



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ILLUSTRATED MAN BY RAY BRADBURY

1. Originally, the stories compiled in "The Illustrated Man" were published separately. Ray Bradbury used the story of the Illustrated Man to tie the short story collection together. How do the framing sequences work in relation to the rest of the stories? Does this technique succeed in making The Illustrated Man a cohesive whole - in terms of plot, or theme, or mood? Why or why not?
2. It's often noted that science fiction is a reflection, not of the future, but the present in which it was written. Given that perspective, what can we say about the present in which Bradbury wrote his stories? How is it the same or different from our own present? Do the stories feel dated from our perch over 60 years after the collection was originally published?
3. Many of the selections, such as "The Veldt," "The Highway," and "Marionettes, Inc." express an attitude towards the consequences of technological and scientific development. Based on the stories read, what do you think Ray Bradbury's view on the impact of technology on society? On families?
4. Are the fathers in "The Rocket" and "The Rocket Man" similar or different? Why? What message(s) are being sent through these characters?
5. Why did Ray Bradbury name the children in "The Veldt" Peter and Wendy and how does this choice support the theme of the story? What are the children of the other stories like? What does the view tell us of Bradbury's view of childhood and the responsibilities of parenting?
6. A number of characters in Bradbury's stories are unnamed, including the Rocket Man, the couple in "The Last Night of the World", the Christ figure in "The Man", the white man in "The Other Foot", and the captain in "The Exiles". What is the significance of leaving these characters unnamed and how does it affect the reader?
7. Faith is an important concept in "The Man," in which an anonymous Jesus-like visitor has appeared on an unnamed planet. One of the space explorers, Captain Hart, dismisses the convictions of the planet's inhabitants and departs to keep looking for "the man," while Martin decides to stay on the planet. What is the role of faith in this and other stories? Is faith rewarded in these stories? Is faith important to human existence? Why or why not?
8. In which stories is the theme of danger of imagination present? What lesson is Ray Bradbury trying to teach his reader?
9. Consider sanity as a flexible state of mind, as a way to cope with reality, or a means to better deal with the stresses of modern life. Given that premise, how does sanity function in stories where characters aren't sure of what they're perceiving or experiencing? What is the sane response, and is it always the right response in these stories?



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10. "It hung in the center of the room, large and yellow and warm. It made not a sound, and there was no sound in the room. The door was shut and the rain only a memory to his tingling body. The sun hung high in the blue sky of the room, warm, hot, yellow, and very fine." So Bradbury describes the sun (in the guise of a Sun Dome) in "The Long Rain." What is the significance of the sun in this and other stories in "The Illustrated Man?"
11. Some of the stories in this collection present a reversal of power for a minority group. For example, in "The Other Foot," Willie expresses his opinion on the arrival of a white man's rocket as follows: "Well...the shoe's on the other foot now. We'll see who gets laws passed against him, who gets lynched, who rides the back of streetcars, who gets segregated in shows. We'll just wait and see." This story is considered by some critics to be unusual not only for its time, but also for science fiction. Do you agree? What was your reaction to reading this story? Do you feel that the ending is too idealistic?
12. Discuss the theme of revenge, where it is seen, and why it is important. How does our society view revenge? Do you agree or disagree with that view and why?
13. Bradbury often has a fine eye for the wondrous aspects hidden in everyday life. Consider how he uses this in several of his stories, drawing specific examples. What effect does it have on the reader, how does it influence our understanding of the stories?
14. Bradbury sometimes overturns expectations in his plots, providing a natural consequence of events in a way readers don't foresee. What tools does he use as a writer to set up one expectation, what tools does he use to provide something different but still consistent with the story? Does this always work? Why or why not?

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