



DELAWARE
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INSIGHTS

DTC's Teacher Resource



Something Wicked This Way Comes

A new musical based on the novel by Ray Bradbury

Music and lyrics by Neil Bartram

Book by Brian Hill

Directed by Rachel Rockwell

Delaware Theatre Company
September 15 - October 8, 2017

A Word from the Creators...

“We hope [the audience is] moved to think about the underlying message of the piece laid out by Ray Bradbury over half a century ago – that we must always keep our eyes open for anything that turns our hearts away from each other, a message that remains relevant even today.”

—Neil Bartram and Brian Hill, 2017

“We’ve been trying to figure out for tens of centuries what our place in the universe is, why we were created to be on the world, why we were given this opportunity to live. I have my own answers.... We have this darkness within us, we have this bright light within us, and we’re going to take both of them [on our journey], and I accept that.”

—Ray Bradbury, from an interview on NPR, 2000.



INSIGHTS

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Delaware Theatre Company

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**39th Season
2017-2018**

SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES

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Ray Bradbury

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Directed & choreographed by

Rachel Rockwell

Delaware Theatre Company
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Delaware Division of the **Arts**

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Summary and Characters

A Note to Readers: To assist educators in preparing their students for seeing our shows, the Department of Education and Community Engagement at DTC prepares and shares detailed summaries of the plots of our productions. This summary is abridged from the one provided to educators; however, it does disclose important plot points, including the climax of the play. Furthermore, our study guides are constructed under the premise that the reader has read our summary and character descriptions, and additional articles herein may reference these same points. This notice is intended to provide a “spoiler alert.” In addition, Bartram and Hill’s adaptation of Bradbury’s Something Wicked This Way Comes is a world premiere being developed at Delaware Theatre Company. The abridged summary herein reflects the script draft of 9/3/17, and some details may change throughout the rehearsal and preview process before opening night.

Summary

It is 1938 in Green Town, Illinois. Two boys, Will and Jim, encounter a traveling carnival, “Cooger and Dark’s Pandemonium Shadow Show,” that visits their town in late October. Though the townspeople are enticed and eager to see the attractions, including visiting the sideshows and their performers and taking in the haunting Mirror Maze, Will and Jim have misgivings about the carnival’s leader, Mr. Dark, who seems both charming and dangerous. Will and Jim observe several disturbing events at the carnival that add to their suspicions that Mr. Dark and his cohorts are a threat to the people in Green Town. Concerned that they have no one to turn to for help, Will finally approaches his father, Charles, despite the emotional chasm in their relationship. Instead of being met with disbelief, Will finds in his father a willing listener who has his own observations about the enigmatic visitors. Will, Charles, and Jim realize they must unite if they have a chance to fight the evil that has invaded their world.

Characters

Will Halloway is a thoughtful 13-year-old boy. Will is traversing the path between childhood and adulthood as he enjoys the time he spends with his best friend, but feels the isolation of growing up with a father who cares for him but cannot or will not show it. Will is, at times, serious, and very sensitive to the threat of danger, harm, and loss. Will’s awareness of sadness and pain is complemented by his very deep love for his father and his friend.



Jim Nightshade is a mischievous 13-year-old boy. Jim is a risk-taker and is outwardly more playful and slightly wilder than his best friend, Will. However, Jim, too, feels the tension that comes in the transition between childhood and adulthood as he wishes to grow up and experience what life has to offer, yet feels the pull of his mother, who wants to keep him from growing up and going away.

John Francis Babbo, above, and Sawyer Nunes, left, play Will Halloway and Jim Nightshade, respectively, in DTC’s production of Something Wicked This Way Comes.

Charles Halloway is the 54-year-old father of Will and a would-be writer. He is stalled in the grieving process for his wife Beth, deceased for two years when the story opens, and feels as though he was too old for her and is too old to be a suitable father to a 13-year-old boy. His concerns about his age and his preoccupation with his wife cause him to distance himself from Will, though he loves his son immensely.

Summary and Characters (continued)

Mr. Dark is the proprietor of the sinister carnival. He is often able to charm and seduce people into joining him, but he feeds on their vulnerabilities, pain, and hidden desires. His age is unknown, but he has been a clever and deceitful manipulator of human beings for decades. He has no goodness in him at all and represents complete evil.

Mr. Cooger is Mr. Dark's partner in the carnival. Though he rarely speaks, he is a menacing presence. Mr. Dark uses Cooger to get what he wants—more power over the lives of others.

Mrs. Nightshade is Jim's mother. Tormented inside because of the loss of her husband, she worries about losing Jim and being alone in life and drinks too much to dull her pain. Her anxieties make her want to cling too hard to Jim.



