



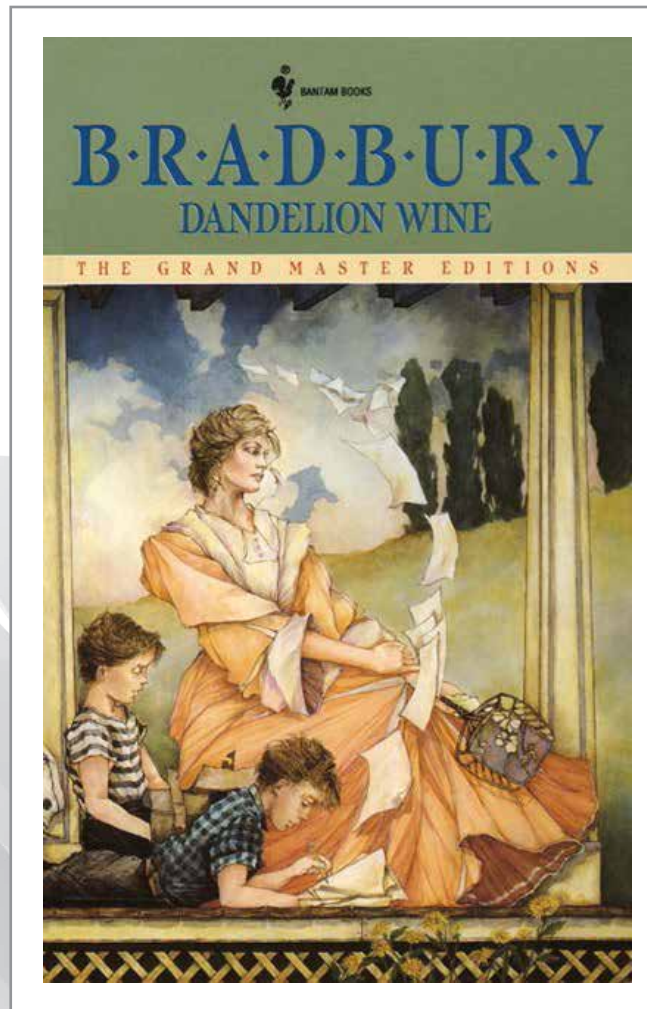
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Dandelion Wine

Ray Bradbury



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Dandelion Wine

Ray Bradbury

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Summary

Dandelion Wine is the most autobiographical of any of Bradbury's novels, but it is much more than a nostalgic reminiscence. In a series of vignettes based on his childhood in a small midwestern town, Bradbury has created a metaphor for the human experience of awareness—of life and death, good and evil, happiness and unhappiness, loss and change.

Green Town, Illinois, the setting of the novel, is Bradbury's fictional re-creation of Waukegan, where he grew up. Douglas Spaulding, who represents Bradbury himself, is twelve years old. The novel begins on the first morning of summer, 1928, and ends on the last day of summer. It is an important summer for Doug, beginning with a fundamental realization on that first day: an awareness that he is *alive*. This realization soon leads him to another one: you are alive because you take action.

His first action is to bargain with the owner of the shoe store and work out a plan to obtain the sneakers he has been coveting. Flying home in his fabulous new shoes, Doug tries to explain his illuminations to his brother, Tom, and begins making lists: "Discoveries and Revelations" and "Rites and Ceremonies."

The summer rituals are recorded, and there are stories about various townspeople, each with its revelation. Leo Auffmann, the town jeweler, tries to make a Happiness Machine—realizing just in time that machinery can never replace the happiness he and his family already have. There is Doug's revelation that Colonel Freeleigh is a Time Machine—his vivid stories of the past can transport listeners back in time. There is old Mrs. Bentley, who is finally convinced by the neighborhood children that she was never young. She is relieved to stop living in the past and join the present as her real self. There are Helen Loomis and Bill Forrester, soul mates with more than a half-century age difference between them.

Along with Doug's feelings of vitality and joy come his awareness of death and inevitable change. A friend he greatly admires, John Huff, announces he is moving away, and Doug's attempt to keep him from leaving with an endless game of "Statues" proves fruitless. Doug and Tom save a mechanical fortune-telling witch from the arcade, and Doug hopes she will be grateful enough to grant him immunity from death. Colonel Freeleigh dies, a young woman is murdered in the ravine, and Doug's great grandmother passes peacefully away. Doug himself nearly succumbs to a deathly illness, but is revived by a junk man's infusion of air from invigorating climates.

