

Dandelion Wine Pdf

by
Ray Bradbury

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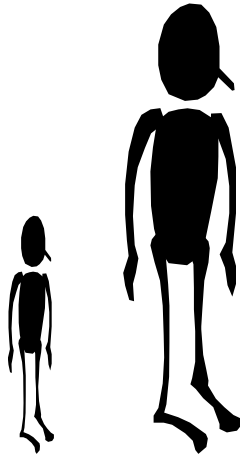
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death” as his elderly friend Colonel Freeleigh and his great-grandmother pass away (43). Douglas has the horrible realization that because he is truly alive, he too will someday die. Sick with worry, he breaks out in a fever that the doctor can’t explain and not even Tom really understands.



What does it mean to grow up? Another issue that *Dandelion Wine* talks about is that old people were once young. In one section, an elderly lady, Mrs. Bentley, tries to convince two little girls and Tom that she was once as young as them. The girls giggle at the idea that Mrs. Bentley was ever called Helen or that the smiling little girl in the picture is now an old lady. Mrs. Bentley was at first heartbroken, but then finally remembers something her husband said to her when he was alive. While looking at the things she wore as a little girl, she imagined her husband explain, “those things don’t belong to you *here*, you *now*. They belonged to her, the other you, so long ago” (75). After this revelation, Mrs. Bentley is not angry at the children’s skepticism anymore and begins agreeing with them; no, she never was young, pretty, or younger than the seventy-two she is now.

Growing up, or simply being the same, is a very interesting idea for readers to ponder: why would the children not understand that Mrs. Bentley was obviously young once? More than this, why would Mrs. Bentley herself decide to claim that she was never young. Why does the third person narration call her “Mrs. Bentley” rather than “Helen”? Perhaps it’s because Mrs. Bentley herself realizes that she is very changed from the person she once was. She was once an eight-year-old, and a ten-year-old and a fourteen-year-old, but she is no longer any of those people. This can be used as an activity for students to think back when they were very different from what they are now.

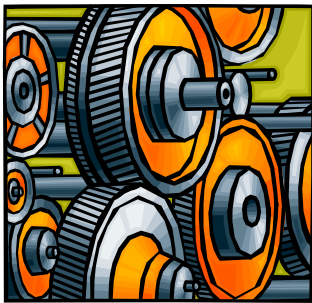
How can I cope with partings? Partings relate to the deaths in the story, but also to Douglas growing up. He sees his friend, John Huff, have to move away. Douglas has a really hard time accepting it, attempting to force John to stay. Douglas insists that John play statues, a game where the person who is it yells “freeze,” and everyone has to freeze. Douglas freezes John, and then tells him that he can’t move or (more importantly) leave (110). However, John leaves, and Douglas immediately is furious and hates John for it—one of the signs of mourning a loss. It’s important that Douglas encounters losing someone who is his own age because it helps Douglas understand



life better. Still, the fact that a friend moved away rather than died means that the story is a bit lighter hearted.

Those that do die in the story also contribute to Douglas mourning a loss. When Douglas's great-grandmother feels like she's going to die, Douglas is upset to lose her. Then she shares this wisdom: "No one really died that had a family. I'll be around a long time. A thousand years from now a whole township of my ancestry will be biting sour apples in the gumwood shade" (183). Here Douglas learns that death is not to be feared, even if the partings are hard. He will miss his great-grandmother, but he also understands that partings are a part of life.

Other Themes:



Finding happiness: Douglas notes that the happiness of summer is fleeting, so he asks Leo Auffmann, a man who loves to tinker with things, to invent a Happiness Machine (chapters 8-9, 11, 13). Much to the dismay of his wife, Lena, Leo works for weeks and completes the machine. His son is the first to try the machine and comes out crying. Lena is furious and threatens to leave until Leo asks her to try the machine. She exclaims in delight until she must leave the machine, and then she, too, is in tears. After that, Leo himself tries the machine, but it overheats and burns up. Douglas, Tom, and their grandfather rush to the scene and lament the loss, but Leo stops them. Leo tells them about the real Happiness Machine, directing them to his front window where he can see his wife and kids inside.

Readers can note that Leo and Douglas's quest for happiness ended in them simply living their lives that they always had. The difference is the new perspective to the life they live. Leo took his family for granted, ignoring them while he pursued happiness through building a machine, until his wife threatened to leave, and then his machine burned down. He recognizes that having his family is more important than any machine.

Adults' knowledge: As Douglas struggles with the idea of growing up, he and Tom make the discovery that grown-ups don't know everything. One day when Douglas had gone missing at night, Tom and his mother fearfully walk to the dangerous ravine, wondering if Douglas had fallen and killed himself. This is when Tom realizes that his mother is just as scared as he is. Tom becomes even less assured because of this and laments, "was there, then, no strength in growing up? No solace in being an adult?" (42). After Douglas is discovered alive and well, Tom relates the idea that adults don't have all power like children give them credit for.

The text also embraces the idea that adults have many difficulties understanding what should be done and what should happen when it tells the story of Miss Fern, Miss

Roberta, and their Green Machine. The Green Machine is a vehicle that moves at no more than fifteen miles per hour that these two elderly sisters ride around in. One day they find themselves heading towards an elderly man and they panic like children and then run into him. The ladies, fearfully thinking they murdered him, ran away and hid in their attic. They do not understand that their little machine couldn't hurt anyone, and they also couldn't take responsibility for their actions, as seen because they fled the scene. I don't think they were intentionally dishonest about the incident. I think they simply couldn't mentally process what had occurred and were afraid. In this situation, Douglas plays the role of the adult: he waits outside the house to tell them that he saw the whole thing and that everything is okay. He is the person who is supporting the adults who certainly don't know everything.