*Rob Riddle plays the sinister Mr. Dark in *Something Wicked This Way Comes*.*



Stephen Bogardus plays Charles Halloway, Will's father, in the show.

The Lightning Rod Salesman is a combined character and narrative voice in the play. He senses the impending doom and tries to warn the townspeople to protect themselves.

Miss Watriss is the town librarian. She is a little bit of a busybody, but her unsolicited advice is her way of trying to help others, including the Halloways.

Mr. Tetley owns a cigar store in town. He tries to remain optimistic even though his business has all but dried up, and he wishes for a return to a prosperous business. His dreams of importance become his weakness.

Mr. Crosetti is the town barber. He also mourns the lack of business he has due to the Great Depression, but is less optimistic and a little grouchy. He dreams of wealth, and his desire for money becomes his weakness.

Miss Foley is a teacher in the town. Though at first she seems sensible, her awareness of aging and her missing her younger, more beautiful self are what make her vulnerable to the temptations offered her by Cooger and Dark.

The Dust Witch is a blind mystic who has the ability to see the inner desires and weaknesses of people. Though her talent seems amazing and entertaining to unsuspecting townspeople, it is this extra-sensory perception that Mr. Dark uses to his advantage in finding his next victims, and the Dust Witch willingly works to help Mr. Dark.

The Autumn People are the minions of Mr. Dark. Their existence is mysterious, for they are previous victims of Cooger and Dark's Pandemonium Shadow Show who now must also find people consumed by pain, anger, and sadness and draw them to the carnival. Like Cooger and Dark, the Autumn People survive on other people's misery.



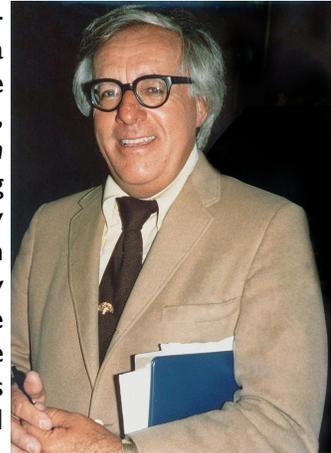
Actress Karen Peakes plays Mrs. Nightshade and also one of the "Autumn People."

Teachable Themes and Topics

Transformations: Inspiration to Story to Novel to Musical

Something Wicked This Way Comes is a famous novel by Ray Bradbury. The book's popularity has endured for over fifty years as the story, though set during the 1930s, has timeless appeal in the battle of good versus evil. In this world-premiere musical adaptation of Bradbury's novel, creators Neil Bartram (who wrote the music and lyrics) and Brian Hill (who wrote the book [the dialogue]) shaped the original prose story into a stage show with scenes and songs. But this transformation from novel to musical is only one of the many shape-shifting stages in the life of this story of a sinister carnival led by an evil proprietor that haunts the people of a small town. Bradbury's own journey from inspiration to full-length novel is fascinating, for it illuminates one person's process from writing a first draft through crafting multiple revisions, from being seized with excitement over an idea to putting work away to percolate over time. How did this story germinate from an idea in Bradbury's head to such powerful prose? And how did Bartram and Hill transform that prose into dramatic writing for the stage?

Bradbury shared his writer's journey in the afterword to the novel, writing, "I imagine you would describe *Something Wicked This Way Comes* as a carnival far-traveling from childhood to reach me in my almost middle years." He recalled a terrifying ride on a carousel as a four-year-old boy, haunting images of weirdness in Lon Chaney's movies *Laugh, Clown, Laugh* and *He Who Gets Slapped* that he saw as a youngster; and a soul-stirring encounter with a kind Mr. Electrico from a traveling carnival Bradbury attended as an adolescent. Mr. Electrico used Bradbury as a volunteer in his act, then later talked at length with the boy when the young Ray wanted to know the trick behind the magic. Bradbury remembered the way Mr. Electrico looked at him intently and posited that the boy was the reincarnation of a dear friend who died in World War I. Bradbury was moved by the experience. "I wandered out of the carnival, stunned.... I knew that something amazing had struck me with electric fire and changed me forever. Within eight weeks I began to write."



Ray Bradbury

That early incarnation of the story, "The Black Ferris," was intended to be a chapter of a longer Bradbury novel titled *Dark Carnival*. The story went unfinished, and Bradbury's published *Dark Carnival* never included the short story, which lay in the author's files for over twenty years. Bradbury did have a successful writing career in the interim, though, writing novels and screenplays, and building friendships with many in the Hollywood film industry. One of those friendships was with actor, dancer, and director Gene Kelly, who invited a middle-aged Bradbury and his wife Maggie to a screening of his entirely nonverbal, mime-and-movement film *Invitation to the Dance*, in which Kelly portrayed at one point a sad clown in a tragic love story.

