

Lesson Plan for Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rains." (1950)

Adapted from Lit and More

Reading (15 min.)

As the students show up, split them into 6 groups or more if the class is larger. Try to have only 3-4 students in a group (3 is ideal). On a handout or the board, list the following skills. Divide the skills so that each group has one to analyze. Have the students annotate the text as you read aloud, looking for their assigned skill. You can ask them to read on their own, but my students usually enjoyed my reading aloud. Besides, it builds an atmosphere for the lesson.

- Character
- Setting
- Structure
- Narration
- Figurative Language 1 (figurative meanings, diction, imagery)
- Figurative Language 2 (simile, metaphor, personification, allusion)

Group Work (10 min. +)

When you finish reading, have the students group together and share their notes with each other. Walk around listening to their discussions and answering any clarifying questions.

Whole Class Discussion (20 min.)

Ask each group to share what they discussed and return to parts of the text that they noticed. Here are some ideas you hope they notice.

Character—Hopefully, they will notice the absence of human characters and find all the characterizations of the house itself (*CHR 1.A*). There are countless examples of the house as a



personified character, heightening in the second half when it catches on fire. The contrasts between the house and the fire parallel a hero vs. villain battle (*CHR 1.C*). It's nice if they notice the reference to "the attic brain" as the house combats the fire, losing in the end.

Setting—Here, most of the evidence is at the beginning of the story, identifying the story's date and location (*SET 2.A*). Hopefully, they will discuss the function of the setting. They may be surprised to see that the story was published in 1950 yet set in 2026, helping them realize that the people in Bradbury's story are themselves as he imagined them (*SET 2.B*). It would be grand if they discussed the relationship between the setting and the technology of this story, which is really the main character of the story (*SET 2.C*).

Structure—Here, the group should notice that the plot events are neatly organized chronologically (*STR 3.A*). Also, they should examine the pacing, noticing that Bradbury explains certain parts in detail, slowing down the pacing (the description of the burned outlines outside, the imagery of the nursery). This contrasts with the quick pacing of the house as it battles and loses to the fire (*STR 3.B*). Next, it would be grand if they remarked on some of the contrasts found in the text, such as clean vs. dirty, light vs. dark, and the ruins of the house vs. the breaking of dawn at the same moment (*STR 3.D*). Lastly, maybe discuss the conflict that appears in many Bradbury texts. Bradbury often featured technology as an antagonist in his stories set in the future. He

also uses fire in several of his stories, leading us to note the juxtaposition between fire (a natural element) vs. technology (a manmade element) (*STR 3.F*).

Narration—The narrator of the text (*NAR 4.A*), at first, seems dispassionate and detached, but closer examination reveals notes of sympathy and concern. Especially as the narrator describes the deathly shadows on the house's siding and how he describes the battle with the fire (*NAR 4.C*).

Figurative Language 1—Hopefully, this group will locate the many words and phrases that are intriguing based on connotations and contrasts (*FIG 5.A*). It would be nice for them to see the house as a symbol, but if not, maybe they will have a lot to say about the imagery and how it contributes to so many other skills (*FIG 5.D*).

Figurative Language 2—Hooray if this group points out how important personification is in this story (*FIG 6.C*) and how frequently Bradbury employs similes, something that can make a writer sound pedestrian but works in his style. The similes contribute to the house's character-building and the general tone of the story (*FIG 6.A*).

Application (5 min.)

To bring the discussion home, write the prompt from Question 3 of the 2021 AP Literature Exam (*the significance of a house*). They understand that the house serves as a symbol for humanity in the future, but they may need help with the interpretation of the work as a whole. Make sure they don't overlook the Sara Teasdale poem in the middle, read aloud in a robotic voice just before the house catches fire. Teasdale's poem expresses that nature is patient and enduring. It existed before humans and will live on after we are gone. This allusion may help them grasp the story's theme and conclude the discussion.

Question 3 of the 2021 AP Literature Exam

In many works of fiction, houses take on symbolic importance. Such houses may be literal houses or unconventional ones (e.g., hotels, hospitals, monasteries, or boats).

Either from your own reading or from the list below, choose a work of fiction in which a literal or unconventional house serves as a significant symbol. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how this house contributes to an interpretation of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.

In your response, you should do the following:

Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.

Provide evidence to support your line of reasoning.

Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.

Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.