Wiser and older now, Doug is able to help his grandmother recover the intuitive magic in her cooking which was almost destroyed by a well-meaning aunt who reorganized Grandma's chaotic but familiar kitchen.

Just as Doug ushered in summer, he now ushers it out. But like the dandelion wine, which preserves a taste of summer, the notes on Doug's yellow pad preserve the lives of the people of Green Town and the memories of the most important summer in Doug's life.

About the Author

Ray Bradbury was born August 22, 1920, in Waukegan, Illinois, the son of Leonard Spaulding Bradbury and Esther Marie Moberg Bradbury. Twin brothers, Leonard and Samuel, were born in 1916, but Samuel died in 1918. A sister, Elizabeth, was born when Ray was 6, but died of pneumonia in infancy.

Bradbury discovered science fiction at the age of 8 when he began reading a magazine called *Amazing Stories*. By age 11, he was writing his own stories. At 12, he wrote his own novel-length sequel to Burroughs' *The Gods of Mars* because he couldn't afford to buy the one Burroughs wrote.

In 1934, the family moved to Los Angeles, where Bradbury has lived ever since. In adolescence, he was plagued by physical and emotional insecurity and was harassed in the halls at school. He haunted the studios at MGM, hoping for an autograph from one of his film or radio idols. By his senior year he was successfully involved in school productions, working as scriptwriter, producer, and director of the "Roman Review" at Los Angeles High School.

After graduation, he worked as a newspaper boy but joined Laraine Day's drama group, Wilshire Players Guild, and began attending Robert Heinlein's weekly writing class. In 1941, he published his first paid piece of fiction, a story called "Pendulum," which was co-authored with Henry Hasse and appeared in *Super Science Stories*. In 1942, he gave up selling papers in order to write full-time. In only three years, he had broken through to bigger magazines, and in 1946 "The Big Black and White Game" was selected for *Best American Short Stories*.

In 1947 he married Marguerite McClure and eventually fathered four daughters. The same year, he published his first book of stories, *Dark Carnival*, and won the first of several O. Henry Prizes. Since then, Bradbury has been incredibly prolific in many different genres. His best-known novels are *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (1962), *Death is a Lonely Business* (1985), *Dandelion Wine* (1956), *Fahrenheit 451* (1954), and *A Graveyard for Lunatics* (1990). He has published over two dozen story collections, nine juvenile books, and a number of plays including scripts for *Dandelion Wine*, *The Martian Chronicles*, and *Fahrenheit 451*. In addition, he has written screenplays for six films and numerous television scripts for science fiction series shows such as "Twilight Zone," "Alfred Hitchcock Presents," and his own "Ray Bradbury Theatre," which ran on the USA Cable Network from 1985-1990. Bradbury has also published poetry and an excellent book about writing called *Zen and the Art of Writing* (Capra Press, 1973).

In an interview with David Mogen, Bradbury said he would like to be remembered 100 years from now as "a lover of the whole experience of life." Students may write to him at: 10265 Cheviot Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90064 or in care of his agent, Don Congdon, 156 Fifth Avenue #625, New York, NY, 10010.

Pages 1-32

Vocabulary

beacon (1)	ravine (2)	loam (5)	delved (6)
apropos (7)	encompass (9)	allegiance (9)	portcullis (9)
quizzical (11)	communing (14)	abyss (16)	interchange (18)
rite (18)	refraction (20)	revelation (24)	rituals (29)
howdah (29)	pontifical (29)	susurrant (31)	slumbrous (31)

Vocabulary Activity

In many cases, the meaning of the vocabulary words listed here and in other sections can be readily gleaned from context. The word lists are given to alert both student and teacher to words which may be unfamiliar. Students should briefly review the word list before reading; then, while reading, note the context in which each word is used. Students might then make a “personal word list” of those words whose definitions still remain unclear. A definition or mnemonic device such as a diagram or sentence can be included in their personal lists.