The film reminded Bradbury of his carnival story, and he began converting it into a screenplay for Gene Kelly to direct and produce. Kelly happily agreed, but without any money to produce the film, the project again went dormant for a short time. But Bradbury decided to build upon the story and write a full novel himself, and after another five years, published *Something Wicked This Way Comes* in 1962. Bradbury's idea for a film version of the story did come to fruition as he himself adapted the novel into a screenplay for a 1983 Disney film of the same name.

(continued)

Teachable Themes and Topics (continued)

Transformations: Inspiration to Story to Novel to Musical (continued)

The path does not end, there, for its most recent incarnation is Neil Bartram and Brian Hill's catapulting the novel into the world of musical theatre. Delaware Theatre Company's Associate Director of Education & Community Engagement, Johanna Schloss, asked Bartram and Hill about their work on this amazing new stage show.

JS: What led you to create a project around Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*?

NB & BH: We're always on the lookout for exciting and inspiring material to develop, and we're drawn specifically to stories that have larger-than-life elements and a big heart. This story about an evil carnival going head to head with a father and son, who mend their strained relationship in the process, seemed to scream out to us.

JS: What kind of Bradbury fans were you before beginning? Science fiction/fantasy fans?

NB & BH: We had both read the book as boys and we've always been fans of his deliciously poetic prose. We're not rabid fantasy fans, but we know that there are many who revere this novel, so we've approached the adaptation with great care, trying to meld the sense of Ray's original with our own voices.

JS: In writing a show about time travels, carnivals, magic, and other special effects, did you already have in your imagination ideas about transferring magical/mystical elements from words on a page to live theatre? How does this production compare with what you imagined?

NB & BH: We believe you can do absolutely anything in the theatre. Nothing makes us happier than writing something that on first reading seems impossible. For example, there's a stage direction in the script that says, "They fashion a Carnival out of dust and clouds." When you put something like that into the genius of the hands of director Rachel Rockwell, you always get exactly what you imagined and more.

JS: What musical inspirations or motifs did you draw upon for composition?

BH: Neil has used the inspiration of iconic musical Americana as well as world music sounds to build a rich and complex score unlike anything that's been heard in musical theatre until now.

JS: What would you like student audiences, or audiences in general, to take away from seeing your show?

NB & BH: First, we'd like them to be entertained. This story is a thrill ride like no other. Second, we'd like them to be moved by the heartbreaking father and son relationship at the core of the piece. And third, we hope they are moved to think about the underlying message of the piece laid out by Ray Bradbury over half a century ago – that we must always keep our eyes open for anything that turns our hearts away from each other, a message that remains relevant even today.

(continued)

Teachable Themes and Topics (continued)

Transformations: Inspiration to Story to Novel to Musical (continued)

The director of the Delaware Theatre Company production of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is Rachel Rockwell, an award-winning choreographer and director whose central vision guides the designs and performances for this world-premiere musical at DTC. Rockwell shared with us some of her thoughts about directing the show.

JS: What drew you to direct a musical version of SWTWC?

RR: Well, I am a mom of a 12 year-old son, and I am always drawn to coming-of-age stories about boys, in part, 'cause I am living it!

JS: What previous experience/appreciation did you have with/for Bradbury's work?

RR: I saw the feature film when I was around the same age as our protagonists, Jim and Will. It scared me to death! Now, looking back on it, (it was) pretty cheesy in a great, early '80's way, but I don't think it really captures both the beauty and terror of Bradbury's novel. Everyone I know of my generation has forgotten all the questionable special effects. We just remember being scared and loving it.

JS: What elements of the production stand out to you/what are you excited about?

RR: I think the visual effects are going to blow people away. In the midst of that, I am most excited by the relationships - the boys' deep and abiding friendship, the father rendered motionless by his grief, and the completely identifiable needs of the townspeople, so secretly unfulfilled by their small town lives.

JS: Are there any themes or takeaways you want the audience to understand after seeing the show?

RR: I think the theme of how seductive and insidious wickedness can be is always relevant. It shows how things separate us, turn us away from the ones we love, for the promise of a better future. It comes in many forms: technological, material, political, etc.

The artists involved in creating this new musical version of the old story clearly have the core theme as well as the main characters and plot of Bradbury's novel in their sights as they work to bring his story to life in a new way for live theatre audiences. And like the author himself, they take on through revisions in writing and through the rehearsal process the journey of crafting and shaping the piece in a way that brings out both the darker or scarier tone as well as the bright center of love and care for one's family, friends, and neighbors. From its beginnings through its most current structure, the transformations of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* are emblematic of creative minds at work, as individuals and in partnership, across time and place to create an unforgettable artistic experience for the audience.

