

# Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed

Short story by Ray Bradbury

## Can where you are **CHANGE** who you are?

If you had to move away from everything you know, how much would you change, and how much would you stay the same? In "Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed," you'll see how a family changes after moving to a very different place.

**TURN AND TALK** With a partner, discuss whether the place where you live can affect your personality. Then, write your responses on the lines at left.

*Can where I am change who I am?*

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### Text Analysis: Mood

The feeling you get from a story is called its **mood**. Writers create mood by using descriptive words and by showing what characters think and how they talk. Mood can also be expressed through **imagery**—words and phrases that appeal to a reader's senses of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste.

IDENTIFYING MOOD	
Descriptive Words	Imagery
• cheerful	• foggy
• somber	• gritty
• wondrous	• perfumed
• eerie	• sour
• terrifying	• screeching
• peaceful	
• silly	

## Reading Strategy: Reading Science Fiction

In **science fiction**, writers often explore the future while making a comment about problems of today's world. As you read this story, notes in the side column will ask you to look for characteristics of science fiction like those shown below.

Characteristics	Examples in the Story
Scientific information based on known facts	<i>Mars once had water.</i>
Elements of life today familiar to most readers	<i>the morning paper</i>
Imaginary elements that are not real in our own time and place	<i>family travels by rocket</i>

## Vocabulary in Context

NOTE: Words are listed in the order in which they appear in the story.

**Convivial** (kuhn VIV ee uhl) is an adjective that means *enjoying the company of others*.

He didn't feel like talking, but he tried to be **convivial**.

**Subtly** (SUHT lee) is an adverb that means *not obviously or in a way that is hard to notice*.

He noticed that the food had **subtly** changed.

**Recede** (ree SEED) is a verb that means *to become fainter or more distant*.

After it lifted off, we watched the rocket **recede** into the sky.

**Dwindle** (DWIN duhl) is a verb that means *to become less, until little remains*.

The rocket's roar will **dwindle** as it recedes into the sky.

**Pendulum** (PEN joo luhm) is a noun that means *a weight hung so that it can swing freely, as used in certain clocks*.

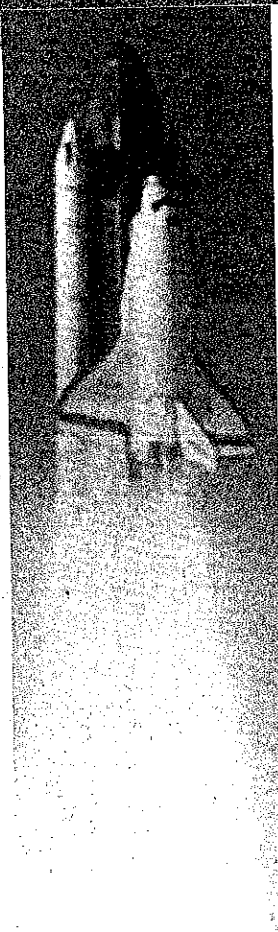
The **pendulum** in the grandfather clock kept a steady beat.

## Vocabulary Practice

Review the words and sample sentences above. Based on these words, what do you think the story will be about? Discuss your thoughts with a partner.

**SET A PURPOSE  
FOR READING**

Read "Dark They Were, and Golden-Eyed" to learn how a family changes when they move to a strange new place.



DARK  
THEY  
WERE,  
AND  
**GOLDEN-EYED**

Short story by  
**RAY BRADBURY**

**BACKGROUND** The planet Mars has long been a popular setting for science fiction stories and movies. "Martians" in these stories and movies are often shown as little green people with big heads. In this science fiction story, Ray Bradbury provides a very different look at what it could mean to be a "Martian."

The rocket metal cooled in the meadow winds. Its lid gave a bulging *pop*. From its clock interior stepped a man, a woman, and three children. The other passengers whispered away across the Martian meadow, leaving the man alone among his family.

The man felt his hair flutter and the tissues of his body draw tight as if he were standing at the center of a vacuum. His wife, before him, seemed almost to whirl away in smoke. The children, small seeds, might at any instant be  
10 sown to all the Martian climes.

The children looked up at him, as people look to the sun to tell what time of their life it is. His face was cold.

"What's wrong?" asked his wife.

"Let's get back on the rocket."

"Go back to Earth?"

"Yes! Listen!"

The wind blew as if to flake away their identities.

