

Honors American Literature Summer reading assignment: *The Martian Chronicles*

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Please read each question thoroughly before even beginning to read. Some of the questions require you to infer (reasonably assume or guess) throughout the text to answer, while some questions can be answered after the relevant text is discovered.

Final responses should be typed, using proper academic standard (Time New Roman 12pt font, double spaced). Additional formatting will be explained during the beginning of classes in the fall. The book can be purchased with a 20% discount off the cover price at RK News Hallmark in Kenosha (262-694-4055).

Due date: September 11th, 2017

Short Essay Questions to accompany *The Martian Chronicles*

1. What are the causes and effects of political turmoil in the novel *The Martian Chronicles*?

Does Bradbury presume that in reading of their shortcomings we might well see our own? Please compose a 2-3 paragraph response using at least three excerpts of textual evidence complete with page number.

2. How do the main characters in the text and people in general make decisions based on both their political and ethical beliefs? How do the conflicts in the texts mirror historical and modern political events? Consider, for example, the effect of the relatively “harmless” Earth pathogen on the Martians; what might this parallel from North American history? Construct a 2-3 paragraph response that employs at least 2-3 excerpts of textual evidence. If you use the internet to find historical or political parallels, be sure to give credit to these resources.

3. Bradbury explained once that editors would send back his stories with rejection letters, noting that he focused too much on people and not enough on science. Give three examples of “unrealistic science.” Does this detract from the story? Why or why not?

4. The structure of *The Martian Chronicles* is a challenge for many readers to get used to because it does not necessarily follow a single protagonist all the way through rising action and to a climax. Based upon what you believe is Bradbury's overall intention in writing this text, how does this structure help create the author's tone? How, if at all, does it detract from the author's tone?

5. "Do you know why teachers use me?" Bradbury once said, in an interview for *the Paris Review*. "Because I speak in tongues. I write metaphors. Every one of my stories is a metaphor you can remember." Explain at least two of Bradbury's metaphors that your teachers would want you to remember.

Guiding Questions: Answer each in 2-3 sentences. Include the page number where you found the answer implied. If the answer requires inferences from several pages or a range, include that.

1. Pay careful attention to "Rocket Summer". What is the significance of the chapter and what is Bradbury's intention by beginning the novel with that story?

2. Note the different reactions of Mr. K & Mrs. K to the newcomers. How do their decisions reflect their personalities and how do their personalities affect their decisions?

3. At some point come back and decide whose action was correct—does it matter what their individual motives were?

4. Examine the Martian culture—how is it like human culture and how is it different? What can you determine the Martians value by looking at their attitudes, art, architecture, recreation, etc. What social commentary is Bradbury revealing here?

5. The 2nd expedition to Mars is also a failure. What do we as readers learn about humans and Martians from this chapter? What do we learn about our current society from this chapter?
6. The 3rd expedition fails as well. What does this chapter (along with the 2nd expedition) say about beliefs and logical reasoning? What are you more likely to believe, what you see to be true, what you think to be true, or what you know to be true? When do you change your mind?
7. In what way does the 4th expedition resemble the historical accounts of European explorers coming to the new world? Based on your understanding of historical events, do you think Spender's actions are understandable?
8. Whom do you blame for the Martians' fate? What were the choices that led to this outcome? Was there another way?
9. The settlers are coming. Look at how their presence changes the planet. Is the novel critical of or sympathetic to the humans?
10. Consider the juxtaposition of "The Green Morning" and "The Locusts." What is Bradbury trying to emphasize with these two chapters?
11. How is the planet changed by the settlers? How are the settlers changed by the planet? How is life on earth changed by people leaving to settle Mars?
12. What does the story of the Martian child suggest about parenthood?
13. After settlers have been on Mars for some time, Earth erupts in an atomic confrontation. How are these two events related?
14. The narrative focus begins to shift from the Martians to the humans on Mars. In light of that shift, explain the significance of the reflections at the end of the novel.