Teachable Themes and Topics (continued)

Innocence and Evil

“A group of young friends struggles against a supernatural, dark force.” These words encapsulate the conflict of *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, inviting us to think of Will and Jim, and even the young version of Miss Foley, trying to defeat Cooger and Dark and their nefarious carnival. Yet the phrase could also describe the action of many books and movies, from *A Wrinkle in Time* to the *Harry Potter* and *Hunger Games* series to Steven Spielberg’s *E.T.*, or even the television hit *Stranger Things*. What makes the theme of children battling evil and a supernatural or unnatural, opposing force so attractive to authors and audiences?



Perhaps the answer is in the way so many people find a sense of truth in the goodness of children who are struggling with a dark and difficult world force. We see childhood as a time that should be filled with joy and innocence. We create barriers to safeguard them—fences around a back yard, parental controls on cable television offerings, security codes and check-in procedures on the doors of schools. We feel compelled to protect children—both their physical and emotional selves--and the world we want them to inhabit. So when, in a play or movie or book intended for a teen or adult audience, we find children as main characters, we are drawn in and root for them when conflicts threaten their happiness. We bristle when their security is being encroached upon, and we fear that their love and innocence in the face of manipulations and machinations of evil forces will make them easy victims.

There is, though, a sense of power and optimism for the human spirit when the smallest triumphs over the gargantuan. Like the biblical David and Goliath, even like Cinderella and her cruel stepmother, stories in which a weaker person takes on a stronger opponent can be satisfying, for readers and viewers in real life are met with daily challenges from forces larger than they. And when that weaker character is endowed with virtues which give the power and strength to vanquish the villain, audiences find satisfaction and, perhaps, justification for choosing to stand up to and against larger opponents or insidious factions they face, whether in the form of larger evils like poverty, illness, and crime, or the pettiness in day-to-day interpersonal arguments and conflicts.

At times, it isn’t the strength of a foe that presents as the greatest obstacle to good; it is the prevalence of apathy and inaction. And in *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, Will and Jim find at the outset that they have no adult presence or authority joining them in fighting Mr. Dark. The adults will not or cannot help, having their own daily concerns commanding their attention. Charles is preoccupied with his advancing age and the death of his wife two years prior. Mrs. Nightshade is wrapped up in her fears of loss and loneliness. Even the policeman Will and Jim summon to help does not believe the boys. The children in the story only have one another as a resource and helpmate in the task.

Young Miss Foley: I wanted her back. But I’m miserable. I’ve been telling people who I am.

Will: And no one believes you.

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Teachable Themes and Topics (continued)

Innocence and Evil (continued)

Jim: Of course, they don't. Who's gonna believe a crazy girl yellin' and screamin' she's our teacher?

Will: Don't worry, Miss Foley. We'll help you.

Jim: How we gonna do that? Who's gonna believe us?

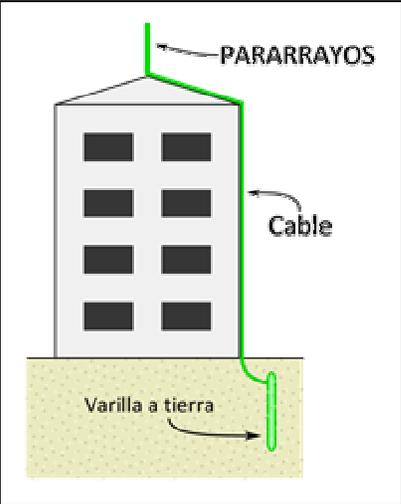
Young readers and viewers, faced with real-life anxieties as they transition from childhood to adolescence and adulthood, may find inspiration in fictional companions who deal with a powerful foe and come out on top. Yet the lasting power behind the genre of children-versus-supernatural has to be that adults, too, find satisfaction in the story. Bradbury reminds adults that they, too, have the power for goodness and greatness to take on their own challenges. He offers hope to our protagonists, and the audience, when the younger generation and the older generation band together.

Charles: And what we've got is each other.
We've got honor and pride.
We've got virtue, and decency
And truth on our side. . . .

Will: Together we'll be good.

In Bradbury's novel, as well as in Bartram and Hill's musical adaptation, the "old man" Charles finds hidden strength when he becomes vulnerable again, as a child, laughing and loving freely. In Bradbury's eloquent way, he shows that it isn't an adult's size, strength, or success that destroys demons; it is the heart of a child that is strong enough to prevail.

How Does a Lightning Rod Work?



The diagram shows a building with a lightning rod system. A green rod labeled 'PARARRAYOS' is mounted on the roof. A green 'Cable' runs down the side of the building to a 'Varilla a tierra' (grounded rod) in the ground.