At any moment the Martian air might draw his soul from him, as marrow comes from a white bone. He felt  
20 submerged in a chemical that could dissolve his intellect and burn away his past. **A**

They looked at Martian hills that time had worn with a crushing pressure of years. They saw the old cities, lost in their meadows, lying like children's delicate bones among the blowing lakes of grass.

"Chin up, Harry," said his wife. "It's too late. We've come over sixty million miles."

The children with their yellow hair hollered at the deep dome of Martian sky. There was no answer but the racing  
30 hiss of wind through the stiff grass. **B**

He picked up the luggage in his cold hands. "Here we go," he said—a man standing on the edge of a sea, ready to wade in and be drowned.

They walked into town.

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**IN OTHER WORDS** A man, woman, and three children step out of a spaceship that has just traveled from Earth to Mars. The man wants to return to Earth, but they decide to stay. Nearby, they see the remains of old cities. Together, they walk to town.

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Their name was Bittering. Harry and his wife Cora; Dan, Laura, and David. They built a small white cottage and ate good breakfasts there, but the fear was never gone. It lay with Mr. Bittering and Mrs. Bittering, a third  
40 unbidden partner at every midnight talk, at every dawn awakening.

"I feel like a salt crystal," he said, "in a mountain stream, being washed away. We don't belong here. We're Earth

**A MOOD**

Reread lines 1–21. Circle the words in those lines that describe how the man feels after landing on Mars.

**B MOOD**

Reread lines 22–30. Then, underline words that describe how Mars looks. With a partner, discuss how you would describe the mood of the story so far.

people. This is Mars. It was meant for Martians. For heaven's sake, Cora, let's buy tickets for home!"

But she only shook her head. "One day the atom bomb will fix Earth. Then we'll be safe here."

"Safe and insane!"

*Tick-tock, seven o'clock* sang the voice-clock; *time to get up*. And they did.

50 Something made him check everything each morning—warm hearth, potted blood-geraniums—precisely as if he expected something to be amiss. The morning paper was toast-warm from the 6 A.M. Earth rocket. He broke its seal and tilted it at his breakfast place. He forced himself to be convivial.

"Colonial days all over again," he declared. "Why, in ten years there'll be a million Earthmen on Mars. Big cities, everything! They said we'd fail. Said the Martians would resent our invasion. But did we find any Martians? 60 Not a living soul! Oh, we found their empty cities, but no one in them. Right?"

A river of wind submerged the house. When the windows ceased rattling Mr. Bittering swallowed and looked at the children.

"I don't know," said David. "Maybe there're Martians around we don't see. Sometimes nights I think I hear 'em. I hear the wind. The sand hits my window. I get scared. And I see those towns way up in the mountains where the Martians lived a long time ago. And I think I see things 70 moving around those towns, Papa. And I wonder if those Martians *mind* us living here. I wonder if they won't do something to us for coming here." Ⓢ

"Nonsense!" Mr. Bittering looked out the windows. "We're clean, decent people." He looked at his children. "All dead cities have some kind of ghosts in them."

**VOCABULARY**

The word **convivial** (kuhn VIV ee uhl) is an adjective that means *enjoying the company of others*.

**READING SCIENCE FICTION**

Reread lines 56–72. Then, in the chart below, list an example of how Bradbury uses elements of life today in this imaginary setting.

Elements of Life Today

Memories, I mean.” He stared at the hills. “You see a staircase and you wonder what Martians looked like climbing it. You see Martian paintings and you wonder what the painter was like. You make a little ghost in your  
80 mind, a memory. It’s quite natural. Imagination.” He stopped. “You haven’t been prowling up in those ruins, have you?”

“No, Papa.” David looked at his shoes.

“See that you stay away from them. Pass the jam.”

“Just the same,” said little David, “I bet something happens.” **PAUSE & REFLECT**

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**IN OTHER WORDS** The family has left Earth because they are afraid the Earth will be destroyed by war and atomic bombs. Although they have not seen any Martians, they fear that the Martians may still be on the planet and may not like people from Earth taking over.

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Something happened that afternoon. Laura stumbled through the settlement, crying. She dashed blindly onto the porch.

90 “Mother, Father—the war, Earth!” she sobbed. “A radio flash just came. Atom bombs hit New York! All the space rockets blown up. No more rockets to Mars, ever!”

“Oh, Harry!” The mother held onto her husband and daughter.

“Are you sure, Laura?” asked the father quietly.

Laura wept. “We’re stranded on Mars, forever and ever!”

For a long time there was only the sound of the wind in the late afternoon.

