and heat of it and the way it really was.

Related Characters: Children, Margot

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 89-90

Explanation and Analysis

In this important and revealing quote, Bradbury gives a glimpse of what day-to-day interactions between Margot and the other children are like. Not only does Margot stand apart on the day the sun will appear, but she stands apart on all days, even when the other children attempt to include her, since her past sets her apart.

This quote reveals two very important things about how Margot relates to the other children. The first is that Margot distances herself from the other children by refusing to participate in activities that do not relate to the sun, instead dwelling on her happier memories. Margot is obsessed with her nostalgia for the past, to the extreme point that she cannot recognize potential moments of happiness in her present. Because of her focus on these memories, Margot is unhappy and isolated.

Second, this description reveals some of the motivation behind the children’s bullying of Margot. Margot’s past, and her fond memories of the sun, are seen as a “crime” because the children are jealous and have no power to access the things that they desire. Margot possesses detailed and powerful memories (memories that haunt her, but which are nonetheless alluring), and the children feel intensely

deprived and jealous. This scene connects the longing that all of the children feel for the sun with a sense of hopelessness on Margot's part and a desire for revenge on the part of the other children.

☞ Then, for the first time, she turned and looked at him. And what she was waiting for was in her eyes. "Well, don't wait around here!" cried the boy savagely. "You won't see nothing!" Her lips moved.

Related Characters: William (speaker), Children, Margot

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

The tension in the classroom breaks out into conflict as William turns his attention towards Margot and asks what she's waiting for. At first, she ignores him. But then, in this pivotal moment, Margot turns to William and he realizes how he can exact the most revenge for the jealousy he feels towards her. Because Margot cares most about the sun and has waited with so much longing for this day (which William realizes when he looks into her eyes), William can hurt her by threatening that moment. In reality, William has no control over the fact that Margot will likely get to spend far more of her life in the sun than him. But, he can feel temporarily powerful and combat that imbalance by taking the short summer away from Margot. Before he does this physically by putting her in the closet, he does so verbally, telling her that she is waiting in vain.

For Margot, this moment represents the dashing of hopes that have sustained her for years. She has waited so long for this brief moment of happiness that the very idea that it may not come is devastating.

☞ "You've only two hours, you know. You wouldn't want to get caught out!" But they were running and turning their faces up to the sky and feeling the sun on their cheeks like a warm iron; they were taking off their jackets and letting the sun burn their arms. "Oh, it's better than the sun lamps, isn't it?"

Related Characters: Children, Teacher (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 91-92

Explanation and Analysis

As the sun comes out and the children rush outside, their teacher reminds them that their time outdoors will be short. They brush her warning aside. It is only after they are forced to return indoors that the children will fully comprehend the magnitude of their waiting compared to the brevity of their happiness. This moment, though, represents the realization of all of their hopes and dreams for the day. In fact, the sun is better than they imagined; better than the sun lamps used underground to imitate the sun's power. This scene shows the intensity of the long-awaited moment, as well as the power of the sun to physically and emotionally restore the children.

☞ They stopped running and stood in the great jungle that covered Venus, that grew and never stopped growing, tumultuously, even as you watched it. It was a nest of octopi, clustering up great arms of fleshlike weed, wavering, flowering in this brief spring. It was the color of rubber and ash, this jungle, from the many years without sun. It was the color of stones and white cheeses and ink, and it was the color of the moon.

Related Characters: Children

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 92

Explanation and Analysis

As the rain clears and the children run out into the sun, Bradbury provides this arresting description of the landscape of Venus. In the absence of sunlight and the continual downpour, the surface of the planet has been transformed into an uncanny, inhospitable jungle of tangled, menacing weeds. In an otherwise joyful scene of sunlight and blue skies, the grayscale jungle is a stark and ominous backdrop. With this description, Bradbury shows that sun deprivation has turned the surface of the planet vile and ugly, just as it seems to have rendered the children cruel and

violent. This parallel, emphasized by the fact that the children are earlier described as “weeds,” shows how dehumanizing the extreme environment has been.