A lightning rod is simply a thick rod made of a metal (usually copper or aluminum) that is a good conductor of electricity. The rod is placed so it sticks up higher than the structure it is trying to protect and is connected into the ground, too, so that the electricity in a lightning bolt will travel through the rod system and into the ground. It does not attract lightning; rather, if lightning strikes the area, the rod provides a safer and more "attractive" channel for the electricity to jump to and move through. Benjamin Franklin is credited with inventing the lightning rod, and his convincing many Philadelphians to install them possibly eliminated many lightning-related fires from burning up homes and blocks of buildings in the city. The diagram here shows the action of a lightning rod, with the "pararrayos" being the rod pointed toward the sky, and the "varilla a tierra" being the grounded wires.

***Teachable Themes and Topics* (continued)**

Ray Bradbury: An Author of All Time

The mysterious carnival in *Something Wicked This Way Comes* features a mirror maze that shows visitors former or future visions of themselves, and an enigmatic carousel that ushers a person's body backwards or forwards in time, making him younger or older with each revolution. The concept of time travel is found not only in this story, but in much of Ray Bradbury's writing. Born in 1920 in Waukegan, Illinois, then a small community outside of Chicago, Bradbury saw and lived through a century of technological progress like no other in history. He was a writer of books and short stories, but also a successful screen writer for the burgeoning film industry and the new medium of television. He imagined life on other planets and predicted the moon landing years before it happened. He typed his original manuscript for *Fahrenheit 451* on a typewriter, and later in his life created a personal website on the internet. Bradbury may have written about the future and imagined technologies that could help or harm mankind, but he remained grounded in his belief that mankind has the power to choose—and must choose--connecting with other human beings over detachment and over-reliance on technology. His writing often centered on showing characters who struggle with all-too-human vices, but who also discover that that human experience of family, friendship, love, and the simple joys of life itself transcend time.

In writing about space travel and futuristic worlds, Bradbury openly remarked about his purpose of illuminating the human condition. In an interview with NPR in the year 2000, the 80-year-old author explained, “[Writing about space travel] involves our philosophy; it involves our sense of theology; it involves our sense of the miraculous. After all, we’ve been trying to figure out for tens of centuries what our place in the universe is, why we were created to be on the world, why we were given this opportunity to live. . . So space travel only intensifies our sense of obligation to the gift of life, to promulgate us, to go to the moon, to go to Mars, to go on beyond our solar system, to take our civilization on a journey.” In one such journey, his short story “All Summer in a Day,” Bradbury gives a futuristic view of a human colony living on Venus. Elementary-school children who live with their families in a tunnel village, protected from the incessant rain on the cloud-covered planet, look forward to the one day the sun will come out and they can emerge from underground and play outside. Their barbaric side comes out, *Lord of the Flies*-style, when the adult teacher steps out of the room on an errand, and they lock a misfit girl in the coat closet, causing her to miss the sunshine. As the story ends, the children realize with deep regret what they have done. The time-travel, futuristic tale is only a setting for a morality story about bullying and the importance of kindness to others.

Bradbury uses a different kind of time travel—a journey to the past—in *Dandelion Wine*, the first story in his “Green Town Trilogy” (of which *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is the second entry). In this nostalgic piece, written as a novel and then adapted by Bradbury into a play, twelve-year-old Douglas Spaulding (a character somewhat representative of Bradbury himself) and his brother and best friend try to understand a mysterious stranger who comes to their town one summer, filling their hearts with a sense of dread. Douglas’ perfect summer of seeing scary movies at the local theatre, playing by the creek during the day, watching fireflies at night on the porch as the grown-ups gather and tell stories, and feeling the joy of life comes to an end abruptly with the loss of people he loves. The boy becomes locked in sadness and closed off to loving and being vulnerable. The stranger then reveals himself to be a grown-up Douglas helping his younger self make peace with the transition between childhood and adulthood. The coexistence of the older man and the younger

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Teachable Themes and Topics (continued)

Ray Bradbury: An Author of All Time (continued)

version of himself may be the stuff of science fiction, but the deeper message the grown-up version of the hero tries to impart is that a person must let go of pain and sorrow to be able to appreciate and experience the love, beauty, and joy in life, too. Filled with poetic language and metaphor, *Dandelion Wine*—like *Something Wicked This Way Comes*—celebrates the gift of human connection and the joys of everyday life in a small town. Bradbury commented in the NPR interview that the human journey involves taking with us “all our stupidities, all our inanities, all our destruction, with all the things that we hate, but along with [that,] all the things we love and all the things that are brilliant and all the things that are creative. We have this darkness within us, we have this bright light within us, and we’re going to take both of them, and I accept that.”