Discussion Questions

1. How does Doug feel as he awakens to the first morning of summer? (*He is filled with anticipation.*) How does he use his imagination to turn an ordinary experience into a magical one? (*He imagines he is a magician orchestrating the waking of the town, though of course everything that happens would have happened without his magician’s commands.*)
2. How does Bradbury use imagery to appeal to the reader’s senses and to create a feeling that the arrival of this particular morning is somehow magical? (*Examples: The cupola is compared to a lighthouse, with Doug’s eyes as the beacon; the street lights are “like candles on a black cake”; the bleak mansions “open baleful dragon eyes”; the trolley is compared to a ship that “sails the rivering streets.”*)
3. Why do you think the stranger laughing deep in the woods is mentioned several times on page 4? Why does their father take Doug and Tom to the forest? (*to gather fox grapes*)
4. What, according to Dad, is “the finest lace in the world”? (*the pattern of treetops against the sky*) What can you infer about Dad from this and other comments he makes about the forest? (*He mentions the centuries it took for leafmold to form loam, and knows that bees will show them the way to the grapes. Dad seems to be appreciative of the beauty of nature as well as knowledgeable about it.*) Does Doug seem to share his father’s reverence for nature? (*page 6— He is very aware of the force of life in the forest, and feels that he has “somehow cut the forest” as he gathers the grapes.*)
5. What does the Thing that Douglas feels in the woods turn out to be? (*his own awareness that he is alive*) What does Bradbury mean, “He yelled it loud but silent, a dozen times!” (*page 10*)? (*The realization was so great that in his own mind, Doug was yelling it over and over.*)
6. The dandelion wine bottled by Grandfather “was summer caught and stoppered” (*page 13*). What else can you think of that captures summer in the same way? (*example: fruits and vegetables canned from a garden, photos of a summer trip*)

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7. What are the “two things of life” that one comes to the ravine to see (page 17)? (*the ways of man and the ways of the natural world*) To what does Bradbury compare the town in an extended metaphor that runs throughout this chapter and into the next? (*The town is compared to a ship, and the wilderness to a threatening sea which will ultimately destroy the ship.*) Do you agree that the natural world will win in the end—will human beings’ gradual encroachment on the wilderness eventually lead to their own extinction?
 8. Why is it so important to Doug to get the Cream-Sponge Para Litefoot sneakers? (*He realizes that to move, he must take action. The shoes seem to him to be full of a kind of life force he feels he must have in order to experience the summer properly; he is also sure that these shoes will help him escape from other boys who are his enemies.*) If Doug were twelve today, what kind of sneakers do you think he would want? Why?
 9. Why do you suppose Mr. Sanderson was willing to let Doug have the shoes? As well as the deal they made with words, what was their unspoken exchange? (*Through Doug, Mr. Sanderson re-experienced his own joy at putting on a wonderful new pair of shoes that made him feel as though he could run and jump like an antelope or gazelle. This part of the exchange was worth more to Sanderson than any amount of money.*)
 10. Why do you think Doug wants to keep track of “Discoveries and Revelations” and “Rites and Ceremonies” (page 27)? What good might these lists be to him—or to his real-world self, the author—later on? Does Tom understand what sorts of things Doug wants to list? (*Tom seems to be obsessed with numbers and statistics; Doug finds these important, but is more interested in solving some of the mysteries of life.*)
 11. How do the porches of summer cause Green Town lifestyles to change? (*People spend evenings on their porches, and are able to hear more of what their neighbors are doing.*) Bradbury, through Doug, says that summer porch-sitting is such a “good, easy, reassuring” ritual, it could never be done away with. Is he right? What do people in your neighborhood do on summer evenings?

Author’s Craft: Personification

Personification is a figure of speech used by writers to endow animals, abstract ideas, or inanimate objects with human characteristics, for example, “...the world humming under its breath...,” page 6. Have students find some other examples of personification in this reading section. Suggest that they continue to look for additional examples of Bradbury’s use of this technique as they read, noting them in their Style Journals. (*Some examples from this reading section: page 6: “...he had somehow cut the forest and delved his hand in the open wound”; page 9: “The grass whispered under his body”; page 5: “Here was where the big summer-quiet winds lived and passed...”*)

Writing Ideas

1. Begin lists of “Discoveries and Revelations” and “Rites and Ceremonies” which are described in *Dandelion Wine*. You might also begin your own lists. Add to all the lists as you continue reading.
2. Write a persuasive note from Doug to his father listing reasons why Dad should buy Doug the sneakers in Mr. Sanderson’s store window.