Alone, thought Bittering. Only a thousand of us here.  
100 No way back. No way. No way. **Ⓢ** Sweat poured from his face and his hands and his body; he was drenched in the

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

Bradbury’s descriptions of the Martian ruins create a very tense mood. Reread lines 84–86. Then, with a partner, discuss what you think might happen to the Bittering family.

**Ⓢ LANGUAGE COACH**

**Sentence fragments** are incomplete sentences. They are often used in dialogue to show how people really talk. In lines 99–100, sentence fragments help express Bittering’s fearful thoughts.



He glanced up from the garden to the Martian mountains. He thought of the proud old Martian names  
 130 that had once been on those peaks. Earthmen, dropping from the sky, had gazed upon hills, rivers, Martian seas left nameless in spite of names. Once Martians had built cities, named cities; climbed mountains, named mountains; sailed seas, named seas. Mountains melted, seas drained, cities tumbled. In spite of this, the Earthmen had felt a silent guilt at putting new names to these ancient hills and valleys. ●

Nevertheless, man lives by symbol and label. The names were given.

Mr. Bittering felt very alone in his garden under the  
 140 Martian sun, anachronism<sup>1</sup> bent here, planting Earth flowers in a wild soil.

Think. Keep thinking. Different things. Keep your mind free of Earth, the atom war, the lost rockets.

He perspired. He glanced about. No one watching. He removed his tie. Pretty bold, he thought. First your coat off, now your tie. He hung it neatly on a peach tree he had imported as a sapling from Massachusetts.

He returned to his philosophy of names and mountains. The Earthmen had changed names. Now there were Hormel  
 150 Valleys, Roosevelt Seas, Ford Hills, Vanderbilt Plateaus, Rockefeller Rivers, on Mars. It wasn't right. The American settlers had shown wisdom, using old Indian prairie names: Wisconsin, Minnesota, Idaho, Ohio, Utah, Milwaukee, Waukegan, Osseo. The old names, the old meanings.

Staring at the mountains wildly, he thought: Are you up there? All the dead ones, you Martians? Well, here we are, alone, cut off! Come down, move us out! We're helpless!

The wind blew a shower of peach blossoms.

He put out his sun-browned hand and gave a small cry.  
 160 He touched the blossoms and picked them up. He turned

### ● READING SCIENCE FICTION

Reread lines 132–136.

Here, Bradbury makes a connection between Martians and elements of human life today. What did Martians do that humans have done? With a partner, discuss what happened to what the Martians did.

1. **anachronism** (uh NAK ruh niz uhm): something placed outside of its proper time period; examples might include a dinosaur appearing in a story that takes place today or a polar bear living in a jungle.



MOOD

Reread lines 165–193. Then, underline the words and phrases that appeal to a reader’s senses of sight, sound, touch, smell, or taste. How do these images make you feel, or what mood do they create in the story?

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them, he touched them again and again. Then he shouted for his wife.

“Cora!”

She appeared at a window. He ran to her.

“Cora, these blossoms!”

She handled them.

“Do you see? They’re different. They’ve changed! They’re not peach blossoms any more!”

“Look all right to me,” she said.

170 “They’re not. They’re wrong! I can’t tell how. An extra petal, a leaf, something, the color, the smell!”

The children ran out in time to see their father hurrying about the garden, pulling up radishes, onions, and carrots from their beds.

“Cora, come look!”

They handled the onions, the radishes, the carrots among them.

“Do they look like carrots?”

“Yes . . . no.” She hesitated. “I don’t know.”

180 “They’re changed.”

“Perhaps.”

“You know they have! Onions but not onions, carrots but not carrots. Taste: the same but different. Smell: not like it used to be.” He felt his heart pounding, and he was afraid. He dug his fingers into the earth. “Cora, what’s happening? What is it? We’ve got to get away from this.” He ran across the garden. Each tree felt his touch. “The roses. The roses. They’re turning green!”

And they stood looking at the green roses.

190 And two days later Dan came running. “Come see the cow. I was milking her and I saw it. Come on!”

They stood in the shed and looked at their one cow.

It was growing a third horn. ●

And the lawn in front of their house very quietly and slowly was coloring itself like spring violets. Seed from Earth but growing up a soft purple.

“We must get away,” said Bittering. “We’ll eat this stuff and then we’ll change—who knows to what? I can’t let it happen. There’s only one thing to do. Burn  
200 this food!”

“It’s not poisoned.”

“But it is. **Subtly**, very subtly. A little bit. A very little bit. We mustn’t touch it.”