Bradbury’s personal sensitivity to and appreciation of the changing conditions of the world certainly contributed to his writing style and subject matter. His warm and lasting relationships with his wife, family, and friends certainly shaped the personal, moral tone of his writing. But he did not believe that love and happiness were a disappearing franchise, for he imbued his optimism for the future in his works, too. With rich memories of the past, a vivid life unfolding in the present, and hope for the future, Bradbury felt connected to the world in which he lived, finding inspiration and excitement from mankind’s achievements and the rich possibilities that lay ahead, telling NPR, “I feel very fortunate not only that I started out with Buck Rogers in 1929, but wound up down at Houston, at Cape Canaveral, in my own lifetime. I feel privileged to be part of this greatest age in the history of the world.”

Fascinating Facts about Ray Bradbury...

- He wrote the episode “I Sing the Body Electric,” about a robotic grandmother who hopes one day to learn and love enough to become human, for Rod Serling’s *The Twilight Zone*.
- He helped conceive and write the presentation for the American exhibit at the 1964 World’s Fair, recounting the history of the United States beginning with its colonial days and ending with a prediction of the moon landing, which occurred in 1969.
- In acknowledgement of his work in melding creative arts with science and technology, the Apollo missions named a crater on the moon for him—the Dandelion crater, an homage to his novel *Dandelion Wine*.
- He was good friends with Gene Kelly, Walt Disney, and animator Chuck Jones.
- He designed the interior and the presentation therein of Epcot Center’s Spaceship Earth.
- He had a television show, *Ray Bradbury Presents*, that ran from 1985-1994, and wrote the screenplays for all of the episodes.
- He has written about cars, space travel, and other technological devices, but never learned to drive, or cared to learn.
- Bradbury’s short story “The Rocket Man,” which appears in his book *The Illustrated Man*, inspired two songs entitled “Rocket Man”—one of those being the hit by Elton John and Bernie Taupin.

Teachable Themes and Topics (continued)

Traveling Carnivals

The fictional carnival that makes its way to Green Town, Illinois in *Something Wicked This Way Comes* is reminiscent, in many ways, of the common practice of traveling carnivals, circuses, wild west shows, and other troupes that moved throughout rural America in the early decades of the 20th century. Though the traveling entertainment of theatre and circuses has long-held roots in Europe, and though there were circuses and animal acts in the 18th and 19th centuries in big cities in America, the more recent American tradition of the traveling carnival did not gain a foothold until after the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Known also as the World's Columbian Exposition to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' voyage to the New World, the Chicago World's Fair offered exhibits in arts, science, technology, history, and culture and drew over 20 million people to its spectacle. In addition to grand halls designed to house stunning works of art or to educate patrons about scientific advancements, new inventions for use in the home and community, or world events, the "Midway Plaisance" section--a long, broad avenue that angled away from the center of the fair--proved a treat for fairgoers, featuring ethnographic villages of people demonstrating elements of their daily lives as would be found in their home countries back in Asia and Africa. Along with this educational component, though, were attractions simply for the amusement of guests. The highlight of the Midway was the very first Ferris wheel that took fairgoers 250 feet in the air. Unusual foods, games of skill and chance, sideshows like mind readers, belly dancers, and even Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show filled the bill.



Carousel at night

After the success of the Midway Plaisance in Chicago, a new business took flight—that of the traveling carnival, which took the word “midway” and made it a standard of the American carnival and amusement circuit. Otto Schmidt was one of the first entrepreneurs to take acts as a collective on the road, touring the Northeastern states before it closed due to financial difficulties. Other showmen took up the practice, though. The bigger shows would set up in larger cities and towns; smaller shows could support themselves in the small towns and rural communities of the heartland and the American west.

Different from a circus, which was an orchestrated performance featuring many acts for which audiences bought specific tickets, a carnival offered guests the opportunity to come at will, stay as long as they wanted, and visit the attractions that interested them. Both circuses and carnivals of the early 20th century took advantage of the burgeoning railroad systems to take their business around the country. With few paved roads in the early decades of the 1900s, carnival and circus leaders often had their own train cars to carry their people and equipment, and a highly organized system of disembarking, unpacking, setting up, running the amusements, repacking, and moving out again on the highly regimented railroad timetables.

Though the carnival season was usually from May to October, many early carnivals found business difficult when the fall harvest began. Once the crops were ready, entertainment--and even school--took a back seat to farm work. Therefore, a carnival was viewed as a summer activity, coming

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Teachable Themes and Topics (continued)

Traveling Carnivals *(continued)*

around perhaps once a season. Yet in a boon for both carnival business and agricultural industry, a business partnership was formed in many communities when the county fair or local agricultural show organizers found that attendance increased when carnival attractions were part of the fair, extending the amusement season into the fall. Guests could see the agricultural exhibits—prize livestock, crops, or home goods—and take in rides and sideshows, too.