☞ In the midst of their running one of the girls wailed. Everyone stopped. The girl, standing in the open, held out her hand. “Oh, look, look,” she said, trembling. They came slowly to look at her opened palm. In the center of it, cupped and huge, was a single raindrop. She began to cry, looking at it.

Related Characters: Children (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 92

Explanation and Analysis

Abruptly, the two hours of sunlight come to an end as a single raindrop falls into a girl’s hand. The sudden end to the brief period of joy is devastating, which Bradbury emphasizes by showing a dramatic reaction to a phenomenon—the start of a rain shower—that would ordinarily be unremarkable. The children’s complete and immediate transition from joy to sadness is a turning point in the story. After years of building excitement, a day full of tense anticipation, and then two brief hours of happiness beyond their wildest dreams, the children are left feeling a sense of profound loss and emptiness. In the end, such high hopes and emotional importance attached to such a fleeting experience has ended in sadness.

☞ Then they closed the door and heard the gigantic sound of the rain falling in tons and avalanches, everywhere and forever. “Will it be seven more years?” “Yes. Seven.”

Related Characters: Children (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 93

Explanation and Analysis

In comparison to the happiness they briefly experienced only moments before, the normal condition of life on Venus—which hadn’t seemed so bad—now feels intolerable. The rain feels more intense and oppressive, and the wait stretching ahead impossibly long. This scene is another demonstration of the negative moments that can come with strong anticipation. It also shows that, like Margot, the children now possess a powerful happy memory that will likely haunt them in the long years of deprivation to come. It seems that they, too, are now destined to nostalgically yearn for a brief remembered period of happiness in nature.

☞ “Margot.” They stood as if someone had driven them, like so many stakes, into the floor. They looked at each other and then looked away. They glanced out at the world that was raining now and raining and raining steadily. They could not meet each other’s glances. Their faces were solemn and pale. They looked at their hands and feet, their faces down. “Margot.”

Related Characters: Margot, Children

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 93

Explanation and Analysis

This is a moment of profound realization and sudden self-awareness for the children. Before, the children had teased Margot and locked her up with careless cruelty, seeming to forget her instantly and failing to spare her a thought as they played outside. But now, in light of their new sense of loss and longing, the children remember Margot and are struck by the seriousness of what they have done. They glance out at the rain, now fully aware of how oppressive and unceasing it seemed to Margot because they share her experiences. Like her, they are now solemn and pale. Their experience outside has given them a profound sense of empathy, because they fully comprehend Margot’s feelings of loss. This is another demonstration of the power of the sun—it has not only given the children a sense of nostalgia, but also restored their ability to empathize and made them aware of their own cruelty.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

ALL SUMMER IN A DAY

A group of children press against the window of their underground classroom on the planet Venus, watching as the rain outside begins to slow. It has been raining ceaselessly for years—on Venus, **the sun** comes out once every seven years, but only for an hour, and today is the day when scientists predict that the sun will appear. The world outside is awash with tidal waves and a perpetually growing and collapsing jungle. These children are the first to grow up on the planet, which was colonized by rockets from Earth the generation before. In their eagerness, the children are tumbled together like unruly **weeds**.

One child, Margot, stands apart. Like all the children, she is nine years old. This means that most of the children can't remember when **the sun** last came out, even though they dream about what it was like and long to feel its warmth.

The day before, the schoolchildren had read about **the sun** and written short stories or poems about it. When Margot quietly read her poem comparing the sun to a flower aloud to the class, another boy, William, exclaimed that she didn't actually write it. Their teacher reprimanded him.

Bradbury quickly establishes the extreme setting he will use as a backdrop for the nonetheless relatable drama in the story. The overwhelming rain on Venus has created a harsh, inhospitable environment, suggesting a sense of displacement from the natural world on Earth. Meanwhile, the anticipated arrival of the sun has generated a slightly chaotic sense of excitement among the children. Their anticipation has an edge of anxiety to it, foreshadowing the conflict and disappointment of the day to come.