He looked with dismay at their house. “Even the house. The wind’s done something to it. The air’s burned it. The fog at night. The boards, all warped out of shape. It’s not an Earthman’s house any more.”

“Oh, your imagination!”

He put on his coat and tie. “I’m going into town. We’ve  
210 got to do something now. I’ll be back.”

“Wait, Harry!” his wife cried. But he was gone.

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**IN OTHER WORDS** The family notices that everything they have brought from Earth is changing.

► In lines 189–196, mark brackets [ ] around three changes they notice.

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In town, on the shadowy step of the grocery store, the men sat with their hands on their knees, conversing with great leisure and ease.

Mr. Bittering wanted to fire a pistol in the air.

What are you doing, you fools! he thought. Sitting here! You’ve heard the news—we’re stranded on this planet. Ⓢ Well, move! Aren’t you frightened? Aren’t you afraid? What are you going to do?

220 “Hello, Harry,” said everyone.

“Look,” he said to them. “You did hear the news, the other day, didn’t you?”

They nodded and laughed. “Sure. Sure, Harry.”

“What are you going to do about it?”

“Do, Harry, do? What *can* we do?”

“Build a rocket, that’s what!”

### VOCABULARY

The word **subtly** (SUHT lee) is an adverb that means *not obviously or in a way that is hard to notice*.

### READING SCIENCE FICTION

In lines 212–214, Bradbury describes a scene that you might see in a small town today. Underline the imaginary element in line 217—the thing that would be out of place if the scene were in our own place and time.

"A rocket, Harry? To go back to all that trouble? Oh, Harry!"

"But you *must* want to go back. Have you noticed the peach blossoms, the onions, the grass?"

230 "Why, yes, Harry, seems we did," said one of the men.

"Doesn't it scare you?"

"Can't recall that it did much, Harry."

"Idiots!"

"Now, Harry."

Bittering wanted to cry. "You've got to work with me. If we stay here, we'll all change. The air. Don't you smell it? Something in the air. A Martian virus, maybe; some seed, or a pollen. Listen to me!"

They stared at him.

240 "Sam," he said to one of them.

"Yes, Harry?"

"Will you help me build a rocket?"

"Harry, I got a whole load of metal and some blueprints. You want to work in my metal shop on a rocket, you're welcome. I'll sell you that metal for five hundred dollars. You should be able to construct a right pretty rocket, if you work alone, in about thirty years."

Everyone laughed. ●

"Don't laugh."

250 Sam looked at him with quiet good humor.

"Sam," Bittering said. "Your eyes—"

"What about them, Harry?"

"Didn't they used to be gray?"

"Well now, I don't remember."

"They were, weren't they?"

"Why do you ask, Harry?"

"Because now they're kind of yellow-colored."

"Is that so, Harry?" Sam said, casually.

"And you're taller and thinner—"

260 "You might be right, Harry."

● MOOD

Reread lines 229–249. How is Harry's mood different from the mood shared by the other men? Which mood—Harry's or the other men's—seems to be the mood of the story?

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"Sam, you shouldn't have yellow eyes."

"Harry, what color eyes have *you* got?" Sam said.

"My eyes? They're blue, of course."

"Here you are, Harry." Sam handed him a pocket mirror. "Take a look at yourself."

Mr. Bittering hesitated, and then raised the mirror to his face.

There were little, very dim flecks of new gold captured in the blue of his eyes. ❶

270 "Now look what you've done," said Sam a moment later. "You've broken my mirror."

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**IN OTHER WORDS** Harry goes into town to talk with other men about the changes he has noticed. He wants to build a rocket to return to Earth.

► With a partner, discuss how the other men react to Harry's plan.

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Harry Bittering moved into the metal shop and began to build the rocket. Men stood in the open door and talked and joked without raising their voices. Once in a while they gave him a hand on lifting something. But mostly they just idled and watched him with their yellowing eyes.

"It's suppertime, Harry," they said.

His wife appeared with his supper in a wicker basket.

280 "I won't touch it," he said. "I'll eat only food from our Deepfreeze. Food that came from Earth. Nothing from our garden."

His wife stood watching him. "You can't build a rocket."

"I worked in a shop once, when I was twenty. I know metal. Once I get it started, the others will help," he said, not looking at her, laying out the blueprints.

"Harry, Harry," she said, helplessly.

"We've *got* to get away, Cora. We've got to!"

### ❶ READING SCIENCE FICTION

Reread lines 262–270. With a partner, discuss whether the changes in the men's eyes are imaginary elements or scientific information.