The carnival and its company of men and women were not always welcome in a community, however. Though the "freak shows" by today's standards are seen as exploitative of individuals such as men and women having abnormal physical features, at the time the curiosity was seen as acceptable, and the carnival sideshow participants as having a steady, paying job; room; and board. Instead, the complaints surrounded the deceitful practices of con men in deliberately misleading visitors about the reality of the attractions, the rigging of games to take advantage of those who played them, and the ubiquitous "girly shows" that were viewed as corrupting youth (and older citizens, too).



*Carnival poster from
the early 1900s.*

Today's carnival industry has evolved from earlier practices. As the mid-20th century brought changing family lifestyles due, in part, to the highway system (which offered the general public the opportunity to travel), more accessibility to education and employment opportunities, and a greater variety of entertainment, most small carnivals dried up or were incorporated into larger carnival companies often led by families who passed the business through succeeding generations. There are still, today, carnival companies that travel by train, that are led by second, third, and fourth-generation family members of the organization's founder, and that run their businesses for a seven-month season, partnering with churches, community groups, and still those local, county, and state agricultural fairs. Gone are the freak shows and side shows, seen as archaic and insensitive. Stricter oversight by legal authorities in the latter half of the 20th century, as well as changing business practices towards a more family-friendly atmosphere, removed the cloak of con artistry and assured communities of safe attractions. But Ray Bradbury's story of a mysterious carnival still appeals to the child in each of us, even without the macabre attractions. Watching an empty parking lot or field transform virtually overnight into a bustling scene of thrill rides, bright lights, cheerful music, and enticing tastes and smells, then disappear a few days later leaving the place hollow and empty, we may all find a sense of mystery surrounding the comings and goings of a carnival, and the childlike excitement of living and playing, even for a short time, in this magical world.

Questions for Classroom Discussion

Knowledge and Comprehension

1. What do we know about Will's family life? About Jim's family life?
2. What are the abilities of the Dust Witch?
3. What do Mr. Crosetti and Mr. Tetley wish for? What does Miss Foley wish for?
4. What happens to Crosetti, Tetley, and Foley when they go to the carnival?
5. What happens to Mr. Cooger when he goes on the carousel?
6. How does Charles Halloway behave when Mr. Dark questions him about the boys?
7. How does Charles save Will? How does Will help Charles?

Application and Analysis

1. How are Will and Jim similar? How are they different from one another?
2. What does Will want most in his world at the outset of the play?
3. What do Mr. Dark and the Dust Witch look for in each towns person they invite to the carnival?
4. How are the sideshow acts of Vesuvio and Guillotine linked to the characters of Tetley and Crosetti?
5. What does Charles Halloway discover at the library about the history of Cooger and Dark's carnival? What does this discovery tell him—and the boys—about the "Autumn People" and about why Dark seeks them all?

Synthesis and Evaluation

1. What do you see are the positive and negative traits of Will, Jim, and Charles? What message, if any, can you discern about Ray Bradbury's tale of good and evil? Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. Who would you say is the best audience for a show like this? Explain your thinking.
3. Which technical element(s) of the show did you find most appealing for helping to tell the story? Why? If you were directing or designing, what might you add or change to the technical elements if you could? Are these additions/changes possible for live theatre?

Classroom Activities

1. From your local library or other sources, find additional short stories by Ray Bradbury and read them. What parts of his stories seem grounded in reality? What elements are more fantasy, science fiction, or otherwise beyond the realm of everyday life? What traits do his characters share in these stories? What makes them different? Prepare a graphic organizer, visual display, or multimedia presentation and share your impressions with your classmates.
2. What amusement park or carnival ride do you love the most? (Or hate the most?) Brainstorm a list of words or phrases that describe the ride, the experience, or the feelings generated by it. Using those words or phrases and other ideas that spring from those, create a free-form poem or “poetic prose” that illustrates, in words, your experience with this ride. Share your poems aloud as a class with one another, perhaps adding projected images as a backdrop to your performance.
3. Think back to your third-, fourth-, or fifth-grade self and the things that worried or upset you as a child. Write a letter of encouragement to your elementary-school self about working through and overcoming fears, frustrations, or other obstacles. Now think about your parent, a teacher, or another significant adult in your life. What gifts, abilities, or positive traits does that person have that you would consider a strength? Now consider the challenges and concerns they may face in their lives. Write a letter of encouragement to that person, connecting their gifts and positive qualities to their ability to work through a challenging situation or overcome an obstacle. Or convert your thoughts to words and phrases to become song lyrics, and using your own musical talents or an app like Garage Band, create a song of encouragement and inspiration. Share that song or letter with that significant person.
4. Think about the existence of the traveling carnival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and how transportation technologies changed the business of the carnival as well as the communities that the carnival visited. Now expand your view from just carnivals to other businesses or to the lifestyles of people in a community. As a class, examine how the advancements in transportation have changed the daily lives of Americans in the past 200 years. What were the major changes or shifts that influenced the way people lived? Why do you say these changes were so influential? Select four or five of the most important advancements or changes in the world of transportation, and have four or five groups explore the influence of just one of these changes. How did a family’s daily life change as a result of transportation technology? How did communities, businesses, and cultures adapt, grow, or decline as a result? Create a cause-and-effect presentation and have each group share their work with the class in a timeline format.

