



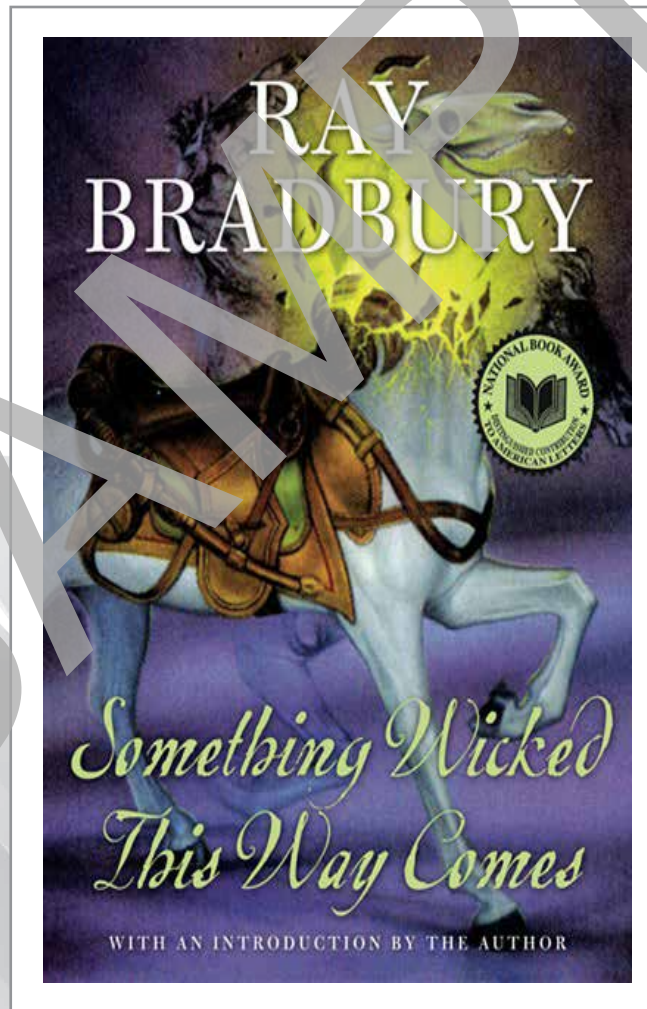
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Something Wicked This Way Comes

Ray Bradbury



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Something Wicked This Way Comes

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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Skills and Strategies

Critical Thinking

Analyzing, inferences,
predictions, compare/contrast,
brainstorming

Comprehension

Summarizing, cause/effect,
supporting judgments,
identifying attributes, drawing
conclusions

Literary Elements

Dialogue, plot, figurative
language, theme, character
analysis, setting, point of view,
irony, conflict/resolution

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, presentation,
dramatization

Vocabulary

Target words, application,
vernacular, glossary

Writing

Poetry, review, essay, journal
entry, letter

Across the Curriculum

Literature—other works by Ray
Bradbury; Research—Waukegan,
Illinois, origin of carnivals and
carousels, magic “bullet trick,”
origin of phrases; Art—collage,
drawing, painting, poster

Genre: fantasy, horror

Setting: Green Town, Illinois; likely between the 1920s and 1950s

Themes: friendship, family relationships, loss of innocence, good vs. evil, change, temptation, aging, fear, knowledge as power, vanity, curiosity

Conflict: person vs. self, person vs. person, person vs. supernatural

Tone: intense, suspenseful, chilling, occasionally humorous

Mood: eerie, mysterious, dark

Point of View: third-person omniscient

Date of First Publication: 1962

Summary

Will Halloway and Jim Nightshade are 13-year-old best friends who live in a small, idyllic Midwestern town. Their humdrum, simple lives change abruptly the week before Halloween when a carnival unexpectedly arrives. Populated with strange and frightening individuals, the carnival tempts the boys into sneaking out at night to investigate it. After encountering the carnival's proprietors, Mr. Dark and Mr. Cooger, the boys begin witnessing supernatural and terrifying occurrences—such as supernatural rides on the carnival's ornate carousel. The boys grow frightened and return to town but are relentlessly pursued by Mr. Dark. Horror befalls citizens who venture into the carnival at night. With the help of Charles Halloway, Will's father, the boys battle Mr. Dark and his band of "sideshow freaks." Ultimately, Will, Jim, and Mr. Halloway destroy the carnival by refusing to empower it with fear, sadness, or sin.

About the Author

Ray Bradbury was born on August 22, 1920 in Waukegan, Illinois. As a boy, Bradbury was interested in both writing and magic tricks. After graduating high school, Bradbury decided to become a "student of life" rather than going to college. For four years he sold newspapers on Los Angeles street corners, reading and writing during his time off. In 1943, Bradbury became a full-time writer. He published his first collection of short stories, *Dark Carnival*, in 1947. Success followed with the novels *The Martian Chronicles* (1950), *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), and *Dandelion Wine* (1957), among others. Over the years, Bradbury also wrote plays and poetry, directed motion pictures, and even served as an architectural consultant for the 1964 World's Fair held in New York. He is well-known for the distinct elements of horror, fantasy, and science fiction that he injected into his works. He traced the inspiration for *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (and, indeed, his writing career as a whole) to an early encounter with a magician named Mr. Electrico at a local carnival. (A character by this name appears in the novel.) The magician, whom Bradbury described as "a fantastic creator of marvels," shouted at Bradbury: "Live forever!" Bradbury decided to follow Mr. Electrico's advice by becoming a writer who could "live on forever" through his works. During his life, Bradbury was awarded the World Fantasy Award for Lifetime Achievement, the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters, and the Grand Master Award from the Science Fiction Writers of America. He passed away at his home in Los Angeles, California in June of 2012.