**IN OTHER WORDS** Harry begins to build a rocket, but no one helps him. He refuses to eat food grown on Mars. His wife says that he can't build a rocket, but he says that they have to leave.

**LANGUAGE COACH**

Reread lines 289–291. The phrases “sea meadows” and “chess cities” are figures of speech called **metaphors**. Here, Bradbury compares the Martian meadows to a sea and the Martian cities to the white game pieces on a chess board.

The nights were full of wind that blew down the empty moonlit sea meadows past the little white chess cities lying  
290 for their twelve-thousandth year in the shallows. In the Earthmen’s settlement, the Bittering house shook with a feeling of change. ●

Lying abed, Mr. Bittering felt his bones shifted, shaped, melted like gold. His wife, lying beside him, was dark from many sunny afternoons. Dark she was, and golden-eyed, burnt almost black by the sun, sleeping, and the children metallic in their beds, and the wind roaring forlorn and changing through the old peach trees, the violet grass, shaking out green rose petals.

300 The fear would not be stopped. It had his throat and heart. It dripped in a wetness of the arm and the temple and the trembling palm.

A green star rose in the east.

A strange word emerged from Mr. Bittering’s lips.

“*Iorrt. Iorrt.*” He repeated it.

It was a Martian word. He knew no Martian.

In the middle of the night he arose and dialed a call through to Simpson, the archaeologist.

“Simpson, what does the word *Iorrt* mean?”

310 “Why that’s the old Martian word for our planet Earth. Why?”

“No special reason.”

The telephone slipped from his hand.

“Hello, hello, hello, hello,” it kept saying while he sat gazing out at the green star. “Bittering? Harry, are you there?” ●

The days were full of metal sound. He laid the frame of the rocket with the reluctant help of three indifferent men. He grew very tired in an hour or so and had to sit down.

“The altitude,” laughed a man.

**MOOD**

Reread lines 310–316. What does Harry realize that causes him to drop the telephone? How does this event affect the story’s mood?

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- 320 “Are you *eating*, Harry?” asked another.  
 “I’m eating,” he said, angrily.  
 “From your Deepfreeze?”  
 “Yes!”  
 “You’re getting thinner, Harry.”  
 “I’m not!”  
 “And taller.”  
 “Liar!”

**IN OTHER WORDS** Harry begins to change.

► Reread lines 305–307. Draw brackets [ ] around details that show Harry becoming more Martian.

His wife took him aside a few days later. “Harry, I’ve used up all the food in the Deepfreeze. There’s nothing left.  
 330 I’ll have to make sandwiches using food grown on Mars.”

He sat down heavily.

“You must eat,” she said. “You’re weak.”

“Yes,” he said.

He took a sandwich, opened it, looked at it, and began to nibble at it.

“And take the rest of the day off,” she said. “It’s hot. The children want to swim in the canals and hike. Please come along.”

“I can’t waste time. This is a crisis!”

340 “Just for an hour,” she urged. “A swim’ll do you good.”

He rose, sweating. “All right, all right. Leave me alone. I’ll come.”

“Good for you, Harry.”

The sun was hot, the day quiet. There was only an immense staring burn upon the land. They moved along the canal, the father, the mother, the racing children in their swimsuits. They stopped and ate meat sandwiches. He saw their skin baking brown. And he saw the yellow

**MOOD**

Reread lines 333–343. The members of the Bittering family have started to change physically. What other way is Harry changing now? Put a check mark ✓ next to the sentences that show how Harry is changing.

eyes of his wife and his children, their eyes that were never  
 350 yellow before. A few tremblings shook him, but were  
 carried off in waves of pleasant heat as he lay in the sun. He  
 was too tired to be afraid.

“Cora, how long have your eyes been yellow?”

She was bewildered. “Always, I guess.”

“They didn’t change from brown in the last three  
 months?”

She bit her lips. “No. Why do you ask?”

“Never mind.”

They sat there.

360 “The children’s eyes,” he said. “They’re yellow, too.”

“Sometimes growing children’s eyes change color.”

“Maybe *we’re* children, too. At least to Mars. That’s a  
 thought.” He laughed. “Think I’ll swim.”

Ⓢ READING SCIENCE  
 FICTION

In lines 349–364, Harry  
 talks with his wife about  
 how they are all changing  
 physically. What familiar  
 element of life today does  
 Bradbury use in line 364  
 to show that Harry isn’t as  
 worried as he once was?