All children on Venus long intensely for the sun, but Margot is isolated by her vivid memories. Somewhat intentionally, it seems, she holds herself apart, demonstrating the extent to which she is fixated by these memories. This also highlights her privilege—she has memories that the other children lack and covet—and sets up the jealousy that will drive the other children's bullying.



The other students pick on Margot in ways that seem initially not to make much sense: in this scene, for example, Margot is simply participating in a class activity. But William's actions are motivated not by Margot's actions, but by the fact that Margot has special knowledge of the sun that allows her to write poems and share detailed memories. The children are jealous that Margot has had such experiences and use her as a scapegoat for their own feelings of deprivation about the sun. Claiming that Margot is lying when she speaks about the sun is one way for William to gain power over her, and, by extension, the imbalance in their situations. In this scene, we also see the power that the sun continues to hold for Margot. She romanticizes her memories of it and briefly comes out of her shell only when she is able to express her interest in the sun.



But back in the classroom, the children are unsupervised as they wait feverishly by the windows. They worry that their teacher won't return in time, and that this will cause them to miss **the sun**. Margot continues to watch and listen to the rain by herself. She is very frail and pale, as if all of the color has been drained from her.

Here we see that anticipation for the sun has made the children anxious and chaotic. The extent to which they have built up this day has made it impossible for them to enjoy the moment without also fearing what will happen if it doesn't meet expectations. We also see that life away from the sun seems to have had a physically draining effect on Margot. Deprivation from the sun has made her a shadow of her former self—almost physically less than human—while it has also made the other children seemingly less civil. The sun has power to make humans both physically and mentally stronger, while its lack has the opposite effect.



William asks Margot what she's looking at. When she doesn't respond, he shoves her, but she still doesn't react and the other children edge away. Margot herself usually eschews the company of other children, refusing to play games or sing songs unless they are about **the sun**.

Again, William tries to engage Margot in conflict even though her behavior is inoffensive. This is another example of William venting his sense of jealousy and deprivation on Margot, showing that these feelings can be strong motivators of bullying. But we also see that Margot herself may have exacerbated her isolation: she makes no secret of the fact that she looks down on life on Venus, emphasizing the privileged life she led on Earth. Another perspective on Margot's isolation here is that she continues to be obsessed by memories of the past, to the extent that she cannot enjoy the present. This shows that strong nostalgia, like the nostalgia that Margot experiences for the sun, can prevent those who experience it from finding happiness in the present.



Margot arrived on Venus from Earth five years ago, so, unlike the other children, she remembers **the sun** and the sky very well from her childhood. Sometimes she describes the sun, but William and the other children claim she is lying. For the most part, she keeps to herself and avoids the touch of water. Her parents may move the family back to Earth, since Margot is suffering so much. All of these things make William and the other children jealous and angry.

When the other children attempt to discredit Margot's memories, it is because they are jealous of her experiences and frustrated by circumstances over which they have no control. We also learn that Margot is privileged not just because she remembers the sun, but also because her parents are wealthy enough that they may be able to move the family back to Earth, providing more fodder for the children's jealousy. And again, Margot closes herself off from others because her memories are so important to her that she would rather focus on them.



In the classroom, William pushes Margot again. Then, he tells her **the sun** won't actually come out—it was all a joke. The other children join in, laughing and saying the sun won't come out. Margot protests weakly.

In this scene of bullying, William and the other children torment Margot by introducing a threat to the thing she cares about most. The thought that the long-anticipated day won't come to pass is extremely difficult to bear, showing how intense this anticipation is.



At William's urging, all the children surge around Margot and push her into a closet in the hallway as she pleads and cries. As Margot throws herself against the locked door, the children smile at each other and return to their classroom just as their teacher reappears.

Glancing at her watch, the teacher makes sure everyone is ready and accounted for. She does not notice that Margot isn't there. The children crowd around the classroom door as the rain slows and then finally stops. Outside, it is shockingly quiet and still. The children wonder at this as the door slides open.

Finally, **the sun** comes out, turning the sky bright blue and sending the children bursting out into the sunlight. Their teacher warns them not to go too far, since they only have two hours, but the children are already peeling off their jackets to feel the sun. They remark that it is far better than sunlamps.