13. **Prediction:** Who has entered the library, and what will happen to Charles?

Supplementary Activities

1. In small groups, design a poster that advertises the carnival's *real* purpose.
2. Chapters 35–40 contain many vivid descriptions. Choose six descriptive words used in these chapters, and write a one-page reaction to Charles's theories about the carnival, including its origin, intention, and where its power is derived from. (The six words you choose may be, but do not have to be, taken from the vocabulary lists in this guide.)
3. In small groups, "translate" Charles's speech in the library into modern-day terms.
4. Complete the Used to Be chart on page 34 of this guide.

Chapters 41–47

Mr. Dark hunts for the boys in the library and tries to intimidate Charles into telling him where they are. After Mr. Dark finds the boys hiding in the stacks, the Dust Witch uses magic to incapacitate Will and Jim and Mr. Dark takes the boys back to the carnival. The Dust Witch remains at the library to kill Charles, but his laughter thwarts her attempt. Mr. Dark imprisons Will and Jim in the Mirror Maze and then entices the crowd with one last event—the Bullet Trick. When he asks for a volunteer from the audience, Charles steps forward and requests Will's assistance with the trick. Although unhappy with this turn of events, Mr. Dark cannot refuse in front of the crowd. Charles marks a strange symbol on the wax bullet used for the trick and fires the rifle.

Vocabulary
naiveté
titillate
recumbent
vellumed
panoply
payane
saurians
sibilant
avaricious
volition
obliquely
libidinous

Discussion Questions

1. How does Mr. Dark attempt to patronize and intimidate Charles into telling him where Will and Jim are? (*Mr. Dark scoffs at Charles's assumptions based on his quick research, saying, "So you've read a few papers and think you know all about us" [p. 211]? He also ridicules the idea that a Bible could hurt him, asking Charles condescendingly, "Do you really imagine that books can harm me? Is naiveté really your armor" [pp. 211–212]? He also reminds Charles that he could easily kill him [as could the Dust Witch] and then tempts him with a ride on the carousel.*)
2. What tactic does Mr. Dark use to find the boys in the library stacks? How does he incapacitate them afterward? (*Mr. Dark first tempts Jim into giving away his and Will's locations by offering him rewards. When that doesn't work, Mr. Dark calls out that Will's mother has ridden the carousel and has been aged beyond recognition. As a result, Will begins sobbing, alerting Mr. Dark to his and Jim's whereabouts. After he has found them, Mr. Dark has the Dust Witch seal the boys' mouths, ears, and eyes. She then places them into a trance, or slumber, from which the boys cannot awake voluntarily.*)
3. What does the Dust Witch try to do to Charles? What secret weapon does Charles discover, and why do you think it works against the Dust Witch? (*The Dust Witch attempts to kill Charles by stopping his heart. Charles lets out an unsummoned giggle, then smiles—repelling the*

10. Why does Charles mouth three sentences to the Dust Witch before he fires the rifle? (*Charles wants the Dust Witch to know his plan so she will understand what is about to happen. The reader also gets a sense that Charles thinks the bullet may not do much damage if the Dust Witch doesn't know he has marked his smile on it.*)
11. **Prediction:** Can Will and Jim be saved? If so, how?

Supplementary Activities

1. Research the origin of “darning-needle dragonfly.” Write a one-page essay linking interpretations of the dragonfly to the scene in the novel in which the Dust Witch and Mr. Dark call upon the “darning-needle dragonfly” to seal Will and Jim’s mouths, ears, and eyes. Sketch a small illustration to accompany your essay.
2. Reread the description of Mr. Dark’s tattoos on pages 215–216 of the novel. Choose one tattoo, and illustrate it on an 8.5 × 11 sheet of paper.
3. Research the “bullet trick” (also known as the “bullet catch” or the “gun trick”) and magicians who have performed it. On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions:
 - a) What were two different methods used to perform the trick?
 - b) What were the dangers of each method?

Chapters 48–54

With Will’s help, Charles shoots the Dust Witch. Will emerges from his trance as the Dust Witch dies. Mr. Dark, unwilling to admit that the act went wrong, dismisses the spectators. Charles and Will enter the Mirror Maze to rescue Jim, and Charles shatters all of the mirrors with his laughter. The “sideshow freaks” attempt to carry Mr. Electrico to the carousel, but the almost-corpse simply disintegrates. Charles and Will see Jim board the carousel, and Will is able to pull him off. Jim appears to be dead, and soon Will and Charles are approached by a small boy (who is actually Mr. Dark). Charles holds him close and allows Mr. Dark to “poison himself” with love. The “sideshow freaks” are freed, and the carnival vanishes. Jim, still unconscious, is awakened by Charles’s and Will’s laughter. The three dance and sing together, and Will embraces Jim. Breaking into a run, the three race into town as the clock strikes midnight.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think actually killed the Dust Witch? (*Answers will vary. Some students may think the Dust Witch simply died of shock or perhaps a heart attack since she was already afraid of Charles. Others may claim Charles’s specially inscribed bullet was the cause of her death, since laughter has proven to be a lethal weapon against Mr. Dark and his “sideshow freaks.” Still others might think her death was due to a combined fear of Charles and Mr. Dark’s anger at her failure to kill Charles.*)
2. How does Mr. Dark almost defeat Charles with the Mirror Maze? How does Charles survive? (*Charles enters the Mirror Maze but is stopped short by the reflection of “one million sick-mouthed, frost-*

Vocabulary

semblance
 simpering
 gauntlet
 narcissism
 riven
 forays
 beatification
 affrighted
 rancor
 souged
 exultant