**IN OTHER WORDS** All of the food brought from Earth is gone,  
 and Harry begins to eat food grown on Mars. The family goes  
 swimming, and Harry again notices how his wife and children are  
 changing. Their skin is brown, and their eyes are yellow.

They leaped into the canal water, and he let himself  
 sink down and down to the bottom like a golden statue  
 and lie there in green silence. All was water-quiet and  
 deep, all was peace. He felt the steady, slow current drift  
 him easily.

370 If I lie here long enough, he thought, the water will work  
 and eat away my flesh until the bones show like coral. Just  
 my skeleton left. And then the water can build on that  
 skeleton—green things, deep water things, red things,  
 yellow things. Change. Change. Slow, deep, silent change.  
 And isn’t that what it is up *there*?

He saw the sky submerged above him, the sun made  
 Martian by atmosphere and time and space.

Up there, a big river, he thought, a Martian river; all of us lying deep in it, in our pebble houses, in our sunken boulder houses, like **crayfish** hidden, and the water washing  
 380 away our old bodies and lengthening the bones and—

He let himself drift up through the soft light.

Dan sat on the edge of the canal, regarding his father seriously.

“*Utha*,” he said.

“What?” asked his father.

The boy smiled. “You know. *Utha*’s the Martian word for ‘father.’”

“Where did you learn it?”

“I don’t know. Around. *Utha!*”

390 “What do you want?”

The boy hesitated. “I—I want to change my name.”

“Change it?”

“Yes.”

His mother swam over. “What’s wrong with Dan for a name?”

Dan fidgeted. “The other day you called Dan, Dan, Dan. I didn’t even hear. I said to myself, That’s not my name. I’ve a new name I want to use.” **PAUSE & REFLECT**

Mr. Bittering held to the side of the canal, his body cold  
 400 and his heart pounding slowly. “What is this new name?”

“Linnl. Isn’t that a good name? Can I use it? Can’t I, please?”

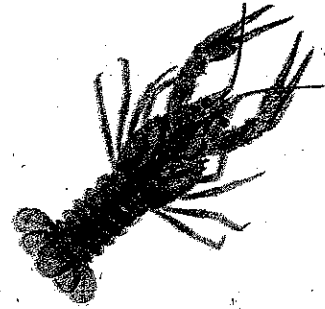
Mr. Bittering put his hand to his head. He thought of the silly rocket, himself working alone, himself alone even among his family, so alone.

He heard his wife say, “Why not?”

He heard himself say, “Yes, you can use it.”

“Yaaa!” screamed the boy. “I’m Linnl, Linnl!”

Racing down the meadowlands, he danced and shouted.



### VISUAL VOCABULARY

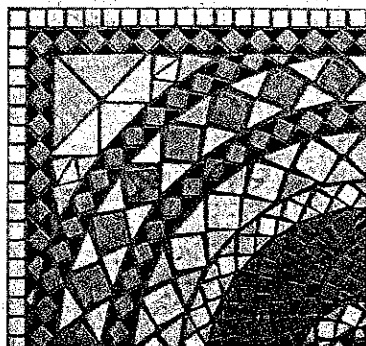
A **crayfish** is a freshwater animal that looks like a small lobster.

### PAUSE & REFLECT

Reread lines 383–399. With a partner, discuss why Dan wants to change his name.



## VISUAL VOCABULARY



A **mosaic** (moh ZAY ik) is a design made from pieces of stone or glass set into a pattern.

© MOOD

Reread lines 413–421. **Circle** the descriptive words

Bradbury uses to create a certain mood. Then, with a partner, discuss how the mood of the story has changed.

## VOCABULARY

The word **recede** (ree SEED) is a verb that means to *become fainter or more distant*.

The word **dwindle** (DWIN duhl) is a verb that means to *become less, until little remains*.

410 Mr. Bittering looked at his wife. “Why did we do that?”  
“I don’t know,” she said. “It just seemed like a good idea.”

They walked into the hills. They strolled on old **mosaic** paths, beside still pumping fountains. The paths were covered with a thin film of cool water all summer long. You kept your bare feet cool all the day, splashing as in a creek, wading.

They came to a small deserted Martian villa with a good view of the valley. It was on top of a hill. Blue marble halls, large murals, a swimming pool. It was refreshing in this hot  
420 summertime. The Martians hadn’t believed in large cities. ©

“How nice,” said Mrs. Bittering, “if we could move up here to this villa for the summer.”

“Come on,” he said. “We’re going back to town. There’s work to be done on the rocket.”