The sunlight has revealed the massive jungle outside to be full of tumultuous, fleshy grey **weeds**, overgrown and bleached by the rain. In this strange environment, the children run and play among the trees, shouting and laughing. They stare up at **the sun** and the world around, attempting to savor everything.

Suddenly, a girl wails, bringing the festivities to a halt. She holds out her palm to reveal a single raindrop. She begins to cry as the children stare up at the sky and the first cold drops fall on their faces. **The sun** fades and the wind begins to rise as the children turn and begin to trudge back to the underground classroom, smiles vanished.

Perhaps because of the intensity of the setting, the scene of teasing quickly escalates to violent bullying. In a mob, the children exact their revenge on Margot's perceived privilege, depriving her of the very thing of which they feel deprived—time in the sun. The specific nature of this bullying shows just how much the children are motivated by their sense of jealousy and longing.



As the big moment arrives, the children feel overwhelmed that all their waiting and anticipation has culminated in a moment that seems to surpass their expectations. The sudden stillness and quiet emphasizes how violent and intolerable Venus' usual weather is. The experience of nature brings a sudden sense of peace.



The sun has an immediately pleasurable effect, seeming to physically revive the children. The long-anticipated moment is better than they could possibly have imagined—but, because of the teacher's warning, we know that this brief moment of happiness will be fleeting.



The absence of sunlight had turned Venus into a tangled and inhospitable wasteland—just as it seemed to have made the children unruly and cruel. Now, outside, they are joyful and energized, suggesting the power of the sun to bring physical and mental health.



The very moment that the brief period of happiness ends, the children revert to a deeper sadness than they even felt before. In this abrupt transition, we see that building high hopes and investing so much emotional importance in fleeting experiences can be very harmful.



Suddenly, the rain returns in force and the sky darkens with thunder. The children run back to the classroom, where they peer out at the deafening rain that seems as if it will continue falling everywhere and forever. They ask if it will really be seven more years before they see **the sun** again.

Now that they have such a bright memory to compare it to, the normal day-to-day conditions of life on Venus seem unbearable. A moment of intense happiness can make everyday life seem comparatively painful, especially when the moment has been anticipated for so long. The return to waiting brings with it renewed awareness of how painful drawn-out anticipation can be. Already, the children seem transfixed by their brief memory of the sun, just as Margot is. It seems likely that they, too, will succumb to the kind of nostalgia that hindered Margot.



Suddenly, one of the children remembers Margot. The children realize she is still locked in the closet, and they stand frozen in place, unable to meet each other's eyes. After a few moments, they begin to walk slowly down the hall as the rain and lightning rage outside.

Perhaps because they now share this emotional understanding of Margot's painful nostalgia, the children suddenly remember her. Experiencing the sun has not only made them feel happy and healthy but given them the experience and maturity to realize the magnitude of their actions and to feel guilt. This is another way that the importance of nature is emphasized. Now that they can relate to Margot, the motivations for their bullying have been taken away.



The children stand for a moment before the closet, which is now silent. Slowly, they unlock the door and let Margot out.

Bradbury does not show us the aftermath of this episode, but it is clear that the day has ended in difficult feelings all around. The children, like Margot, are now armed with a powerful memory of happiness which will likely make it far more difficult for them to enjoy everyday life and endure the long wait for another such day. Meanwhile, Margot has experienced the shattering disappointment of expectations for a day that had become all-important in her mind, demonstrating the danger of relying on such fleeting moments. A day that should have brought joy to all has instead brought a powerful sense of loss.





HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Talkoff, Emma. "All Summer in a Day." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 15 Feb 2018. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Talkoff, Emma. "All Summer in a Day." LitCharts LLC, February 15, 2018. Retrieved April 21, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/all-summer-in-a-day>.

To cite any of the quotes from *All Summer in a Day* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Bradbury, Ray. *All Summer in a Day*. Bantam. 1990.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Bradbury, Ray. *All Summer in a Day*. New York: Bantam. 1990.