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Page 12—Mobile Mardi Gras carnival poster. Strobridge and Company Lithograph image. Public domain. Accessed at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Carnival_posters#/media/File:MobileMardiGras1900Poster.jpg

Why Go to the Theatre?

State and National Education Standards Addressed Through Taking Your Students to a Live Theatre Production

When your students view live theatre, they are taking part in a learning experience that engages their minds on many levels. From simple recall and comprehension of the plot of a play or musical to analysis and evaluation of the production elements of a show, students receive and interpret messages communicated through words, movement, music, and other artistic devices. Beyond “I liked it; it was good,” students learn to communicate about the content and performance of an artistic piece and to reflect on their own and others’ emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual points-of-view and responses. And the immediacy of live theatre--the shared moments between actors and audience members in the here-and-now--raises students’ awareness of the power and scope of human connection.

The following educational standards are addressed in a visit to a performance at Delaware Theatre Company along with a pre-show DTC classroom presentation and post-show talkback session at the theatre. *(Additional standards addressed through the use of the study guide or through further classroom study are not included here.)*

Common Core English Language Arts Standards:

Reading: 9-10 and 11-12, Strands 3, 4, 6

Language: 9-10 and 11-12, Strands 3, 4, and 5

National Core Arts Standards—Theatre:

Responding: Anchor Standards 7, 8, and 9

Connecting: Anchor Standard 11

Delaware Standards for English Language Arts (DOE):

Standard 2: 2.2a, 2.4b1, 2.5b, 2.5g, 2.6a

Standard 3: 3.1b, 3.3b1, 3.3b2

Standard 4: 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.1c, 4.2f, 4.3a, 4.4b

*Compiled by Johanna Schloss, Associate Director of Education &
Community Engagement, Delaware Theatre Company, 2016*

Teamwork in Theatre = Artists + Audience

Going to the theatre is a wonderful way to experience **TEAMWORK**.

The **ARTISTS** who put on the show—that includes people like actors, musicians, sound designers, costumers, painters, carpenters, and even electricians—are not only involved in the performance, but have often spent weeks or months getting the show ready. That’s a lot of work! And there would be no show without the efforts of these artists. They are very important!

The **AUDIENCE** who comes to see the show is also important. There is no show if there is no audience! The actors, musicians, and technicians can practice all they want to, but it takes an audience to turn all that work into a theatre performance!

THEATRE is not the same as a movie or a TV show. Theatre is LIVE in front of you and happening now. The actors onstage? They are real people in the room with you! The lights shining onstage? They are controlled by real people in the room with you! The sound of applause during the bows? That comes from real people in the room with you! **Everything anyone does in the room, whether that person is an ARTIST or an AUDIENCE member, affects everyone else.** If an actor decides not to wear the right costume, it disrupts the performance, surprises the other actors, and confuses the audience. If an audience member decides to play a video game during the show, it disrupts the performance, creates strange lights and sounds that don’t fit in the show, and distracts other audience members and the artists involved with the performance. When you are in the theatre, your words and actions are observed by everyone in the room, and these words and actions can make the theatre experience a good one for everyone else or a bad one for everyone else. This is why **TEAMWORK** is so important in theatre. Everyone in the room needs everyone else to **DO THEIR PART** for the experience to be successful.

What must the ARTISTS do during the theatre performance?

- Do the show as rehearsed, and not suddenly change something or surprise other actors or technicians.
- Give full attention to your job, whether that is acting or moving scenery or opening a curtain on time.
- Give full energy to the performance, showing that you care about what the audience sees and hears.

What must the AUDIENCE do during the theatre performance?

- Give full attention to the activity onstage, with no talking during the show, no sleeping, and no playing with things like cell phones, toys, or papers.
- Practice courteous behaviors towards other audience members, not making noises during the show, keeping hands and feet to yourself, and staying still in your seat rather than distracting others by getting up and down.
- Show respect for the place and the people in it by doing things like arriving on time; waiting until after the curtain call to leave; not eating, drinking, or chewing gum in the theatre; and responding to the show in a way that recognizes the efforts of the ARTISTS and the AUDIENCE in making the experience positive.

When ARTISTS and AUDIENCE members all do their part, they show respect for each other and for the work involved in creating theatre. **That mutual respect and the efforts to make the experience a positive one for all add up to make TEAMWORK in the theatre!**