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**IN OTHER WORDS** The family begins to adopt Martian ways. However, Harry hasn’t completely given up the idea of leaving.

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But as he worked that night, the thought of the cool blue marble villa entered his mind. As the hours passed, the rocket seemed less important.

In the flow of days and weeks, the rocket **receded** and **dwindled**. The old fever was gone. It frightened him to  
430 think he had let it slip this way. But somehow the heat, the air, the working conditions—

He heard the men murmuring on the porch of his metal shop.

“Everyone’s going. You heard?”

“All going. That’s right.”

Bittering came out. “Going where?” He saw a couple of trucks, loaded with children and furniture, drive down the dusty street.

"Up to the villas," said the man.

440 "Yeah, Harry. I'm going. So is Sam. Aren't you Sam?"

"That's right, Harry. What about you?"

"I've got work to do here."

"Work! You can finish that rocket in the autumn, when it's cooler."

He took a breath. "I got the frame all set up."

"In the autumn is better." Their voices were lazy in the heat.

"Got to work," he said.

450 "Autumn," they reasoned. And they sounded so sensible, so right.

"Autumn would be best," he thought. "Plenty of time, then."

No! cried part of himself, deep down, put away, locked tight, suffocating. No! No!

"In the autumn," he said.

"Come on, Harry," they all said.

"Yes," he said, feeling his flesh melt in the hot liquid air. "Yes, in the autumn. I'll begin work again then."

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

Reread lines 452-459. With a partner, discuss why the rocket is becoming less important to Harry.

"I got a villa near the Tirra Canal," said someone.

460 "You mean the Roosevelt Canal, don't you?"

"Tirra. The old Martian name."

"But on the map—"

"Forget the map. It's Tirra now. Now I found a place in the Pillan Mountains—"

"You mean the Rockefeller Range," said Bittering.

"I mean the Pillan Mountains," said Sam.

"Yes," said Bittering, buried in the hot, swarming air.

"The Pillan Mountains."

READING SCIENCE  
FICTION

What elements of life today are the Bitterings giving up in lines 475-489? List the items on the lines below.

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Everyone worked at loading the truck in the hot, still  
470 afternoon of the next day.

Laura, Dan, and David carried packages. Or, as they preferred to be known, Ttil, Linnl, and Werr carried packages.

The furniture was abandoned in the little white cottage.

“It looked just fine in Boston,” said the mother. “And here in the cottage. But up at the villa? No. We’ll get it when we come back in the autumn.”

Bittering himself was quiet.

“I’ve some ideas on furniture for the villa,” he said after a  
480 time. “Big, lazy furniture.”

“What about your encyclopedia? You’re taking it along, surely?”

Mr. Bittering glanced away. “I’ll come and get it next week.”

They turned to their daughter. “What about your New York dresses?”

The bewildered girl stared. “Why, I don’t want them any more.”

They shut off the gas, the water, they locked the doors  
490 and walked away. Father peered into the truck.

“Gosh, we’re not taking much,” he said. “Considering all we brought to Mars, this is only a handful!”

He started the truck.

Looking at the small white cottage for a long moment, he was filled with a desire to rush to it, touch it, say good-bye to it, for he felt as if he were going away on a long journey, leaving something to which he could never quite return, never understand again.

Just then Sam and his family drove by in another truck.

500 “Hi, Bittering! Here we go!”

The truck swung down the ancient highway out of town. There were sixty others traveling in the same direction. The town filled with a silent, heavy dust from their passage. The canal waters lay blue in the sun, and a quiet wind moved in the strange trees. ③

“Good-bye, town!” said Mr. Bittering.

“Good-bye, good-bye,” said the family, waving to it. They did not look back again.

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**IN OTHER WORDS** The settlers from Earth move to the old Martian houses. Harry thinks about staying behind to finish his rocket, but he decides to join everyone else and move to the mountains. The children have changed their names, and the settlers now use the Martian names of mountains and rivers.

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510 Summer burned the canals dry. Summer moved like flame upon the meadows. In the empty Earth settlement, the painted houses flaked and peeled. Rubber tires upon which children had swung in back yards hung suspended like stopped clock **pendulums** in the blazing air.

At the metal shop, the rocket frame began to rust.

In the quiet autumn Mr. Bittering stood, very dark now, very golden-eyed, upon the slope above his villa, looking at the valley.

“It’s time to go back,” said Cora.

520 “Yes, but we’re not going,” he said quietly. “There’s nothing there any more.”

“Your books,” she said. “Your fine clothes.”