Affective Issues Related to the Work: As stated before, although this book features boys who are ten- and twelve-years-old, this book addresses issues that are probably better understood in high school. These students will be able to directly relate to some of the deep and even philosophical ideas Douglas has about growing up. Still, students might be able to relate to Tom, who can participate in some of this conversation, but is completely left behind with some of the things Douglas talks about. Douglas talks about loneliness, which everyone can relate to sometime when they grow up. Another thing about Douglas is that he can be very serious and believe in things too much. He has so many thoughts, some of them are bound to go wrong. All students deal with embarrassment. At one point, Douglas become sure that a wax doll machine that tells fortunes is a real woman and so he “kidnaps” her, infuriating the drugstore owner. One main thing that Douglas learns that many high school students struggle with is being himself. He is an example of a boy who is different, but is all right with it.



Vocabulary Issues: Bradbury uses a very rich, descriptive language in his setting. Teachers can make a list of troublesome words. Knowing these words will help students with their reading of the text:

Some Vocabulary Terms: Ravine (17), Kindling (17), Shrines (17), Rite (18), Capsize (19), Revelation (27), Illumination (27), Institution (27), Pontifical (29), Peonies (51), Primordial (69), Gyroscope (66), Paraphernalia (68)

The teachers should also be prepared to have definitions ready for other terms found in the story. Or perhaps teachers should have students research these things, depending on how much of the class the teacher wants to spend on them.

Other **words** or **allusions** (good time to explain allusions to your class): Rain-or-shine clocks (30), Ticonderoga pencil (28), Dandelion Wine, “The Blue Danube” (59), Caruso (68), zeppelins (104), Ahab (29), “Plato in the peonies” (51).



Background Knowledge: Students should understand the setting and the implications of the time period—a small town in America in the 1930s. This very small town is very well described and loved. One thing that students should be aware of is how the beginning is very poetic and beautiful and is not intended to be confusing. The novel begins and ends with Douglas pretending to lead the beginning of summer like a conductor would lead an orchestra. First he cues in the streetlights and stars to go out and then the lights to turn on.



Slowly he marks everyone waking up and getting ready for the summer day. He ends the novel by commanding the lights off again. Perhaps teachers should familiarize the students with an orchestra so they can understand the beauty of the beginning rather than wondering what is going on.

Students should also be introduced to the genre and author before beginning this novel. This novel can be considered both a semi-autobiographical narrative as well as science fiction and fantasy. Introducing Ray Bradbury, with most of his works as strictly science fiction or fantasy, and his childhood in a small town in Illinois, will help students understand before they begin reading what they are going to find. If students know beforehand that the story is going to take place in small town in the 1930s, yet there will be fantastic elements in it, they will be prepared for it and understand the text easier.

Implications for Students of Diversity: This novel does not address racial diversity issues: there is nothing about race in this novel, yet chapters 23-24 tell of one person accusing another of being something she is not. In this chapter Elmira Brown accuses Clara Goldwater of being a witch. Although the rest of the town recognizes that Elmira is incorrect, students can discuss why Elmira might make the accusation. The main reason is jealousy, but it's also that Elmira thinks differently from the rest of the town. Elmira decides to cook up a potion herself, showing that as she fears that Clara is practicing witchcraft, she actually believes in it herself. Elmira's beliefs



are different from those around her, just as diverse students have different beliefs. In the story, the ladies' group was electing a leader. After Elmira explains that her magic concoction will help her win the vote to become leader, she drinks it and makes herself sick. The other women take pity on her and vote her as their new leader. The only caution about using this passage to relate to students of diversity is that Elmira is a very strange individual. It would be offensive to tell diverse students that they are like Elmira.

Gender Issues: Although this novel centers around Douglas and Tom, and not often about any young girls, many men and women are portrayed both as good and bad. In this way, one gender is not favored about the other. For example, Douglas's grandmother is seen as a well-loved, accomplished baker. The only person who pushes her around is Douglas's Aunt Rose in chapter 34. It is not a man controlling grandma, but another woman. Another strong willed woman is Lavinia Nebb, in chapters 30-31, who is not afraid of a serial killer, and goes to the movies and then returns home alone. However, the killer, the Lonely One is waiting inside her house for her. She kills him with a pair of sewing scissors. Lavinia is an example of an independent woman. However, there are also very silly women in the novel, such as Elmira Brown (see above section).

Research Issues/Project Ideas:

Growing Up: Chapters 15-16 is about Mrs. Bentley and how the children do not believe she was ever a child. Mrs. Bentley thinks to herself, "children are children, old women old women, and nothing in between" (70-71). Point out to students how Mrs. Bentley remembers her things as a child, and yet knows she is too old to wear her old ring. Have students think of a time when they were so different, they were like a different person: when they were babies, they enjoyed different toys and games than they do now. They had different thoughts than they do now. Tell students to talk in small groups about their favorite activity now as compared to their favorite activity when they were younger and so different.

The Happiness Machine: (Chapters 8, 9, 11, 13) Discuss as a class what makes each person happy. Now have students create a collage of what they would find in their happiness machine.

Notes:

All pictures used from Microsoft Word clip art.