“Your *llles* and your fine *ior uele rre*,” she said.

“The town’s empty. No one’s going back,” he said.

“There’s no reason to, none at all.”

The daughter wove tapestries and the sons played songs on ancient flutes and pipes, their laughter echoing in the marble villa.

### ③ MOOD

Reread lines 502–506. What mood is created by the descriptive words *silent*, *heavy*, *quiet*, and *strange*? Discuss your answer with a partner.

### VOCABULARY

The word **pendulum** (PEN joo luhm) is a noun that means *a weight hung so that it can swing freely, as used in certain clocks*.

Mr. Bittering gazed at the Earth settlement far away in the low valley. "Such odd, such ridiculous houses the Earth  
530 people built."

"They didn't know any better," his wife mused. "Such ugly people. I'm glad they've gone."

They both looked at each other, startled by all they had just finished saying. They laughed.

"Where did they go?" he wondered. He glanced at his wife. She was golden and slender as his daughter. She looked at him, and he seemed almost as young as their eldest son.

"I don't know," she said. Ⓢ

540 "We'll go back to town maybe next year, or the year after, or the year after that," he said, calmly. "Now—I'm warm. How about taking a swim?"

They turned their backs to the valley. Arm in arm they walked silently down a path of clear-running spring water.

Ⓢ READING SCIENCE FICTION

Are the startling changes in lines 526–540 examples of scientific information or imaginary elements? Explain.

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**IN OTHER WORDS** The family realizes that they no longer want to return to town.

► Reread lines 529–540. With a partner, discuss what has happened to Harry and his family.

Five years later a rocket fell out of the sky. It lay steaming in the valley. Men leaped out of it, shouting.

"We won the war on Earth! We're here to rescue you! Hey!"

550 But the American-built town of cottages, peach trees, and theaters was silent. They found a flimsy rocket frame rusting in an empty shop.

The rocket men searched the hills. The captain established headquarters in an abandoned bar. His lieutenant came back to report.

“The town’s empty, but we found native life in the hills, sir. Dark people. Yellow eyes. Martians. Very friendly. We talked a bit, not much. They learn English fast. I’m sure our relations will be most friendly with them, sir.”

560 “Dark, eh?” mused the captain. “How many?”

“Six, eight hundred, I’d say, living in those marble ruins in the hills, sir. Tall, healthy. Beautiful women.”

“Did they tell you what became of the men and women who built this Earth settlement, Lieutenant?”

“They hadn’t the foggiest notion of what happened to this town or its people.”

“Strange. You think those Martians killed them?”

“They look surprisingly peaceful. Chances are a plague did this town in, sir.”

570 “Perhaps. I suppose this is one of those mysteries we’ll never solve. One of those mysteries you read about.”

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

**PAUSE & REFLECT**

Pause at line 572. How would you explain the mystery of the town and its people? Discuss your answer with a partner.

The captain looked at the room, the dusty windows, the blue mountains rising beyond, the canals moving in the light, and he heard the soft wind in the air. He shivered. Then, recovering, he tapped a large fresh map he had thumbtacked to the top of an empty table.

“Lots to be done, Lieutenant.” His voice droned on and quietly on as the sun sank behind the blue hills.

580 “New settlements. Mining sites, minerals to be looked for. Bacteriological specimens<sup>2</sup> taken. The work, all the work. And the old records were lost. We’ll have a job of

2. **bacteriological specimens** (bak teer ee uh LAH jih kuhl SPEH suh muhnz): samples of different kinds of living things that each have only one cell.

MOOD

Reread from line 578 to the end. What is the mood at the end of the story? How does Bradbury create this mood?

Lined writing area for student response.

remapping to do, renaming the mountains and rivers and such. Calls for a little imagination.

“What do you think of naming those mountains the Lincoln Mountains, this canal the Washington Canal, those hills—we can name those hills for you, Lieutenant. Diplomacy. And you, for a favor, might name a town for me. Polishing the apple.<sup>3</sup> And why not make this the Einstein Valley, and farther over . . . are you listening, Lieutenant?”

The lieutenant snapped his gaze from the blue color and the quiet mist of the hills far beyond the town.

“What? Oh, yes, sir!”

**IN OTHER WORDS** Years later, people from Earth land on Mars to rescue the settlers. They find the town empty. Martians living nearby tell them that they don't know what happened to the settlers. The men from Earth discuss building a new settlement. One of the men is distracted by the Martian landscape.

3. polishing the apple: acting in such a way as to get another person's approval.